



LEWISTON-AUBURN RAIL STUDY

Preliminary Capital Investment Grant Ratings Assessment

January 2023

PREPARED BY



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



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1

INTRODUCTION

MaineDOT is currently leading the Lewiston-Auburn Rail Economic Evaluation Study, as directed by LD 991 passed by the Maine legislature reviewing the feasibility of creating passenger rail service between Lewiston-Auburn and Portland, ME.

The Lewiston-Auburn Passenger Rail Service Plan Project has included a series of reports: the *Transit Propensity Analysis Report* (August 2018), *Operating Plans and Corridor Assessments* (May 2019), and *Economic Evaluation Study* (November 2022).

This document will detail the various alignment alternatives that were considered throughout the course of the study. Next, the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) evaluation rating process will be described, followed by the results of a preliminary CIG assessment for the Lewiston-Auburn Rail alternatives.

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ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Throughout the course of previous MaineDOT’s studies for this project, a series of alignment alternatives were identified. Initiated with the *Transit Propensity Analysis Report* (August 2018) and refined within the *Operating Plans and Corridor Assessments* (May 2019), a long list of alignments was initially considered.

The alternatives analyzed as part of the studies included the following alignments, all connecting in Portland’s East End or West End:

- ▶ Alignment 1A - High-Frequency Service between Lewiston-Auburn and Portland using PAR Corridor
- ▶ Alignment 1B - High-Frequency Service between Lewiston-Auburn and Portland using SLR to Yarmouth Junction
- ▶ Alignment 2A - High-Frequency Service between Lewiston-Auburn and Portland via Back Cove Bridge using Pan Am Corridor through Royal Junction
- ▶ Alignment 2B - High-Frequency Service between Lewiston-Auburn and Portland via Back Cove Bridge using SLR Corridor
- ▶ Alignment 3A - Split Brunswick-bound Downeaster Service between Lewiston-Auburn and Brunswick using Pan Am Corridor
- ▶ Alignment 3B - Split Brunswick-bound Downeaster Service between Lewiston-Auburn

