

# BUS HISTORY ASSOCIATION 2019 CONVENTION

Ottawa ON and Gatineau QC – Wednesday, June 5<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup>

*All photos by Kevin Nicol, unless otherwise indicated*

The Bus History Association (BHA) convention was held in Ottawa this year. It had been 16 years (2003) since the BHA held their convention there. As with the past 3 Canadian conventions (Montreal, Quebec City, Vancouver), Mario Seneviratne organized a fan trip on the day before the start of the convention. Société de transport de l'Outaouais (STO) is one of the few remaining transit systems in Canada that still operates high floor vehicles (not including cutaways). STO, along with Coast Mountain Bus Company (Orion V suburbans), Sarnia (1 Orion V) and Cold Lake (2 Classics as back up) are the only systems that still operate the venerable buses. Their days are clearly numbered though except possibly for Vancouver where they have a few years left.



STO still operates MCI Classics that formerly operated in Calgary. Bus # 9136 was chosen for the charter which is ex-Calgary # 5106. The charter started at Terrasses de la Chaudière in Gatineau. BHA members had to take regular transit to get to the start location and most rode OC Transpo route 97 from the host hotel of Hilton Garden Inn and Suites – Ottawa Airport. Upon arriving at Mackenzie King bridge, we alighted route 97 and transferred to route 44 for the ride to Gatineau. People who arrived early were able to take many photos. OC Transpo services Terrasses and one of the new Nova LFS buses arrived during our time there. STO also had some new 1900 series LFS Hybrids with the new driver's window and one of them also was there prior to the charter. One other bus that was present was privately

owned ex-OC Transpo # 8776, a GMC Classic. Jesse Goulah, of Toronto, had driven his bus all the way to Ottawa and we would see it quite a bit during the convention. Prior to departing on the charter, we did a side by side with Jesse's bus and our charter bus. Classics had last run in Ottawa around June 2010 and as we would see during the convention, Jesse's bus would cause a lot of people to look twice when they saw the bus.

The STO charter toured Gatineau, Aylmer and Hull. Mario timed the routing to meet up with an in service Transcollines cutaway #C1 at a Rapibus station. Mario also was able to obtain a visit to the Autobus Campeau garage, as they are the contractor for Transcollines. Transcollines is the name of the transit system servicing Les Collines-de-l'Outaouais. Their fleet is very diverse and includes cutaways, NovaBus LFS, a Krystal bodied cutaway, and Thomas Saf-t-liner C2 buses. A few years ago, they did have two Grande West Vicinities but these were sold to CIT operators in the Montreal area in 2017.



The charter finished at around 2:00 PM which allowed people to spend the afternoon rush hour in the downtown Ottawa area. Some BHA members chose to remain at Terrasses de la Chaudière to wait for some OC Transpo Rural Partner routes to depart. 417 Bus Lines operates several of the 500 series commuter routes on behalf of OC Transpo to suburbs around Ottawa, including Russell Township. Two of the 417 Bus Lines (an X3-45 and

H3-45) are wrapped for Russell Township. In all of the OC buses, note the route sign in the front right side of the bus.

In Ottawa, the light rail system was not open during the BHA visit so it is still a non-stop parade of buses along Albert and Slater during the rush hours. Inveros and double-deck buses are still plentiful and BHA had plenty of buses to photograph. Speaking of double-deckers, the Lady Dive Enviro 400 buses that are used on sightseeing in the Ottawa area also depart from Confederation Square and a few people headed to that location to see them.

It was a great day and I know everybody always enjoys the charters that Mario operates before BHA conventions. The charters always run smoothly, and the advance organization is always apparent. Alex Tipaldos also helps Mario with the routing and his help is appreciated as well.



## DAY ONE – Thursday, June 6<sup>th</sup>

For the first day of the BHA convention, we chartered an MCI J4500 from 417 Bus Lines (# 63-07). Our first stop of the day would be at the 417 Bus Lines garage in Casselman, ON. If you are not familiar with the company name, it is named after Highway # 417 which is the highway that connects Ottawa with Montreal. Casselman is located about 50 kilometres east of Ottawa right off the highway. The current roster of 417 consists of 38 highway coaches, along with many school buses. However, as with any charter coach company, they are in business to keep their buses on the road. Most of their fleet was out on the day that the BHA visited. There were two other buses on the property including # 32-97 which is still in the colors of Delaney Bus Lines (ex # 901). 417 purchased Delaney in 2018 and took over the OC Transpo Rural routes that they operated.



The next stop would see the BHA returning to Ottawa for the Pinecrest garage of OC Transpo. Most of the OC site visits were scheduled for Saturday but the Pinecrest garage is only open on weekdays resulting in the Thursday visit. The main reason for visiting this garage was to view the OC historical collection. Their collection is in a state of limbo these days as the vehicles have not been licenced for the road for at least five years. There are no plans to get rid of the collection, so they are safe for now. The collection consists of bus # 217 (Canadian Car CD-36, ex London Transportation Commission # 308), # 337 (Twin Coach 38-S, ex-Windsor), 5101 (GMC TDH-5105, "Sunshine Bus"), 5931 (GMC TDH-5105), 6101 (GMC TDH-5301) and 8222 (GMC TA-60102N, ex-Hamilton Street



Railway 8202). The buses could not move so BHA members had to photograph them where they were. OC Transpo did clear out the rows beside the buses so at least they were able to be photographed. Jesse's Classic # 8776 joined the excursion at this point, and it was posed beside one of the OC Transpo Inveros at the garage.

