

Kennebec Valley Community Action Program KVCAP Transportation Services

Contact Information

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Service Summary

Service area:	Kennebec, Somerset Counties
Type of service:	Flex route, demand response, contract service

Kennebec Explorer Public Bus Service

Kennebec Explorer is a flex-route public bus service with operations in and between the greater Waterville and Augusta areas. Kennebec Explorer also serves several nearby communities and lower Somerset County. Service is provided using mid-sized accessible buses. Route structures have been designed to offer a convenient, cost effective means of transportation to commuters, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and the general public. Primary destinations include shopping centers, medical facilities, educational facilities, business facilities, elderly/low-income housing projects and community service organizations. Service includes the following:

Greater Waterville Area - (Mondays through Fridays)

Kennedy Memorial Drive: This route provides regular service throughout the day to and from the Waterville Concourse to Elm Towers, KVCAP, the Muskie Center, JFK Mall/Hannaford, Seton Village, Louise Avenue, Shaw's, Marden's, and Inland Hospital.

Waterville Concourse – Walmart and Fairfield: This route provides regular service throughout the day to and from the Waterville Concourse to Elm Towers, Maine General, Elm Plaza, Walmart, Four Seasons, KVCC and Fairfield Island Avenue, and Gerald Hotel and Hazelwood.

Greater Augusta Area – (Mondays through Fridays except as otherwise noted)

Augusta North: This route provides service throughout the day to and from Downtown Augusta to Chateau Cushnoc, Walmart, DHHS, Kohls, Barnes and Nobel and UMA.

Augusta East: This route provides service throughout the day to and from downtown Augusta to FMI, Bread of Life, Glenridge Drive, Green Tree, Hannaford, Cony Flat Iron, Hodgkin School, Rite Aid and Willow Street.

Togus: This route provides service to Togus USVA and Cabin in the Woods veteran's housing site.

Augusta West: This route provides service throughout the day to and from downtown Augusta to K-Mart, Shaw's, Gray Birch, Target, Turnpike Mall, Hannaford State House and YMCA.

Augusta Health Loop North: This route provides service throughout the day to and from downtown Augusta to Rite Aid, Bangor Street, Alford Center North, Alford Cancer Center, MGMC Enterprise, the Commerce Center, Concord Coach, North Park, Mt. Vernon Avenue, Library and Court House.

Augusta/Hallowell/Gardiner: This route provides service throughout the day to and from downtown Augusta and UMA to the State House, YMCA, Cotton Mill Apartments, Pine Hill, Gardiner Hannaford and Randolph IGA.

Augusta/Waterville Regional Service: This route provides service throughout the day between downtown Augusta and Waterville Concourse with service to the Commerce Center, Alford Cancer Center, Alford Center Health, and Faith Evangelical Church.

Vassalboro/China area – (Mondays and Thursdays): Beginning July 2017, Kennebec Explorer provides local public transportation to residents of Vassalboro and China. Destinations are based on public demand. Destinations may include Hannaford in China as well as Waterville area destinations. Passengers are picked up at their homes.

Somerset Explorer – (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays): The Somerset Explorer flex route bus service operates in lower Somerset County in Skowhegan, Madison, Anson and Norridgewock. In association with the Move More Kids project, service is expanded to five days a week during the summer months.

Move More Kids – (Mondays through Fridays, summer months): The Move More Kids routes are designed to give young people access to a variety of locations including shopping centers, work sites, health services, community services and many other programs and services. The service operates two buses in Skowhegan, Madison, Anson, Norridgewock and Canaan.

Jackman Area Service - (Wednesdays): Beginning in May 2017, Somerset Explorer is providing local Jackman public service for shopping, health services, and other programs and services.

Jackman to Skowhegan service – (Fridays): Beginning in May 2017, Somerset Explorer is providing service between Jackman and Skowhegan. Destinations are determined by riders. The service is open to anyone along the Route 201 corridor in Jackman, The Forks, Moscow, Bingham and Solon.

KV Van

The KV Van transportation program offers door-to-door van and volunteer service to passengers who are eligible under specific social service organization guidelines. This service is available throughout Kennebec and Somerset Counties to elderly and/or disabled passengers, low income citizens, DHHS Child Welfare riders and other citizens covered by specific funding sources or private payment.

MaineCare Transportation

Effective August 14, 2014, KVCAP is working with Penquis, the MaineCare transportation broker for Kennebec and Somerset Counties. MaineCare door-to-door trips are arranged through Penquis, located in Bangor. KVCAP may be selected by the broker to provide MaineCare trips by agency vehicle, volunteer driver or taxi. In order to retain its volunteers, KVCAP reimburses its volunteers for all miles driven, even though only loaded miles can be billed to the broker.

