



Meeting Notes

Date: 12.08.22 Notes Taken By: Kathryn Rasmussen
Place: Microsoft Teams Re: Advisory Group Meeting #2
Project No.: 55607.01

ATTENDEES:

Nathan Howard, MaineDOT
Nathan Moulton, MaineDOT
Natalie Bogart, NNEPRA
Maddie Jensen, BACTS
Benjamin Blunt, Concord Coach Lines
Keith Luke, City of Augusta
Jack Benoit, VHB
Maggie Maddox, VHB
Kathryn Rasmussen, VHB
Tim Bryant, VHB
Valarie Discafani, VHB

Presentation & Discussion:

- › Maggie Maddox provided introductions and led a presentation on the study findings.
 - Project goals are to understand potential for travel and potential costs of future transit service in the corridor.
 - Explained inputs that have informed the analysis: peer literature, existing transit services, demographics data, and existing vehicle traffic.
 - Overviewed the methodology for estimating number of trips, including catchment area development, use of streetlight data as main data source, cross-checking of AADT counts at points along study corridor, and use of growth factors for estimated project opening year 2040.
 - Presented transit propensity analysis results in the form of estimated monthly ridership.
- › Nathan Howard, MaineDOT, asked for a reminder of what Peer Comparison corridors were used. Jack Benoit, VHB, answered the Ethan Allen Express to New York and two corridors feeding into Chicago. Maggie Maddox pointed out that the comparison itself was made to sections of these corridors terminating prior to either New York or Chicago, but that the potential to connect regionally to a major urban area is comparable to Boston in the study.
- › Nathan Moulton, MaineDOT, asked for clarification on what the ratios presented represent. Maggie Maddox indicated that it is the proportions of regional to local trips.
- › Benjamin Blunt, Concord Coach Lines, asked for further explanation of transit propensity results, including if low- and high-end range came from Streetlight data. Maggie Maddox answered that origin-destination data was used from two perspectives to develop a range of potential estimated riders.
- › Keith Luke, City of Augusta, asked how these results compare to Lewiston-Auburn numbers. Jack Benoit answered that there is a range of 150-250 per day on this study and 250-330 daily on the Lewison-Auburn study and followed up with

monthly estimated ridership. The monthly ridership range for Lewiston-Auburn was 7,500-10,000. It was noted that Lewiston-Auburn numbers are slightly higher than for Portland-Bangor.

- › Benjamin Blunt asked what service would be associated with these results. Maggie Maddox responded that results do not consider a service plan but instead reflect ridership potential, numbers are the potential volume that could be captured based on the service. The study focused on travel needs based on trips we know are being taken. In discussion, it was agreed that the specific service plan would impact how many riders would use the service. There are parallel corridors and bus service that provides a transit option. Ridership could certainly change depending on the alignment, where stations are sited, and how much service is provided.
- › Maggie Maddox presented the order of magnitude rail costs conceptual approach, assumptions, and estimated costs, developed as a high-level cost per mile range for two different corridors. Keith Luke noted the Lower Road extension is more costly.
- › Maggie Maddox overviewed next steps, including that a public meeting is planned for January and a report draft will be circulating to the Advisory Group soon. Report planned to be finalized by the end of December.
- › Natalie Bogart, NNEPRA, asked if the monthly ridership estimate is based on an entire year or if it takes seasonality into account. Maggie Maddox responded it is an average over a year. Jack Benoit added all values used in developing the estimate were either annual or average daily.
- › Natalie Bogart asked about the plan to present this information at the public meeting. Maggie Maddox indicated it will probably be a similar presentation on the findings. Nathan Moulton adds that the team presents to the Transportation Committee by January 1st and that group takes it from there. The project team does not reach any conclusions or chosen recommendations, the process is more about presenting findings and letting legislature decide next steps.
- › Benjamin Blunt indicated that numbers would swing very differently based on the service plan. Maggie Maddox agreed that is a good consideration to present for the public meeting. Maggie Maddox also reiterated that the purpose of propensity study is primarily to understand the demand for a type of trip in the corridor, as in what trips currently exist that may shift to rail service. This is a more general study than Lewiston-Auburn, which is considering service plans. Keith Luke added that there are not many commute trips happening in Portland-Bangor corridor from Augusta, but that growth will happen. However, this growth itself depends on the nature and quality of service introduced in the future with the baseline based on current origin-destination patterns. Nathan Moulton pointed out that factors such as the cost of gasoline in the future could affect ridership. Over time, if the cost of the rail trip is low comparatively, it will be considered by riders.
- › Benjamin Blunt asked if data is seen as a delta, as in an additional number of riders each month. Also asked if the study's estimate considers the 3,800 Portland or north of Portland trips made on Concord Coach, and if this data should be featured in the public meeting. Maggie Maddox answered that the data set does not differentiate how trips are being made. It may account for some bus riders but also may represent riders who are willing to take rail but not bus service.
- › Maggie Maddox closed by indicating that the team will be working to get the report completed in December, with everything in the study wrapped up in January, including comments collected at the public meeting.