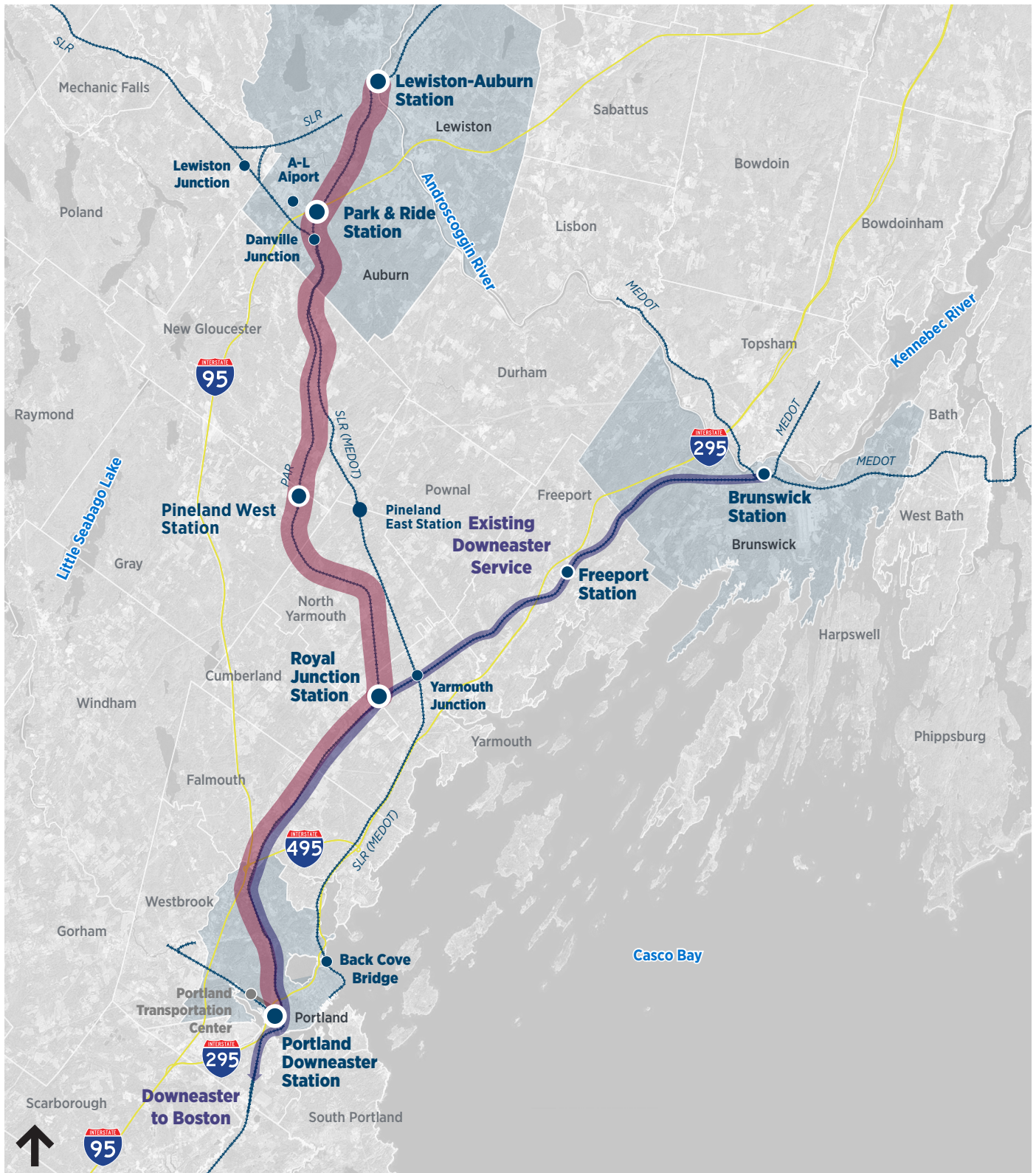
and Brunswick using SLR Corridor

- ▶ Alignment 4 - Rail Shuttle Connecting Lewiston-Auburn to Downeaster at Yarmouth Junction using SLR Corridor
- ▶ Alignment 5 - Rail Shuttle Connecting Lewiston-Auburn to Downeaster at Royal Junction using Pan Am Corridor

Starting with a long list of potential alignments, two were selected as part of LD 991 as the preferred alternatives under consideration for further analysis in the study, *Operating Plans and Corridor Assessments* (May 2019) by Maine DOT. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the two preferred alignments under consideration. Both of these alternatives selected terminate in Portland, ME:

- ▶ **Alignment 1A (West)** is the western route for the proposed rail services with the following station areas - Lewiston, Auburn (Park and Ride), and Pineland West.
- ▶ **Alignment 1B (East)** is the eastern route for the proposed rail services with the following station areas - Lewiston, Auburn (Park and Ride), Pineland East, and Yarmouth Junction.

Alignment 1A and Alignment 1B's have relatively similar track lengths. Alignment 1A is approximately 35.9 miles long and uses the PAR freight mainline. Alignment 1B is approximately 36.3 miles long and uses the PAR freight mainline before switching to the SLR line at the Yarmouth Junction. Both Alignments service similar areas and provide service daily from 5:00 AM to 10:30 PM. No specific station sites have been identified for both Alignments.



