

Public Transit Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes of January 24, 2023 (DRAFT)

Decisions and commitments in ***bold italic*** type.

Members in attendance: Ryan Neale (PTAC Chair, MaineDOT), Larry Allen, Clyde Barr, Sandy Buchanan, Stephanie Carver, Andrew Clark, Tim Cowan, Katherine Freund, Will Gayle, Rebecca Grover, Chris Hall, Maddie Jensen, Greg Jordan, David Landry, Jessica Maurer, Duane Scott, Paul Towle.

Others in attendance: Lori Brann (PTAC Clerk, MaineDOT), Jennifer Grant (MaineDOT), Ken Murchison (City of Caribou), Jim Wood (KVCAP), Lisa Feldman (Orono), Ken Capron (MicroRail).

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 and was recorded. Meeting minutes, presentations, and recordings will be available here: <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/transit/ptac/>

Welcome and Introductions. Ryan Neale introduced MaineDOT staff. Jenn Grant welcomed PTAC members and guests and thanked everyone for attending. She also expressed the Commissioner's regrets for not being able to attend.

Approve August 2022 Minutes. *There were no comments on the minutes as presented. Jess M. motioned to approve, seconded by Steph C. The minutes received unanimous approval.*

Overview and Discussion of Draft Maine State Transit Plan: Ryan gave a PowerPoint presentation of the Maine State Transit Plan, which is one piece of a larger family of plans. Information about the draft plan and other modal plans is found here:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/27763afe326645c285cb1d726ee68cae>

Ryan said that response has been positive, and many comments have been received. PTAC members are encouraged to go online to enter their comments though January 30th.

Questions/Comments:

Jess Maurer asked in the recommendation to "Increase transit service as warranted", what "as warranted" means. Ryan noted the approaches that may be involved and noted the needs assessment established a framework to evaluate needs locally and regionally and determine solutions.

Steph Carver suggested providing more detail in the narrative about the process for implementation in terms of working with regional planning organizations and other stakeholders.

Larry asked about detailed information on specific regions. Ryan noted that the needs assessment will be provided as an appendix and will include more in-depth information and detail per region.

Steph comment that a connection seems to be missing to other regional transit planning efforts and that including links to these efforts could be helpful. Ryan agreed that this would probably be helpful.

Jess commented that the plan is missing a connection to issues and efforts such as housing, economic development, etc. Ryan said MaineDOT would look into addressing this in the Transit Plan and/or the Long-Range Transportation Plan. Sandy commented that transit providers are often excluded from the discussion on development issues until it is too late for better transportation planning to occur.

MaineDOT Updates: (Ryan)

Transit Bus Electrification: MaineDOT's consultant, Hatch LTK, has developed plans for eight agencies under the project budget, so MaineDOT is looking for volunteers from other rural agencies to explore transition plans for rural fleets. Implementation will take time as considerations include the grid, asset management, etc. MaineDOT's internal transit is exploring joint procurement opportunities to increase buying power for infrastructure.

Transit Technology Initiatives: MaineDOT is working with Carol Schweiger to map services in GIS format and automated fare payment. CAD/AVL has also been added to the project scope. MaineDOT is finalizing the contract and the hope is for outreach to begin in a couple of weeks to transit agencies. The intent is not to find one single solution, as there are different needs and circumstances, but to ensure technology is integrated to maximize benefit for riders and agencies.

Workforce Transportation Pilot: The first award was made in November to Sunday River. There are 4-5 other proposals in the review stage, working through final details, with other proposals in varying review status. MaineDOT hopes to award a couple more contracts shortly. The goal is to support connecting workers to job opportunities or training for better job opportunities.

Biennial Report: This report is due every two years to the Legislature by March 1. Ryan will use the same template from prior years as a starting point for this year's report. The last report was based on the previous transit plan; this new report will use data from the current, draft, transit plan. If anyone wants to see prior years' reports, they are on the PTAC website. MaineDOT will share the draft report with the PTAC prior to finalizing.

Roundtable discussion: Tim Cowan noted the timing of the Transit Plan is helpful as it aligns with the Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment, which is a requirement for not-for-profit hospitals. That process looks at health data and community input and identifies priorities to social determinants of wellness. There is a great opportunity to link with transportation.

Public Comment: Ken Murchison noted that passenger rail is in the news frequently. Ryan noted there is more detail in the active transportation plan and rail plan, available at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/27763afe326645c285cb1d726ee68cae>.

Adjourn: Ryan will email the draft biennial report for comment. Jenn announced a public meeting scheduled for tomorrow night (1/25) for passenger and commuter rail service between Portland and Auburn. Thursday (1/26) will be the public meeting on the draft rail plan. MaineDOT encourages everyone to attend if interested.

Adjourn at 2:45 pm.