

**Public Transit Advisory Council
Meeting Agenda
Wednesday, December 11th, 2024
9:00am – 11:00am
Location: Zoom**

<https://mainestate.zoom.us/j/83262632115>

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Agenda Item	Responsibility	Action or Information
1.) Call to Order (9:00)	Chad Heid, Chair	Action
2.) Ascertain Quorum (9:00-9:05)	Chad Heid, Chair	Action
3.) Approval of Previous Minutes (9:05-9:10) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2024 	Chad Heid, Chair	Action
4.) Updates from the Chair (9:10-9:15) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departures / vacancies • January / remaining meetings • PTAC member survey plan • Equity Committee 	Chad Heid	Information
5.) Maine State Ferry Service Presentation (9:15-9:35)	Bill Geary, MSFS	Information
6.) State of Transit Committee Update (9:35-9:45)	Chad Heid	Information
7.) Research & Policy Committee Update (9:45-9:55)	Josh Caldwell	Information
8.) Mobility Alternatives Update (9:55-10:05)	Katherine Freund	Information
9.) Go Maine Presentation (10:05-10:25)	Go Maine Staff: Emily Becker, Luke Van Denend	Information
10.) Scheduling Additional Meetings (10:25-10:35) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal: January 8th, 930a and February 19th 		Action
11.) Discussion Items (10:35-10:45) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open floor • Next meetings • Committee engagement 	Chad Heid, Chair	Information

12.) Public Comment (10:45-10:55)	Chad Heid, Chair	Information
13.) New Business (10:55-11:00)	Chad Heid, Chair	Information
14.) Adjournment (11:00)	Chad Heid, Chair	Action

Public Transit Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes of October 9, 2024 – Held via Zoom

PTAC Members in attendance: Omolola Achuba, Larry Allen, Kirk Bellavance, Marsha Bennett (for Sandy Buchanan), Josh Caldwell (vice chair), Stephanie Carver, Andrew Clark, Cole Cochrane, Tim Cowan, Representative Lydia Crafts, Catherine Davidson, Amanda Dioszeghy, Eamonn Dundon, Rebecca Grover, Chris Hall, Michael Hallundbaek, Cheryl Harkins, Chad Heid (chair), Maddie Jensen, Jay Kamm, Jessica Maurer, Ryan Neale, Megan Salvin (for Kim Moody), Duane Scott, Mike Tremblay.

Others in attendance: Jennifer Grant, Lori Brann, William Gayle from MaineDOT; Steve Richard, Zoe Miller, Kate Reilly, William Ferdinand, Matt Cannon.

(Note: Chats made during this meeting are found at the end of these minutes.)

- 1. Call to Order.** Josh Caldwell called the meeting to order at 9:35 am. Josh noted that Chad Heid will be joining later.
- 2. Ascertain Quorum.** It was determined that the quorum requirements were met.
- 3. Approval of August 2024 Minutes.** Stephanie Carver moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Jess Maurer. ***The minutes were unanimously approved.***
- 4. Committee Updates.** Josh noted that committees have been meeting in recent months. The goal is to share recommendations and findings with MaineDOT by the end of October.

Equity Committee: Ryan Neale read an email from Jonathan LaBonte to the group. The Equity Committee will discuss takeaways the Moving Maine Network's public engagement efforts and determine if the U.S. Department of Transportation's equity metrics apply to transit and other transportation modes in Maine.

Mobility Alternatives: Jess Mauer shared that Zoe Miller of the Moving Maine Network will share questions on funding opportunities with the Steering Committee and is working on recommendations for volunteer transportation programs in Maine.

(Chad joined the meeting at 9:40 and assumed Chair duties.)

State of Transit Committee: Chad reported that the committee is coordinating the regional presentations to the PTAC. A request was sent to transit operators last week on funding needs for capital projects over the next five years, operating expenses for maintaining and/or expanding service, and sources of revenue. This information will help the Council identify statewide funding needs. The committee is continuing to compile data from transit providers to assess current conditions for transit.

Steering Committee: Josh and Chad are developing a portal for PTAC members to add suggestions and priorities to include in the biannual report.

Research and Policy Committee: Josh reported that this committee is meeting bi-weekly. The committee is reviewing previous PTAC reports, the Blue Ribbon Commission on transit funding

report, and practices from peer states to develop recommendations around key themes, including: a dedicated source of funding for transit, increased state funding for operations, reducing local match and barriers to additional federal funding, ensuring transparency in the allocation of transit funds, a concrete plan to support volunteer drivers and networks, and expansion of the workforce transportation pilot program. Josh stated that transit operators have a good understanding of the needs in their areas and need to be appropriately resourced to provide the necessary service.

Ryan Neale mentioned that any PTAC members having issues accessing the SharePoint site can get in touch with him.