The next stop would be at the Hull garage of Société de transport de l'Outaouais. This is their old garage and the BHA would visit their new garage in Gatineau later in the afternoon. The main reason for visiting the old garage was to see the MCI Classics along with the STO restored bus, # 7901 (GMC T6H-5307N). Up until a couple of years ago, STO did use the GMC New Look occasionally in revenue service and charters. They have since decided that it will not be used for charters or revenue service going forward. It is still in great shape and BHA members were given a short ride around the garage in it.



After lunch, we would then visit the new STO garage in Gatineau. This is a very large and impressive facility which contains most of their fleet. During our tour, one interesting part was seeing the overhead catwalk in the maintenance area. With low floor buses these days, most of the equipment, including batteries is on the roof of the bus. While some systems have constructed scaffolding to allow staff access to the roof, the STO built a catwalk platform above three hoists in the garage. A bus can be lifted, and the mechanic can work on it without having to bend over. It was an impressive system and was a highlight of the tour. BHA members were also able to get a few shots of the Nova Hybrids, both 40' and 60' that are kept at this garage.

Our last stop of the day would be at Place du Portage in Gatineau. Several OC Transpo, STO and OC Transpo Rural Partner routes depart from this location. Many of the OC routes utilize the double-deck buses during rush hour. It is very busy though and between traffic and people, it was tough to get some good photos. Part of the building goes over the road here which complicates photography with shadows, especially on a bright sunny day. However, we did manage a few photos. The OC Transpo Rural operators seen included Allegiance Transportaton, with a cutaway that is used on OC Rural route 542 to Kemptville. A few charter buses, including a Great Canadian J4500 went by during the time we were there. Jesse's also made numerous photo passbys with # 8776 during our time there.



After Place du Portage, it was back to the hotel for the BHA annual meeting. After the meeting, slides and digital photos were presented by several individuals showcasing the Ottawa and Gaitneau operators that we were seeing during the course of the convention.

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## DAY TWO – Friday, June 7<sup>th</sup>

The Friday of the Bus History Association was planned as a long day. Our charter coach for the day was a Prevost H3-45 (# 3953) from Leduc Bus Lines and we would travel over 500 kilometres for the day to Cornwall, Brockville and Kingston.



Our first stop would be at the Leduc Bus Lines garage in Rockland, ON. In addition to their charter coach fleet, Leduc also operates Clarence-Rockland Transpo (known as CRT), under contract to the City. Leduc operates three suburban LFS buses, along with Prevost X3-45 and LeMirage XL-II buses for the service. Their charter coach fleet consists of Prevost H3-45 buses, along with ABC bus cutaways. Leduc also has a sister company Classic Alliance Motorcoach of Carleton Place, ON. Most of the Classic equipment is ex-Autobus Galland and is used on some of the OC Transpo Rural routes.

At the Leduc garage, we met the co-owner Ghislain Leduc who mentioned that the city of Clarence-Rockland is stopping the funding of CRT effective August 31st. Leduc still plans on operating the service privately under their own name, and not CRT. It will be interesting to see if it is successful. Ghislain mentioned that the Nova buses will be retired and only Prevost buses will be used on the line run. All BHA members were impressed by the Leduc operation and I hope the line run service works out for them when the funding is withdrawn.

After Leduc, we headed to Cornwall. We stopped at the main transfer point at Second and Pitt, along with the Cornwall garage. Mario Seneviratne has done numerous fan trips on Cornwall buses over the years and has a very good relationship with them. Mario did all the planning for the Cornwall stops and the BHA was welcomed warmly. At the garage, two of the ex-Mississauga Orion VI buses were pulled outside and posed in the sun. The three Orion VI buses still active are expected to be retired by the end of the year. This is a model of bus that is very rare these days with only Sault Sainte Marie and possibly Timmins still operating active units. Cornwall is getting more Nova LFS buses which are expected later this year.



From Cornwall, a quick stop was made at Brockville. The Superstore transfer point is where the cutaways meet once every hour. Brockville Transit was running behind schedule on that day, so we ended up waiting a little longer than planned. The cutaways are Girardin but in talking with the Transit Manager, low floor cutaways are being considered for the next order.



After Brockville, we headed west to Kingston where we stopped downtown and at Cataraqui Mall. The two stops enabled BHA members to ride regular transit between the two which several people took advantage of. Kingston Transit is a success story in recent years and transit systems across the country are trying to duplicate their success. Kingston implemented two express routes in 2013 and they have been so successful that there are now four routes with one of them operating every 7 1/2 minutes during the university school year at Queen's University. Ridership



has increased 73% since 2011 and increased an impressive 18% in the year 2017 alone. The express buses are branded in a very attractive paint scheme with a large X on the side of the bus. Kingston's current fleet consists of New Flyer D40LF and D40LFR along with NovaBus LFS units. The fleet size is 75, a very impressive size for a city the size of Kingston (approximately 135,000). BHA members were really impressed with Kingston Transit and this was a very enjoyable stop.

