



Like everyone, the employees and management of CTC have lived through an extraordinary year. This required many tough decisions, some of them with considerable impact on this community. Decisions were made as CTC was rapidly running out of cash and our continued operation became uncertain. The steps we took resulted in a company that came through the pandemic financially healthy and ready and able to serve Chebeague.

This was the result of a great management team, dedicated employees (on land and sea), and a community that weathered the restrictions imposed by COVID—not always happily—but with the understanding that this island’s existence depends on a viable transportation company.

Recognizing that our passengers have questions about the past year, we’ve prepared a short list of Frequently Asked Questions, hoping that we can address some of these issues. We welcome your interest and responses.

Q: Why did CTC make cuts in its schedule for much of the year, eliminating evening ferries?

A: With no after-school activities and many islanders working from home, ridership in the evenings plummeted. The ability to operate with a single crew, working a 12-hour shift, saved us \$8,000 a month at a time when revenues were sharply down. In addition, the reduced schedule limited COVID exposures of our staff. We had no “extras” to fill in if a crew member got sick or was forced to quarantine. We recognized the needs of our commuting passengers who required evening transportation, so we contracted for on-call water taxi service. CTC absorbed almost all of the per-trip cost.

Q: Why is CTC cancelling trips based on low tides? Is that necessary? That never used to be a problem.

A: The channel to and from the Stone Wharf has not been dredged in 20 years. In recent years, sediments have significantly built up within the channel. At times the ferry is running with less than a foot of clearance. The town is pursuing a dredging project with the Army Corps of Engineers, which we are actively supporting. Our captains, with the full support of the CTC board and management, have collectively determined that it is an unsafe risk to our passengers, crew and our ferries to operate during extremely low tides.

Q: Speaking of rescues, CTC has always provided rescue transport 24/7. Given cancellations during extreme low tides, what will CTC do?

A: CTC can run trips safely 99.5 percent of the time; extreme low tides occur less than one percent of our year-round/24-hour availability. Should a rescue occur during that one half percent of the time, the town has an excellent Memo of Understanding with Long

Island that provides rescue coverage whenever CTC boats are out of service. In addition, the town has several alternative backup arrangements if Long Island rescue is unavailable. We are in constant communication with the fire/rescue squad about any change in our operating status.

Q: Why has CTC discontinued its policy of assisting passengers on and off the boat at lower tides? What has been the impact and feedback from the community?

A: This was a hard decision that we made that impacted some in the community. We made this decision out of concern about the risk of injury to our crew and safety of those we transport. While it is an inconvenience for a handful of travelers, by posting advance notice of when assistance is not available, we have largely reduced the impact on travel. Lengthening the ramps at the Stone Wharf and Cousins Island is just one option being considered by the town to facilitate unrestricted travel for everyone.

Q: If CTC is so worried about solvency, why not extend the barging season to capture more revenue?

A: Barging revenue accounts for less than 10 percent of our gross revenue during a normal year with the majority of our barge income coming in May through October. Like our passenger ferry operations, barging revenues plummet after Columbus Day weekend. Additionally, our barging schedule is limited by a Court Order and by an agreement with the Town of Yarmouth that dates back many years, both in the number of trips we can make and the hours of service. While we would greatly like to increase our barging, especially during the busy summer season, that would require renegotiating the agreement with Yarmouth which does not appear likely to succeed, and opening the Court Order up for amendment. In 2021 we began barging at our usual start date despite the pandemic (and the need for repairs we were unable to complete in 2020). In 2020 the barge became a popular means of travel to the island by summer residents who were able to arrive safely and quarantine here.

Q: What's with the new ticketing policies? Why the change?

A: The new policies were initiated because of COVID restrictions to reduce the risk of person-to-person exposure. On busy travel days, onboard ticket collection could delay arrivals by up to 45 minutes and was a nightmare for our deckhands. Loss of revenue was also significant. We continue to work on improving ticketing (both for parking and ferry travel) and hope to have a new electronic system in operation later this year.

Q: What's with the new monthly commuter pass?

A: The new pass offers a new benefit of unlimited monthly travel at pre-pandemic pricing. It is available to island residents who commute weekly, as the pass was originally intended. It also facilitates travel for our commuting passengers and is simpler to administer.

Q: The Blanchard lot is crowded. Can't you create more parking spaces?

A: Capacity at the Blanchard lot is set by an agreement with the Town of Yarmouth and a Court Order. Demand for year-round parking space in that lot far exceeds the 165-car limit. With fewer daily commuters leaving the lot in the morning, there is a real space crunch. To ensure that our year-round permit holders can park in the lot, we have sharply

reduced the number of day parking permits, increased enforcement, will tow illegally parked cars, and allow temporary parking in normally off-limit areas temporarily when the lot is at capacity.

Q: Can CTC do a better job of communication? Your text/email alerts and schedule postings are very useful, but the website itself is difficult to navigate.

A: A redesign of the CTC web page is coming. We agree the current site is not as user friendly and up-to-date as it could be. The redesign was postponed during COVID to save money, but it's on our to-do list.

Q: CTC seems to have a lot of money in the bank. What do you plan to do with it?

A: As COVID taught us all, the financial solvency of a business—especially a business that involves multiple inspected and uninspected vessels, parking lots and busses—can turn on a dime. Over the past decade, the CTC board and managers have worked hard to build a financially strong company, one that can weather a pandemic (2020) or an economic meltdown (2008). Large cash reserves are fiscally wise because unplanned expenses (for example, a new boat engine, need for a replacement bus) can occur unexpectedly and repair/replacement costs can quickly escalate to hundreds of thousands of dollars. With CTC once again returning to solid financial footing, the board will be actively reviewing our cash position and will evaluate paying down debt at a rate that also protects the company in the event of an emergency. We also anticipate rising expense costs associated with inflation and the labor market. A sufficient cash reserve allows us to moderate fare increases as much as possible.