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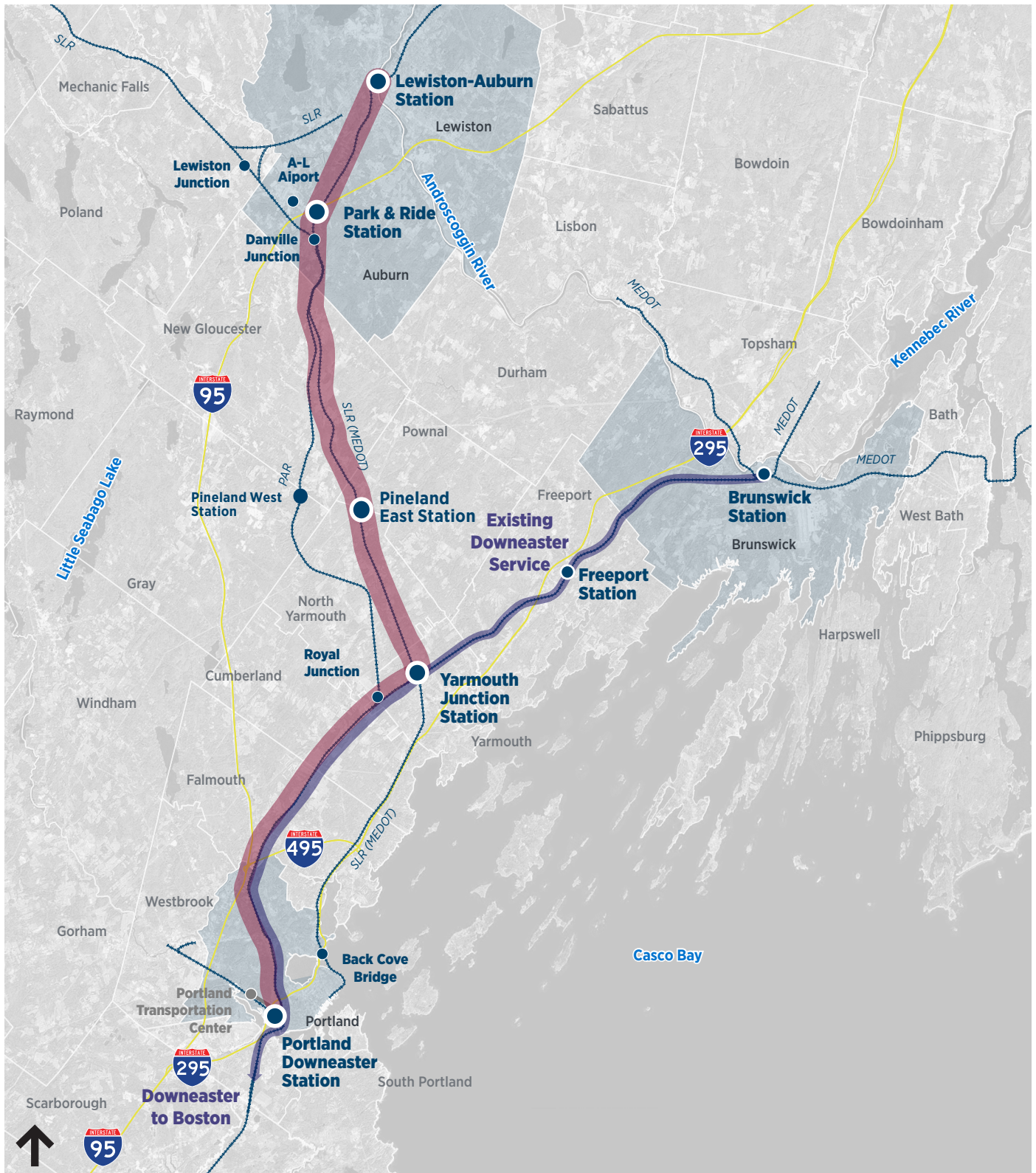


- Existing Downeaster Service
- Proposed Alignment
- Existing Downeaster Station
- Potential Stations

**LEWISTON-AUBURN
CAPITAL INVESTMENT GRANT
ASSESSMENT**

**Alignment 1A
Route Map with Potential Stations**

Source: VHB



- Existing Downeaster Service
- Proposed Alignment
- Existing Downeaster Station
- Potential Stations