Stephanie Carver noted that York County Community Action Corporation (YCCAC) should be part of the volunteer network discussion. Jess responded that YCCAC is part of the discussion. She noted the importance of distinguishing between types of volunteer driver programs. Some are fully volunteer with no reimbursement for drivers, and some are linked to transit providers with volunteers reimbursed for mileage and/or some training. We need to understand what the needs are. Stand-alone programs are important to fill transportation gaps and transit providers should be able to make referrals to stand-alone programs. Jess referenced the 2018 volunteer network technical assistance request for proposals which did not move forward. The Maine Council on Aging is providing some support to volunteer networks. Mapping the current network could be an important step. Josh noted that a previous PTAC report had recommended a two-year technical assistance program and mentioned this idea might be included in the 2025 biannual report. The 2018 RFP would be a starting point for a future effort.

5. Regional State of Transit Presentations (see attached Power Point presentations).

Region 1. Jay Kamm provided an overview of the Aroostook Regional Transportation System. ARTS is the only transportation provider in the region and provides a wider range of services than in the past. ARTS serves every community in the region at least one day per week, and two days in most cases. The recent turnover in executive directors has been problematic but ARTS is pleased to have its new executive director on board. Some local contracts do not cover the cost of providing service to clients. Fare revenue is increasing. ARTS is looking to diversify its funding sources to reduce reliance on federal and state funds. Workforce transportation is an opportunity, but large employers are generally not located in service centers. ARTS is looking at opportunities to better coordinate with health care providers on client and patient trips. Tribal centers are in service centers, but dispersed housing creates challenges for transportation. ARTS is working to reduce the stigma associated with using the service and improve understanding of what ARTS is and offers today.

ARTS is struggling to find drivers and needs to reevaluate its pay scale. The Hatch report found that 3-4 times as many electric vehicles would be needed due to ARTS' long routes. ARTS has gone from 10 volunteer drivers to 0; volunteers were not being reimbursed for long trips and many volunteer drivers were aging and could no longer perform this function. ARTS is not reimbursed for no show trips. ARTS is looking at fare discrepancies as fares may be the same for both long and short trips.

Cole Cochrane asked about fare increases and coordination with other providers. Jay responded that ARTS has not increased fares over the last five years. Jay noted that ARTS works with the one taxi company in the region, but this company is shifting its focus to other regions. ARTS works with Cyr Bus Lines when possible.

In response to a question, Jay noted that ARTS has both full- and part-time drivers.

In response to a question, Jay noted that the Hatch study found that 3-4 times more electric vehicles would be needed to provide the same services due to ARTS' long routes. Ryan noted that Hatch's studies suggested hybrid vehicles as an option in some circumstances. Jay said ARTS is interested in hybrid vehicles, but electric vehicles are not in the conversation currently.

Kirk Bellavance asked how changes in the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation program have affected ARTS. Jay said that the relationship with the NEMT program has improved, and revenues have increased. ARTS had not been used much by this program previously.

Region 5. Michael Hallundbaek presented on Waldo Community Action Partners services. Michael thanked MaineDOT for assistance after a fire destroyed their facility last fall. WCAP was able to continue operations and is currently at an interim facility in Belfast while building a new transit facility. WCAP partners with DHHS and MaineDOT. The separate MidCoast Connector began providing NEMT service in 2014. MidCoast Connector and MidCoast Public Transportation merged in 2018.

Michael discussed the many services and programs offered by WCAP and the different funding sources. The goal is to have a central location for administration and coordination. Total trips are now approaching pre-pandemic levels. WCAP has in the past provided charter services but currently only provides charter services for one event. Most services are curb-to-curb. WCAP provides flex routes and coordinated demand-response service over a wide area and coordinates where possible with many adjacent transportation providers.

WCAP's fleet management is based on MaineDOT and FTA practices. WCAP has seen a decline in the number of volunteer drivers. A commercial network of approximately 120 drivers does primarily MaineCare transportation.

WCAP tries to coordinate to maximize the number of passengers per vehicle. The NEMT brokerage services provide much of the passenger funding. WCAP staff will guide travelers to the most appropriate program and braids funding together for services.

Michael reviewed some of the routes and services that are included in his presentation. WCAP is working on a connection between Thomaston and Belfast and is running test routes for other connections in the region. WCAP is everywhere in the region nearly every day and is looking to increase the number of flex routes offered.

MidCoast Public Transportation is essentially a network within a network. Trips are rebounding after the pandemic declines.

Challenges for WCAP include the loss of the facility, the potential loss of the coordinated partnership through MaineCare, increasing transit-oriented planning, focusing more on equal access to life and economic opportunities rather than social services, driver recruitment and

lack of statewide driver training certifications, and improving coordination and partnership between operators. WCAP is opposing the decision to have ModivCare take over MaineCare operations in the region by December 31, 2024. Michael mentioned the possibility of a unified training and certification effort.

