

Maine State Ferry Service Annual Operating Expenses Assistance

Summary of Articles and Publications Regarding Service Reliability Challenges

Several articles published in the Spring and Summer months of 2022 highlighted the increased number of MaineDOT ferry service cancellations and discussed potential reasons for the disruptions. According to the Department of Transportation, MSFS had cancelled 59 trips between May 1st and August 1st of 2022, about 1.3% of its total scheduled trips¹. Commissioner Bruce Van Note explains that the Ferry Service may be forced to continue temporary schedule changes, reassign ferries, or close upper decks on ferries to ensure continued service to all islands².

The articles incorporated interviews with MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note as well as MaineDOT spokesman Paul Merrill, who point to a combination of workforce shortages and impacts of COVID-19 as causes of recent service disruptions. Ferries are unable to run if they do not have enough crew members to meet minimum safety requirements from the U.S. Coast Guard, which is difficult to ensure given challenges related to hiring and retention. The existing staff pool is strained as it is, and with the seasonal service increase coupled with Summer staffing lulls, finding crew to operate the vessels has proven difficult.

Attracting and retaining mariners has proven difficult, largely due to the relatively low pay for seamen. Able-bodied seamen earn \$22.78 per hour at the top of the scale, whereas ordinary seamen make \$17.54. AB Training is available but is relatively costly and time-consuming. The Department instituted \$2,000 recruitment and retention bonuses this year but are still struggling to find enough qualified seamen to meet the need³.

MaineDOT's workforce challenges are on-par with industry-wide trends, as one article discussed similar difficulties for Casco Bay Lines.

¹ *Staffing shortages force service reductions at Casco Bay Lines, Maine State Ferry Service* (August 10, 2022), [Staffing shortages force service reductions at Casco Bay Lines, Maine State Ferry Service - Portland Press Herald](#)

² *Staffing shortages, COVID-19 force changes to Maine State Ferry Service* (May 10, 2022), [Staffing shortages, COVID-19 force changes to Maine State Ferry Service \(msn.com\)](#)

³ *Staffing shortages force cancellations of Maine ferry services* (July 27, 2022) [Staffing shortages force cancellations of Maine ferries | newscentermaine.com](#)