**LEWISTON-AUBURN
CAPITAL INVESTMENT GRANT
ASSESSMENT**
**Alignment 1B
Route Map with Potential Stations**

Source: VHB

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CAPITAL INVESTMENT GRANT CRITERIA RATINGS PROCESS

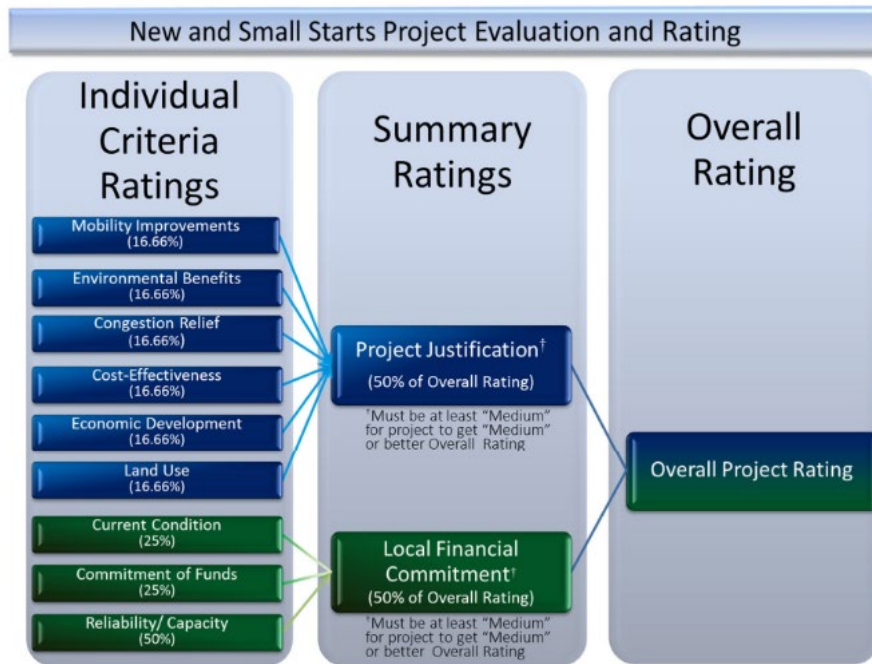
Projects undergoing CIG application will be evaluated by the FTA on a 5-point scale from low to high based on based on a combined summary of project justification criteria and local financial commitment.

The Project Justification contributes 50% toward the Overall Project Rating. Each of the six Project Justifications are given an equal weight of 16.66%. The Local Financial Commitment contributes the remaining 50% toward the Overall Project Rating. The three criteria of Local Financial Commitment are weighted at 25%, 25% and 50%.

The FTA requires a medium rating or above on both Project Justification and Local Financial Commitment to obtain an Overall Project Rating of medium or better. The chart in Figure 3¹ describes the CIG criteria rating process and how each project justification is weighted.

¹ Source of chart: Capital Investment Grants Policy Guidance, Federal Transit Administration, January 2023 [final Initial CIG Policy Guidance January 2023 \(dot.gov\)](#)

Figure 3 New and Small Starts Project Evaluation and Rating



3.1 Project Justification Criteria

There are six justification criteria - mobility improvements, environmental benefits, congestion relief, economic development effects, land-use, and cost-effectiveness - used to rate projects applying for a Capital Improvement Grant. Projects are rated and evaluated against the criteria established by the FTA. Breakpoints have been established by the FTA to help rate each justification criteria against the project. The following section details the methodology for calculating each justification criteria set forth by the FTA.

3.1.1 Mobility Improvements

The FTA evaluates mobility improvements as the total number of linked trips using proposed service, with transit dependent trips weighted double. Projects can choose to estimate total linked trips either by a local travel forecasting model or FTA’s simplified model (STOPS) which uses existing census and ridership data.² FTA’s mobility metric is computed by adding the estimated number of linked trips taken by non-dependent transit persons and the number of linked trips taken by transit dependent persons multiplied by two. The table below shows FTA’s break points for mobility metrics. Data on transit-dependent riders is not currently available for this study. This calculation weighs each rider equally.

Table 1 Mobility Improvements Breakpoints

Rating	Mobility Improvements: Estimated Annual Trips (Trips by Non-Transit Dependent Persons plus Trips by Transit Dependent Persons multiplied by 2)
High	>= 30 Million
Medium-High	15 Million – 29.9 Million
Medium	5 Million – 14.9 Million
Medium-Low	2.5 Million – 4.9 Million
Low	<2.5 Million

Lewiston Auburn’s Passenger Rail Service baseline mobility calculation for both Alignments is rated as low with an estimated 477,420 annual trips. The 2040 mobility calculation for both alignments is also rated low with 581,263 annual trips.

3.1.2 Cost Effectiveness

The cost-effectiveness metric is based on a cost per trip measure, meaning the annualized capital cost and annualized operating and maintenance (O&M) cost. This metric is an incremental measure requiring a point of comparison. Current year calculations are compared to existing transit system, 10-year horizon forecasts are compared to the no build scenario, and 20-year horizon forecasts are compared to the Metropolitan Planning Organization’s fiscally constrained long-range plan.³ This Passenger Rail Service plan will be compared to a 2040 scenario.