Summary of Service Changes

1. **Augusta area service expansion.** Service in the Augusta area was enhanced with additional commuter service between Augusta and Waterville, as well as service to cancer care and health care. In addition, Kennebec Explorer expanded service to seniors in the Augusta area by expanding the range of its services. This includes an activity night, with different housing sites receiving service on different nights. It also includes a Saturday shopping run, aimed primarily at seniors.
2. **Somerset Explorer.** The Somerset Explorer service was initiated and has been operating successfully.
3. **Additional MaineGeneral bus.** An additional bus was added in Augusta in November 2013, to provide service to MaineGeneral Hospital.
4. **Kennebec Explorer expansion.** Additional routes were developed to serve:
 - Jackman
 - Bingham
 - China
 - Vassalboro
 - Manchester

These routes function in a demand response basis. These additional routes operate one day per week, except Manchester, which received service twice weekly, but has since been eliminated due to low ridership.

5. **Cohen Center.** Service on the Cohen Center route in Augusta was been reduced to three times per week and has since been eliminated due to low ridership.

Summary of Accomplishments

1. **Ridership growth.** The schedule has been revamped and ridership has grown, from about 44,000 rides annually in 2011 to 103,313 rides annually as of June 30, 2017. This growth is the result of many factors including redesign of the system to make it easy to use, better buses and new partners to promote the service.
2. **Route expansions.** Routes have been expanded and new routes have been developed, as summarized in the section above.
3. **Growing interest in general public ridership.** There has been a great deal of interest in developing transit, and there are ongoing discussions with a number of groups interested in providing more transit services.
4. **Diverse Base of Local Support.** KVCAP Transportation Services has been active in developing non-municipal sources of local revenue. Only about a third of KVCAP's match comes from municipalities; the rest is from MaineGeneral Health, the University of Maine at Augusta, downtown Augusta employers, Inland Hospital, Waterville business supporter, United Way and youth organizations.

5. **Bus shelters.** New bus shelters have been installed in Skowhegan and Augusta at the new bus depot.
6. **Monthly Explorer Bus Passes.** KVCAP Transportation Services implemented a monthly bus pass system for commuters, healthcare workers, and shoppers. Monthly bus passes are available and widely used. Local monthly bus passes are available for \$40 and full access passes are available for \$80.
7. **Successful transition to MaineCare brokerage system.** KVCAP has partnered with Penquis CAP in Bangor to operate MaineCare transportation in MaineDOT Regions 3 and 4. Under the partnership, Penquis is the broker, and KVCAP Transportation is a provider of MaineCare Transportation in Region 4.

Future Priorities

1. **Expanded Waterville Area Service.** KVCAP has worked with private consultants and area colleges and agencies to develop a Waterville Area Transit Plan that would add new bus routes to existing service to cover areas of the community that are not currently served, as well as improving service to local colleges.
2. **Somerset/Waterville Connections.** KVCAP has been working with Backyard Farms, Kennebec Valley Community College, Somerset Transit Committee and the Somerset Career Center to develop public transit services that would provide commuter services for employees of Backyard Farms and provide intercity access to people attending KVCC or the Career Center which has recently relocated to the Hinckley campus. These services would connect with existing services to provide interconnectivity from Somerset County through the lower Kennebec region and Togus USVA.
3. **Schedule revisions.** KVCAP is reviewing all of the current routes in preparation for schedule revisions. The Agency is assessing which routes are currently operating efficiently and which routes may be performing less effectively than expected. Route alterations will be developed to improve efficiency and ridership.
4. **Updating fleet.** Kennebec Transportation will be looking at VW settlement money, state of good repair, and 5310 funds to improve fleet condition.

Plans and Studies

1. **Committee planning.** Most of KVCAP Transportation Service's route planning has been undertaken by committees such as the Somerset Transit Committee, the Waterville Area Transit Committee, Sustain Mid-Maine Coalition in Waterville, and various age-friendly groups.
2. **Corridor study.** The Augusta/Waterville corridor study needs to be updated.

Ridership

1. **Ridership over 100,000.** As indicated above, ridership on the explorer system grew to 103,000 trips in 2017.
2. **North Augusta Route.** The North Augusta route has more riders than capacity. From a cost standpoint, it is not yet at the point where a bigger bus would be justified.