Opportunities include updated scheduling software, General Transit Feed Specification software, the Thriving Communities effort, increased engagement with workforce transit, a reconvening of a county-focused advisory group to identify service opportunities, and construction of a regional transit center in Belfast.

Mike Tremblay commented on the importance of emphasizing public transit's role in providing access for a full and productive life.

Regions 5 and 7. Marsha Bennett presented for Western Maine Transportation Services. WMTS offers many types of service. WMTS began with demand-response human services transportation and provides a range of transportation services now.

Marsha discussed WMTS' services noted in her presentation. WMTS is looking to replace the old rolling stock for Bath City Bus. There is demand for additional service in Brunswick but funding is an issue. The free fare on the Brunswick Link helps improve access for new Mainers and others. Many people are riding the Blue Line to make other connections in and around Brunswick. WMTS is running into capacity issues on the Blue Line as many new Mainers were using it to connect from the Lewiston/Auburn region to Metro's Breeze in Brunswick and then to Portland. This is less of a challenge with the LAP bus now in service and providing a more direct route from Lewiston/Auburn to Portland. Ridership in the Brunswick area is up significantly from FY2023 to FY2024.

Challenges include sources of local match, aging fleet, and staffing (especially for drivers). WMTS has more requests for service than vehicles to meet the need. Consistent branding of vehicles and messaging are other challenges. Unmet needs include passenger amenities, expanded evening/weekend service, and additional technology for flex routes, automated voice announcements, automatic passenger counters, and real-time tracking for buses.

Token Transit is used for ticket purchases for all WMTS services.

WMTS actively seeks grants to support its services. WMTS' service area for Region 7 includes Androscoggin, Franklin, and northern Oxford Counties. WMTS' services in these areas include demand-response, the Worx Link workforce transportation pilot, the seasonal Sugarloaf Explorer flex-route and Sugarloaf Express services, the GreenLine commuter service and GreenLine Connection service (done by reservation only), and the Lisbon Connection service.

Priority projects include integrating the Lisbon Connection into the Blue Line, connections between Oxford Hills and Lewiston/Auburn, and evening pilots for Oxford Hills and Mount Blue.

Chad noted that funding contributions from counties had not been mentioned in any of the regional presentations. Marsha said contributions vary by county, with Androscoggin contributing more than the other counties in WMTS' service area. Chad noted that the question to transit providers on funding sources will provide insight on this topic.

Tim Cowan noted that he is getting positive feedback from Auburn residents on the Work Linx pilot and noted that the Council may want to look at this as a potential funding source.

Catherine Davidson presented on behalf of NNEPRA. Catherine is the grant program and compliance specialist for NNEPRA. NNEPRA manages the Amtrak Downeaster service between Brunswick and Boston. Trains used on the Downeaster are part of Amtrak's national fleet and are not specific to the service. Most of the Downeaster track is owned by the State of Maine while some sections are owned by other entities. The Portland Transportation Center is a public-private partnership with Concord Coach Lines. NNEPRA is adopting a revised fare structure, with the last fare adjustment having been in 2019. NNEPRA uses several funding sources to support various projects. NNEPRA has an in-house marketing director who works closely with an advertising agency. NNEPRA is continuously looking for ways to connect with new audiences and engage its existing audience. Major projects include the Wells Area Improvement Project, relocation of the Portland station, a West Falmouth station close to I-95, and potential service to Rockland.

Chad asked about Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funds and about FTA's acceptance of in-kind match for the station. Municipal contributions are compiled and shared with FTA as in-kind match for FTA 5307 CMAQ flex funds. Catherine will follow up with some information on the CMAQ question.

6. Discussion Items:

Chad emphasized that committee deliverables are expected by the end of October. The Equity committee is an exception as it is involved in a public participation process. Chad thanked Council members who have joined committees and invited others who have not joined one to do so. More committee meetings and deliverables are expected in the coming weeks.

A survey with proposed recommendations will be shared for member feedback. The survey results will be discussed at the December PTAC meeting.

The remaining regional presentations from Maine State Ferry Service, DTI, and Casco Bay Lines are expected at the Council's December meeting. Chad asked the group for suggestions on other stakeholders that should be heard from.

The next planned PTAC meeting scheduled for December 11 from 9:00 to 1:00 will include a first pass on the substance of the biennial report.

7. Public Comment. There were no public comments.

8. New Business/Meeting Feedback. There was no new business or meeting feedback.

9. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 12:44 p.m. with a motion from Kirk Bellavance.

Substantive Zoom meeting chat comments.

10:07:02 Cole Cochran: Are these drivers full time or part time?

10:27:21 Kirk Bellavance: Can you speak to how changes in the NET program by DHHS using brokers has impacted your revenues and NET services?

DRAFT