Cost-effectiveness is calculated by adding the annualized capital cost and annualized O&M cost and dividing that by the annual number of forecasted trips. The table below shows FTA’s breakpoints for cost-effectiveness. Annualized capital cost is calculated using FTA’s

² Refer to Chapter 6 in the 2018 Lewiston Auburn Passenger Rail Service Transit Propensity Report for information on ridership methodology. <https://www.avcog.org/DocumentCenter/View/4521/L-A-Passenger-Rail-Service-Plan-Transit-Propensity-Report-August-2018-PDF>

³ Capital cost and annualized O&M costs were calculated in 2019. A 1.116% inflation rate has been applied to each of these estimates.

Standard Cost Categories (SCC). The necessary data to compute this cost is unavailable at this time, so an annualization rate of 4.46% for capital cost was assumed.⁴

Table 2 Cost Effectiveness Breakpoints

Rating	Range
High	<\$1.00
Medium-High	Between \$1.01 and \$1.99
Medium	Between \$2.00 and \$3.99
Medium-Low	Between \$4.00 and \$5.00
Low	>\$5.00

Lewiston Auburn’s Passenger Rail Service baseline and 2040 cost effectiveness metric for both alignments are rated as low. Alignment 1A baseline cost effectiveness was estimated to be \$78.30 and the 2040 estimate is \$64.31. Alignment 1B baseline cost effectiveness was estimated to be \$83.14 and the 2040 estimate is \$68.28.

It is important to note that these ranges consider all transit modes: heavy rail, light rail, BRT, commuter rail, some of which are generally more cost effective than commuter rail, due to the high capital costs of this mode.

3.1.3 Congestion Relief

The congestion relief metric is based on the number of new weekday linked trips resulting from the implementation of the project. This metric is calculated by comparing total weekday linked transit trips for the no-build alternative with the total weekday linked transit trips.

Table 3 Congestion Relief Breakpoints

Rating	New Weekday Linked Transit Trips
High	18,000 and above
Medium-High	10,000 to 17,999
Medium	2,500 to 9,999
Medium-Low	500 to 2,499
Low	0 to 499

Daily transit trips for baseline Alignment 1A and 1B is estimated to be 1,300, with an estimated 6,500 weekday linked transit trips. Daily transit trips for Alignment 1A and 1B in 2040 is estimated to be 1,300, with an estimated 8,000 weekday linked transit trips. The No Build for the Project would induce 0 weekday transit trips. **Lewiston Auburn’s**

⁴ A 4.46% annualization rate is the average annualization rate from the FTA’s Standard Cost Categories (SCC).

Passenger Rail Service baseline and 2040 congestion relief metric for both alignments would be rated as medium.

3.1.4 Environmental Benefits

The environmental benefits metric is based upon a dollar value of anticipated direct and indirect benefits to human health, safety, energy, and air quality. This dollar value is then compared to the same annualized capital and O&M costs found in the cost-effectiveness metric. Benefits are computed based on the change in vehicle miles travelled (VMT). Each subfactor (human health, safety, energy, and air quality) converts the VMT back to its native unit to compute a dollar value for each benefit. The conversion is done by using national-level standards provided by the FTA⁵. The table below shows the FTA’s breakpoints for environmental benefits.

Table 4 Environmental Benefits Breakpoints

Rating	Range
High	>10%
Medium-High	5 to 10%
Medium	0 to 5%
Low-Medium	0 to -10%
Low	< -10%

Alignment 1A baseline percentage was calculated at -17% and 2040 percentage at -21%. **Alignment 1A is rated as low** for both baseline and horizon. Alignment 1B baseline percentage was calculated to be -15% and 2040 percentage to be -18%. **Alignment 1B is rated as low** for baseline and horizon calculations.

3.1.5 Land Use

The land use metric is a quantitative metric that analyzes existing corridor conditions. These existing conditions include station area development, station area pedestrian facilities, station area parking supply, and the proportion of existing “legally binding affordability restricted housing” within a half mile of the station area compared to existing “legally binding affordability restricted housing” in counties the project travels through. This metric is measured through station area population densities, total employment served by the project, and proportion of “legally binding affordability restricted housing” in half mile area of the station. The table below shows FTA’s breakpoints for area population, employment densities, and parking supply.

