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Going Places Network announces major boost to
The PI Loop with gift of new bus, state-of-the-art technology
and community challenge match

PRESQUE ISLE – Community members will have a brand new metro bus to ride on with state of the art technology to track its location and connect to the outside world while on board when The PI Loop fixed bus route launches in the Star City this October. A generous gift of more than $270,000 from Presque Isle native and philanthropist Mary Smith also includes a $50,000 challenge match to the Rotary and Kiwanis Club selected 2019 community project to raise funds for installation of bus shelters.

“The Going Places Network has been planning to address transportation needs in Presque Isle for about a year. Thanks to Mrs. Smith’s generous gift, The PI Loop will now contain state of the art technology, a metro bus that will allow for a comfortable experience for all riders, and a fixed loop service that will be rolling through the City before the snow falls,” said Jamie Chandler of ACAP, who along with LeRae Kinney of MSAD 1, co-chair the Going Places Network.

The Network is a collaborative group of multiple community representatives seeking solutions to challenges the community of Presque Isle faces. The network selected transportation as the priority of their initial work and set a goal to develop and implement a fixed-route bus system in the City of Presque Isle called The PI Loop. The service will be operated, beginning mid-October, by Aroostook Regional Transportation System (ARTS).

The new bus, which arrived this week in Presque Isle, was purchased with a donor directed gift by Mary Smith. It is a 36-seat metro style passenger bus with perimeter seating on the inside. It features a wheelchair ramp, making it accessible to individuals with mobility disabilities.

In the coming weeks, a specially designed wrap will be added to the outside of the bus that will include The PI Loop logo. The logo design was created by Fort Kent graphic designer Heidi Carter. In addition to that element, the wrap will feature other images that will make it stand out and look unique on the outside. Additionally, rolling billboards featuring ads of the three largest sponsors will be featured on the exterior, while advertisers will have the opportunity to purchase space in the interior.
“Collaboration has been key in pulling this project together. Each and every meeting concludes with action steps to be taken to keep us all moving forward. We have the right people at the table at the right time, including Mary Smith, to make this happen. This is an exciting time for our community,” said Kinney.

Smith has also provided the funding to create a specially-designed mobile phone app and website that will allow community members to pay for The PI Loop fares electronically, to track the bus and see its location in real time using GPS technology, and receive any alerts. A County-based firm, Sweden Street of Caribou has been contracted to do the work and is well underway on building the technology to support Presque Isle’s new public transportation initiative. Part of the gift is also directed to equipping the new bus with Wi-Fi so that riders can be connected at all times.

“There is a very special group of residents of Presque Isle who have gone above and beyond what is reasonable to get to this moment. Their work is not done. It will continue until the bus service is running smoothly. I have great admiration for them all and I ask that all citizens of Presque Isle support The PI Loop by using it and offering constructive feedback and suggestions so that it can become all that it is meant to be, a transportation system that will serve everyone,” said Smith.

The final portion of Smith’s gift to support the work of the Going Places Network is set aside as a $50,000 match grant for efforts by the Presque Isle Rotary and Presque Isle Kiwanis Club to raise funds to support the work of the Going Places Network to get The PI Loop off the ground.

The two community service organizations have chosen to support building bus shelters for the PI Loop as their joint 2019 Community Project. The shelters, which will be installed in 2020, will shield people waiting for the bus from the elements and serve as an income source with advertising options available on the walls. The advertising, in turn, will add to the long-term sustainability of The PI Loop bus route.

Collaborators in the Going Places Network include Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP), MSAD #1, Northern Light Health, Public Health Nursing, Aroostook Council for Healthy Families, United Way of Aroostook, Aroostook Regional Transportation System (ARTS), Northern Maine Community College, Katahdin Trust Company, Presque Isle Housing Authority, City of Presque Isle, Aroostook Area Agency on Aging, Aroostook Band of Micmacs, and parents/grandparents/guardians of children under the age of 5.

The Going Places Network is planning a press conference in September to provide information answering several frequently asked questions about the new service since it was publicly announced earlier this summer. Among the details to be shared will be the initial route – including bus stop locations, the bus fare rates and ticketing options, hours of operation, major sponsors and other key details under final review in the coming weeks.

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