

February 20, 2023

Lower Road Railroad Use Advisory Council

Questions on the Bangor Transit Propensity Study

[Bangor Propensity - Report Draft 1.30.23.pdf \(maine.gov\)](#)

- 1) What is the estimated cost for the railroad rolling stock?

MaineDOT Response: Specific details for a potential passenger rail service, like rolling stock, average speed, travel time, operating costs, maintenance costs, projected revenue, and necessary public subsidy, were not included in the Bangor Transit Propensity Study.

This goal of this study was to identify the overall propensity for transit use in the Bangor to Portland corridor. At this early phase of project planning the study focused on the possible intercity service absent specific details on mode, alignment, stations/stops, and service frequency. Given the wide range of potential use of transit service due to these variables that contribute to travel demand, rather than predicting future ridership this assignment was intended to identify a reasonable range of demand that can be expected

Please see Chapter 6 of the Bangor Propensity Study for more details.

- 2) What is the estimated annual maintenance cost for the Lower Road? Back Road, if different?

MaineDOT Response: Please see MaineDOT Response to Question #1.

- 3) What are the estimated railroad operating costs?

Bangor to Brunswick via the Lower Road

Bangor to Lewiston/Auburn via the Back Road

MaineDOT Response: Please see MaineDOT Response to Question #1.

- 4) What is expected to be the average railroad speed?

Bangor to Brunswick to Portland via the Lower Road

Bangor to L/A to Portland via the Back Road

MaineDOT Response: Please see MaineDOT Response to Question #1.

- 5) What are the estimated railroad travel times for the Back and Lower Road corridors?

MaineDOT Response: Please see MaineDOT Response to Question #1.

- 6) The Concord Bus fare from Bangor to Portland is \$30. What is the estimated railroad fare?

MaineDOT Response: Please see MaineDOT Response to Question #1.

7) What is the projected revenue?

Bangor to Brunswick to Portland via the Lower Road

Bangor to L/A to Portland via the Back Road

MaineDOT Response: Please see MaineDOT Response to Question #1.

8) Shortfall?

MaineDOT Response: Please see MaineDOT Response to Question #1.

9) Are there any federal or industry guidelines for population density per square mile needed to support passenger rail service?

MaineDOT Response: There are no federal guidelines or minimums for population density.

10) How about showing the capture areas for the Back Road including Lewiston Auburn, Augusta, and Waterville? Would there be any difference between the two railroad corridors? (January, 2023 Draft Bangor Transit Propensity Study, p16-17, Figure 3-4)

MaineDOT Response: This study examined transit propensity from Portland to Bangor along the Lower Road Corridor. The high-level capital cost estimate for the potential extension from Lewiston-Auburn along the Back Road was included at the request of Advisory Committee.

11) Concord Bus annual ridership in 2019 as shown in table 3-4 is 130,000 and the trip is Bangor to Portland to Boston. The draft study states:

“Concord Coach Lines operates bus service from Bangor to Augusta, Portland, and Boston. Currently, three Concord Coach Buses per day make the trip from Bangor to Portland, with two of them stopping at Augusta. These buses also make stops at several Maine colleges during the school year. All of these buses continue through Portland to Boston, and one bus per hour travels from Portland to Boston. In 2019, the total ridership was **over 130,000 within the corridor**, averaging approximately 360 riders per day over a year, not considering seasonality and schedule changes.”

Throughout the study the use of the word corridor refers to Bangor to Portland. Is this the case here or does it mean Bangor to Portland to Boston? Figure 3-7 seems to suggest that is Bangor to Portland. (p.23). If that is the case, what are the ridership figures from Portland to Boston?

MaineDOT Response: The study corridor is Portland to Bangor. Figure 3-7 represents boardings at stops within Maine. 130,000 represents the number of trips that begin within the project corridor (excluding Portland) and terminate at either Portland or Boston. About half of them were destined for Portland, and half were destined for Boston.

12) How much unused existing capacity does Concord Bus have with its existing service?

MaineDOT Response: Unknown at this time. MaineDOT did not request this data from the bus operators.

13) Slide 21 for the Bangor Propensity Study public meeting held in January has data on bus corridor costs that do not appear in the draft report which should be included.

- Rail Corridor Costs – Capital \$400M-\$900M depending on rail segment, conditions, number of stations
- Bus Corridor Costs – Coach, long distance buses ~\$300,000-500,000/vehicle. (Ex \$1.2M – \$2.0M for 4 vehicles)

MaineDOT Response: These costs are reflected in Chapter 5 of the draft report.

- Existing Bus Service in Corridor – Serving many of the potential trips – Opportunities to partner with existing operators

The third bullet on existing bus service in corridor needs more explanation as to what that means.

[PowerPoint Presentation \(maine.gov\)](#)

MaineDOT Response: Comment noted.

14) Table 4-6 has annual and monthly figures. (p.38) Daily figures would be useful here as well as throughout the report.

MaineDOT Response: Comment noted.

15) The conclusion in chapter 6 states:

“The total volume of trips potentially served by new or enhanced transit service in the Bangor to Portland corridor is estimated to be relatively modest at approximately 5,150 – 7,250 per month.”

[On a daily basis that would be 172-242 passengers and with 5 daily trips each train would have between 34 to 48 passengers.]

The report concludes:

“In determining the potential for enhancing transit service in this corridor it will therefore be **important to define what constitutes success** in this study area in terms of ridership, financial performance, and regional benefits. If there is interest in pursuing transit enhancements in this corridor given this amount of potential propensity, future efforts would require evaluation of various factors necessary to refine the definition of the service such as alignment, stations/stops, vehicle type, integration/interface with **Amtrak** Downeaster service and existing intercity bus services, operating frequency/headings, capital costs, operating costs, fare/revenues, environmental impacts, funding, and financial considerations.”

The resolve of the 130th legislature creating this study asks the following questions be studied and answered:

“the department shall conduct a transit propensity study to assess the demand and **viability** for new or enhanced transit service, including passenger rail, between the communities of Portland and Bangor.”

[getPDF.asp \(maine.gov\)](#)

So, how viable is extending rail service from Bangor to Portland?

Which rail corridor, the Back Road or the Lower Road is more viable?

Is extending rail service more viable than enhanced bus service?

Is enhanced bus service viable?

MaineDOT response: This goal of this study was to identify the overall propensity for transit use in the Bangor to Portland corridor. At this early phase of project planning the study focused on the possible intercity service absent specific details on mode, alignment, stations/stops, and service frequency. Given the wide range of potential use of transit service due to these variables that contribute to travel demand, rather than predicting future ridership this study was intended to identify a reasonable range of demand that can be expected.

The study did not identify a specific alternative or route that best satisfies the estimated demand.

What about the role of Amtrak? Does it have any long-range plans to serve Bangor?

MaineDOT response: Passenger rail service expansion to Bangor is not identified in Amtrak's 15-year vision—*Amtrak Connects US: Amtrak's Vision for Improving Transportation Across America*