⁵ Conversion standards can be found in the Capital Investment Grants Policy Guidance, Federal Transit Administration, January 2023 [final Initial CIG Policy Guidance January 2023 \(dot.gov\)](#)

Table 5 Land Use Breakpoints –Population, Employment Densities, Parking Supply

Rating	Station Area Development		Parking Supply	
	Employment served by system	Avg. Population density (persons/sq. mi.)	CBD typical cost per day	CBD spaces per employee
High	> 220,000	>15,000	>\$16	<0.2
Medium-High	140,000 – 219,999	9,600 – 15,000	\$12 - \$16	0.2 – 0.3
Medium	70,000 – 139,999	5,760 – 9,599	\$8 - \$12	0.3 – 0.4
Medium-Low	40,000 – 69,999	2,561 – 5,759	\$4 - \$8	0.4 – 0.5
Low	<40,000	<2,560	<\$4	>0.5

The following table shows the breakpoints for the proportion of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the project corridor.

Table 6 Affordable Housing Breakpoints

Rating	Proportion of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in the counties through which the project travels
High	>= 2.50
Medium-High	2.25 – 2.49
Medium	1.50 – 2.24
Medium-Low	1.10 – 1.49
Low	<1.10

Available data on transit corridor’s employment density and population density is measured in a 3-mile radius around each proposed station.⁶ To compute the land use metric, the FTA defines the transit corridor as ½ mile around each proposed station. Because the rail corridor travels through an area with relatively low population density and data needed to complete this calculation is unavailable at this time, **it assumed the land use metric is rated as Low.**

3.1.6 Economic Development

Economic development is a qualitative metric measuring the extent the proposed project is likely to induce transit-supportive development. This metric is evaluated using transit supportive plans and policies. At this stage of the project, no conceptual station plans have been developed, and there is limited documentation on transit supportive plans and policies. The 2022 *Lewiston Auburn Study for Economic Evaluation Study* discusses at a

⁶ Refer to the 2022 Lewiston Auburn Rail Study Economic Evaluation Study for information on employment and population density.

high level potential economic development from the proposed rail service. **Though this study discusses potential future development along the corridor, this project is not far enough along in the design process to calculate the economic development metric.** As the project advances into conceptual design, the economic development metric will be considered in future analysis.

3.1.7 Warrants

Warrants are a pre-qualification approach that allows a proposed project to automatically receive a Medium rating on the Mobility Improvements, Congestion Relief, and Cost-Effectiveness. Warrants require project sponsors to submit a letter addressed to the FTA Associate Administrator for Planning and Environment requesting approval for use of warrants. The letter must document estimated project cost, requested CIG amount and share, and the existing transit ridership in project corridor. The letter must also include demonstration the transit system is currently in a state of good repair. Warrants aim to streamline the CIG process and reduce analysis time. The following table demonstrates the breakpoints for each criterion. **Because Lewiston Auburn Passenger Rail Service is a new service and not an improvement of an existing system, this project does not qualify to use warrants.**

Table 7 Warrants Breakpoints

Total Proposed Small Starts Project Capital Cost (millions)	Existing Weekday Transit Trips in the Corridor	Mobility Rating Automatically Assigned	Cost Effectiveness Rating Automatically Assigned	Congestion Relief Rating Automatically Assigned
Combination of both metrics				
\$0 to <\$50	3,000 or more	Medium	Medium	Medium
\$50 to <\$100	6,000 or more	Medium	Medium	Medium
\$100 to <\$175	9,000 or more	Medium	Medium	Medium
\$175 to <\$250	12,000 or more	Medium	Medium	Medium

3.2 Local Financial Commitment

Local Financial Commitment Rating for proposed New Starts projects is calculated by the FTA based on three criteria. Ratings range from High, Medium-High, Medium, Medium-Low, and Low⁷. This rating makes up 50% of the Overall Rating. **A project must have at least a “Medium” rating in order to achieve a “Medium” or better Overall Rating.**

The rating is measured as a weighted average of the following criteria areas:

Table 8 Local Financial Commitment Rating Criteria

Local Financial Commitment Rating	
Criteria Category	Weighted
Current Condition (Capital and Operating)	25%
Commitment of Funds (Capital and Operating)	25%
Reasonableness of Assumptions and Financial Capacity (Capital and Operating)	50%

The project’s summary local financial commitment rating may be raised by one level if it is rated at least at a Medium and the project sponsor provides more than 50% of the project’s capital cost. This would assume that the requested CIG share is less than 50%.