3. **Manual ridership tabulation.** Drivers use a clip board tally sheet. They bring the sheets into the office, where it is transferred to an excel spread sheet.
4. **Accessibility.** There are many more riders with disabilities, and more elderly people. Demand for accessible service has skyrocketed. Kennebec Explorer’s accessible buses allow more people to get out into the community.
5. **No accessible taxis.** There are no private taxis with lifts. Insurance costs would be too high for accessible taxis.
6. **Seasonal variation.** There are no seasonal variations in ridership, although summer youth ridership in Somerset County increases through the Move More Kids program.
7. **Ridership promotion.** Ridership promotional efforts, including helping people learn to use the system, are undertaken on a continual basis by a staff member in Augusta, intake people in the Waterville office, drivers, and the Director.
8. **On-board surveys.** On-board ridership surveys have been conducted in the past, using Colby students in some cases. Surveys don’t get to the question of why people don’t use the bus.
9. **Ghost riding.** KVCAP has undertaken some ghost riding to help evaluate its services.
10. **Senior housing surveys.** KVCAP has undertaken surveys of senior housing sites in Augusta asking about desired services. The majority of respondents are seniors. They want to go all over the city.

Kennebec Explorer General Public Flex Route Trips					
	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Augusta	49,372	53,062	56,825	61,640	72,321
Waterville	14,995	14,331	15,680	15,542	14,939
Somerset	1,492	5,846	7,488	7,692	4,905
Intercity	5,160	9,574	14,351	12,929	11,148
Total	71,019	82,813	94,344	97,803	103,313

KV Van Demand Response Trips					
	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
General Public	1,796	776	761	820	2,092
MaineCare	392,588	175,816	296,058	302,842	291,043
DHHS Other	20,585	16,278	21,837	27,832	31,919
Other	1,055	2,712	1,719	1,497	6,634
Total	416,024	195,582	320,375	332,991	331,688

Fares

Fare	Local travel within one community - \$1.25 Local travel between two towns - \$1.50 Waterville - Augusta Intercity - \$3.50 Children 6-12 - \$.50 Children under 6 (with adult) - Free Transfers between routes with ticket – Free Demand response \$8.50 + \$-0.41/mile volunteer driver Demand response \$8.50 + \$1.65/mile self-pay agency vehicle
Exact Fare Required?	Kennebec Explorer: Exact fare, or ticket or pass KV Van: billed monthly
Electronic Fare?	No
Senior/disabled Half fare available?	No
Senior/disabled half fare pass required?	N.A.
Other discounts?	Children under 6 with adult free; children 6-12 \$0.50
Multi-ride prepayment?	No
Monthly pass prepayment?	Monthly Commuter Pass \$80
Passes available from:	Local KVCAP offices or by mail via subscription

Buses/Facilities

- 1. Bus stops.** All bus stops are marked. There are several bus shelters in Augusta.
- 2. Maintenance.** Bus maintenance is undertaken by contracts with several vendors in each region. KVCAP intends to use USC 5310 funds to include capital maintenance costs.
- 3. Condition.** Overall, the buses are in fair to poor condition. Kennebec Transportation will be looking and VW settlement money, state of good repair, and 5310 funds to improve fleet condition.
- 4. Amenities.** Buses have air conditioning and are reasonably comfortable, but there is no WiFi, and the system is not served by any apps.
- 5. Cleanliness.** Cleanliness is a challenge. There are not a lot of facilities that can accommodate buses. J & S in Manchester is about the only facility. We ask drivers to wash their buses once per week. Drivers are supposed to sweep out their bus every day. We don't get many complaints.

Agency Volunteers

- 1. Number.** KVCAP currently has 103 volunteers. These volunteers are used to provide MaineCare and DHHS rides. Some volunteers view their work as an occupation. Others view their service as a benevolent contribution. Many group runs are made to Kennebec Behavioral Health and Discovery House.
- 2. Agency Vehicles.** Volunteers are not permitted to drive agency vehicles because Department of Labor regulations would require them to be employees.

Volunteer-Based Transportation Groups

KVCAP Transportation Services provides a lot of technical support to Neighbors Driving Neighbors, which serves seven southwest Kennebec County towns. There is very little ridership transfer between the two systems.