After Kingston, we returned to Ottawa and arrived at the hotel around 7:30 PM. Most BHA members had

supper at the hotel and prepared for another long day on Saturday.

## DAY THREE – Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup>

The final day of the BHA convention was spent touring Ottawa. Our charter bus for the day was OC Transpo # 8106, an Enviro 500 double-deck bus. Michael Wright, an OC Transpo driver and transit fan, volunteered to drive our charter which allowed the BHA to get a very reasonable charter rate for the bus. Michael had organized a few of his own OC Transpo charters in the past so it was a pleasure to get him as our driver for the day. By the way, if you are wondering if this was the first time that the BHA chartered a double-deck bus, it was not. In 1992, the convention was in Brampton, ON and the BHA chartered Brampton Transit # 8500 for a tour of western greater Toronto area transit properties. Jesse's Classic # 8776 would also join us for the tour on Saturday.



Our first stop of the day was at the OC Transpo Merivale garage. Our purpose for visiting this garage was to view the restoration progress of Ottawa streetcar # 696. The original Ottawa car, built in 1917 by the Ottawa Car Company, has been undergoing restoration for several years by a non-profit group. They hoped to have the car ready by the 150th anniversary of Canada in 2017 but it was not too be. As you can see though, the group is making progress and their target for completion is mid-2020. Car # 696 was acquired from the Canadian Rail Museum in Delsun, QC in 1989. They also have car 905, but it is body only. The future of car # 696 is not known. Apparently, the group has received an offer to make it a static display at the Byward Market, but they are hopeful of actually running it someday. Now that Ottawa is close to having their own light rail, you never know. The non-profit group was loaned a portion of the OC Transpo Merivale garage for their work.



Our next stop would be at the OC Transpo Walkley Yard, the yard for the Trillium light DMU cars. We had

hoped to get into the new facility for the Confederation Line but with preparations underway for an opening sometime in the fall, OC Transpo did not want groups walking through the facility. At the Walkley yard, we did see some of the Alstom Coradia LINT cars, like C6, that are used on the Trillium O Train line. The original cars (Bombardier Talent) used on the line are still at the yard, but as you can see in the photo of car C1, the red paint has faded a little. The cars can be yours for \$1 although I am sure transporting and storage would be a bit of an issue.

After the Walkley Yard, we headed to the main OC Transpo St. Laurent garage. This garage has expanded over the years and now occupies two main large buildings along with a huge outside storage lot. Also, just down the road is the Industrial garage, the newest garage of OC. With the garages being so large, and OC concerned with our safety, we were given a tour of both facilities aboard a D60LFR articulated bus (the double-decker would have had a few height issues). Our group was split into two groups with the other half getting a tour of the simulator facility. OC has simulators for both the Trillium and Confederation line along with their fleet of buses. Some BHA members got to try the simulators but our group was too large for everybody to be accommodated.



From the OC St. Laurent garage, we headed to St. Laurent Mall for lunch. We were able to park our 2 buses at the Transitway station that is adjacent to the mall which allowed some side by side photos of service buses, including one of the new Nova LFS buses. After lunch we headed to the Bayview O train station by way of the Parliament Buildings. Just east of Bayview is the OC Champagne layup. This location is heavily used by buses laying over on the transitway during weekdays, but on weekdays there was not that much action there. Our primary reason for stopping here was to get photos of the Confederation Line trains testing. They were

simulating regular service, so a train went by every 5 minutes or so in both directions. We posed our two buses so we could get a side by side shot with the new trains. The light rail cars are Alstom Citadis Spirit cars and 34 have been ordered for the line. As for the line, a fall opening is expected but no date has been set yet. If it opens in the fall, it will be 1.5 years behind schedule as the original opening date when the construction started was spring 2018.

From the Champagne layup, we walked to Bayview station to board one of the Trillium line cars for a ride to Greensboro. At Greensboro, our buses met us there and we boarded to ride the south transitway to Hurdman station. There has always been a lot of activity at Hurdman station and it also allowed us to see more of the light rail cars being tested. After a brief time at Hurdman we headed back to the hotel stopping for a quick group photo along the way at Billings Bridge with the double-decker and the GMC Classic in the background.

It was a very good convention and the assistance of Bernie Drouillard, Michael Wright, Mario Seneviratne, Jesse Goulah and Pat Scrimgeour is appreciated in setting up the convention. All of the properties that were visited welcomed the BHA and their courtesousness was appreciated.

BHA 2020 will be in Iowa, tentatively set for Thursday, June 11th to Saturday, June 13th. No host city has been chosen at this point and it may end up being in more than one city.

The Bus History Association will be doing a survey of the members later in 2019 to determine convention locations for the years 2021-2025.



## **BHA GROUP PHOTO AT BILLINGS BRIDGE STATION ON THE TRANSITWAY**