Current Condition takes into account average fleet age, bond ratings within the last two years, current ratio, and recent service history. **Commitment of Funds** considers amount of committed, budgeted, or planned funds, and whether there are significant private contributions to the project. **Reasonableness of Assumptions and Financial Capacity** accounts for assumptions about revenue and expense growth, reasonableness of project capital cost estimate, state of good repair needs, and the capacity to withstand cost overruns or funding shortfalls.

In order to assess financial readiness, the FTA requires that the project sponsor for a proposed New Starts project prepare a financial plan and 20-year cash flow statement per the *FTA’s Guidance for Transit Financial Plans*.⁸

Currently, there are no local financial commitments demonstrated for the Lewiston-Auburn Passenger Rail Service. **The estimated rating for this project would be Low, primarily based on the lack of existing local financial commitment, although some of the other metrics cannot currently be evaluated based on availability and or presence of data.**

⁷ Detailed metrics for criteria and ratings can be found on page 39, Ch.2 Small Starts, in the Capital Investment Grants Policy Guidance Federal Transit Administration January 2023 [final.Initial CIG Policy Guidance January 2023 \(dot.gov\)](https://www.federaltransit.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/final_initial_cig_policy_guidance_january_2023_dot.gov)

⁸ [Guidance for Transit Financial Plans \(dot.gov\)](https://www.federaltransit.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/guidance_for_transit_financial_plans_dot.gov)

It is expected that the rating could be improved, and that a given project could qualify for a Simplified Financial Evaluation if project sponsors meet the following requirements:

- ▶ Reasonable plan to secure funding for the local share
- ▶ O&M cost of the project is <5% of existing operating budget
- ▶ Sponsor is in reasonably good financial condition

Table 9 Simplified Financial Evaluation Requirements

Simplified Financial Evaluation - Requirements	
Project Sponsor Actions	Ranking
Meets requirements above & requests >50% Small Starts funding	Automatic "Medium"
Meets requirements above & requests <50% Small Starts funding	Automatic "High"
Cannot meet requirements above	Cash flow must be submitted and project is evaluated in fashion similar to New Starts

In sum, the local financial commitment rating takes into account:

- ▶ Qualifies for Simplified Financial Evaluation
- ▶ Current Financial Condition (Capital & Operating)
- ▶ Commitment of Funds (Capital & Operating)
- ▶ Reasonableness of Assumptions & Financial Capacity (Capital & Operating)
- ▶ Estimated CIG Funding Request
- ▶ All other funding sources
- ▶ Project Development Estimated Cost
- ▶ CIG Share of Capital Cost
- ▶ Federal Share of Capital Cost

4

LEWISTON-AUBURN RATINGS ANALYSIS

FTA CIG templates were completed to estimate CIG project eligibility for each of the final two alternatives based on work that has been completed to date. Table 10 summarizes the estimated CIG ratings analysis for both project alternatives.

The FTA does not assign numerical scores for each category, but determines the overall Project Justification Score and Local Financial Commitment Score using the category ratings of each criteria.

With available data, the Lewiston-Auburn Passenger Rail Project would score Low for Project Justification. Of the six criteria for Project Justification, only one has a Medium score. For the Project Justification Score to equal the minimum "Medium" at least four of the categories must be medium if all others receive a low score since all criteria are equally weighted. Alternatives include receiving warrants for certain project justification criteria that would allow the project to move forward with potentially lower scores. Warrants allow for automatic ratings on project justification criteria in certain cases.

Table 10 CIG Ratings Summary

Project Description	1A	1B
Project Type	Commuter Rail Service	Commuter Rail Service
Length (miles)	35.9	36.3
Mode/Technology	Locomotives	Locomotives
Number of Stations	4	4
Number of Vehicles	15	15
Current Year	2022	2022
Horizon	20 years	20 years
Exact Horizon Year	2040	2040
Existing Weekday Corridor Ridership	N/A	N/A
Capital Cost (Current Year \$)	\$230,000,000	\$254,000,000
Capital Cost (Year of Expenditure #)	N/A	N/A
Annualization Factor	N/A	N/A
Warrants Eligible?	N/A	N/A

Project Justification (50% of Overall Project Rating)

Project Description	1A		1B	
	2022	2040	2022	2040
Mobility Improvements				
Annual Trips	477,420	581,263	477,420	581,263
<i>Mobility Improvement Rating</i>	Low	Low	Low	Low
Cost Effectiveness				
Capital Cost ⁹	\$16,176,000	\$16,176,000	\$17,371,000	\$17,371,000
Annualized Operations & Maintenance Cost	\$21,204,000	\$21,204,000	\$22,320,000	\$22,320,000
<i>Cost Effectiveness Rating</i>	Low	Low	Low	Low
Congestion Relief				
<i>Congestion Relief Rating</i>	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium

⁹ FTA’s Cost Effectiveness calculation requires an annualized capital cost, this analysis assumed a 4.46% annualization rate.

Project Justification – Continued (50% of Overall Project Rating)

Project Description	1A		1B	
	2022	2040	2022	2040
Environmental Benefits				
Change in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)	-2,387,100	-2,906,313	-2,196,132	-2,673,808
Environmental Benefit (%)	17%	21%	15%	18%
<i>Environmental Benefits Rating</i>	Low	Low	Low	Low
Land Use (Current Year)				
<i>Land Use Rating</i>	Low	Low	Low	Low
Economic Development				
<i>Economic Development Rating</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

The FTA requires a medium rating or above on both Project Justification and Local Financial Commitment categories to obtain an Overall Project Rating of medium or better.

5

NEXT STEPS TO PURSUE FEDERAL FUNDS

The Lewiston-Auburn project does not appear eligible for CIG funding in its current status for Project Justification.

In order to be considered eligible for CIG funding by the FTA, Maine DOT may wish to consider the following updates to shift ratings from low to medium, or higher, in order to achieve a higher overall score.

In general, it is acceptable if some criteria ratings are low, as long as that is offset with medium or medium-high ratings in other criteria areas. MaineDOT should focus on improving the criteria categories where it is feasible to do so. Since one category, Congestion Relief, is already estimated to have a medium rating, improvements in other areas or qualification for warrants may raise other scores and the overall rating. Elements to analyze further are noted in the following section.

It is also important to note that early FTA engagement is vital in the Capital Investment Grant process. Communicating efficiently first with the regional office, then FTA Headquarters, will lead to a better understanding of the administration's priorities and process. Having a Congressional Champion for the project also fosters success.

For the project to formally enter project development and conduct the analysis for CIG scoring, the project needs to have funds identified. While federal CIG funds cannot be used for project development, local funds used during this phase of the project can later be applied as a local match for federal funds. As long as the project cost remains within

the Small Starts threshold, many tasks can be completed throughout the Project Development phase to improve the project ranking. This is in contrast to a two year project development phase that applies to projects which fall within the New Starts category.

Once the Lewiston-Auburn project has been developed further, the CIG Rating Analysis should be revised reflecting any changes that would further justify the project in the project development phase.

5.1 Project Justification Criteria Recommendations

- ▶ Mobility Improvements – estimated low rating
 - As noted in section 3.1.1, data on transit-dependent riders is not currently available for this study.
 - Acquiring and sharing the data on transit-dependent ridership may help to improve the Mobility Improvements metric rating from low to medium.
- ▶ Cost Effectiveness – sufficient data not currently available
 - Areas or strategies to improve this ranking may be considered in the Project Development phase.
- ▶ Environmental Benefits – estimated low rating
 - Areas or strategies to improve this ranking may be considered in the Project Development phase.
- ▶ Land Use – estimated low rating
 - As noted in Section 3.1.5, it assumed the Land Use metric is rated as Low, since the rail corridor travels through an area with relatively low population density, and data needed to complete this calculation is unavailable at this time.
 - Providing more data and any updates to land use policy in the form of zoning updates, updated local ordinances, master plans, or transit oriented development plans may help improve the Land Use metric from a low to medium rating.
- ▶ Economic Development – sufficient data not currently available
 - Areas or strategies to improve this ranking may be considered in the Project Development phase.

5.2 Local Financial Commitment Criteria Recommendations

- ▶ Local Financial Commitment
 - As noted in section 3.2, the estimated rating for this category would be Low, primarily based on the lack of existing local financial commitment, although some of the other metrics cannot currently be evaluated based on availability and or presence of data.
 - The FTA requires a minimum of a 50% or higher local financial commitment. The higher the local financial commitment share above 50%, the higher the rating is likely to be for this category.