Coordination/Outreach/Partnerships/Unmet Needs

1. **Brokerage.** KVCAP is the major transportation provider in Region 4 for the broker, Penquis CAP. Coordination works well, but does require two separate contracts with Penquis.
2. **Taxis.** Coordinating taxi services include JP Taxi, Elite Taxi, Kennebec Taxi, AI's Taxi and Skow Town Taxi. Given the high demand for early morning appointments, KVCAP orders can exhaust available taxi capacity in the region at that hour.
3. **Partnerships.** KVCAP has successfully partnered with a number of committees, business interests and organizations to enhance transit service, including various aging committees, local businesses in Waterville and Augusta, MaineGeneral Hospital, Inland Hospital, and youth organizations, to name a few.
4. **Website, brochures.** KVCAP's transit services are fully described on its website and in a printed brochure.
5. **Unmet need.** There appears to be a growing awareness of the value of transit service, and growing demands for service. Much of the effort in planning for additional services focuses on funding needs.

Innovations/Creative Approaches

1. **Software collaboration.** KVCAP undertook a joint collaboration with Penquis on purchasing new software (HBSS). Phase 1 will be implemented February 1, 2019. Phase 2 will include tablets for buses and ride tracking. HBSS offers a lot more service than Easy Rides.
2. **Google Transit.** KVCAP worked as a pilot with MaineDOT during the Summer of 2018 to get Explorer bus schedules compatible with Google Transit to assist riders with schedule and connectivity information. MaineDOT is now working with the Maine Turnpike Authority to explore growing Go Maine to include this information. A consultant would be hired to keep transit provider data current.
3. **Manifests and vehicle tracking.** Volunteers, all of whom provide rides for MaineCare or DHHS, now receive manifests by email or paper at KVCAP's offices. KVCAP will be purchasing smartphones for its volunteers, which will provide real time opportunities to track what's going on.
4. **Wish list.** The wish list for providing better service for more riders includes more buses, extended hours, increased headways, and improved technology. Rider-based technology improvements include tablets on vehicles to track buses and provide instant access to bus locations. It would also help to get more people to council meetings.

Major Challenges

1. **Coordinated service.** One of the biggest challenges facing the region is the 1987 legislation that required coordinated services. The demand for services is still there, but everything is moving into silos. What most states do is develop a good transit system that Medicare can buy into.
2. **Economies of scale.** Decentralization of services makes it hard to get economies of scale.
3. **Misperception of transit.** There is a widespread misconception that transit is a social service, and this misconception has made it more difficult to secure municipal contributions.
4. **Local match.** Although there appears to be more support for transit, coming up with local match continues to be a challenge. \$240,000 local match includes \$100,000 from MaineGeneral, \$7,500 from UMA, \$30,000 from the City of Augusta and only \$6,500 from the City of Waterville. Comparisons with other state capital cities are \$60,000 from Montpelier, \$350,000 from Helena, \$35.M from Juneau and \$80M from the State of Delaware.
5. **Redundant dispatch.** The brokerage system has resulted in redundant dispatch services because a MaineCare covered request for a ride must first go to the broker, where dispatchers provide intake and forward the ride request to dispatchers at KVCAP. Rides funded by other sources such as DHHS, United Way, foundation grants, or other sources must be arranged directly through KVCAP.
6. **KV Van finances.** KVCAP is losing money on its van services.
7. **Municipal support.** Kennebec Explorer has been level funded by municipalities for 20 years.
8. **Cohen Center route.** Cohen Center ridership not doing as well as it once did, so the number of service days was reduced from five to three and then eliminated in January 2019.

Public Participation Summary

Public participation has played a central role in planning and providing general public transit services in Kennebec and Somerset Counties. KVCAP values the important role that the public plays in ensuring that general public transit services continue to support the economic and social fabric of the communities that it serves. The following highlights major public participation milestones.

1. **Public transit forum.** 11/1/2016: KVCAP hosted a Public Transit Forum in Waterville to establish priorities and identify partners in the effort to establish an additional bus in Waterville.
2. **Transit workshop.** 11/17/2016. KVCAP hosted a Transit Workshop at its offices in Waterville at which future projects and priorities were identified and prioritized for the updated Locally Coordinated Plan.
3. **Sustain Mid-Maine Transportation Committee.** The KVCAP Transportation Director served as the Team Leader for the Sustain Mid-Maine Transportation Committee that meets 5-6 time annually to gather local input and develop transportation strategy.
4. **Somerset Transit Committee.** KVCAP regularly meets with local public officials and interested parties as a member of the Somerset Transit Committee. This committee regularly meets to review utilization of existing service and gain input for new development.

5. **Jackman Leadership Team.** On several occasions, KVCAP met with the Jackman Leadership Team, including a legislative listening session on 9/24/2016. Transportation was major topic of discussion.
6. **Penquis MaineCare Advisory Committee.** This group meets within the region to evaluate service delivery every six months.
7. **Augusta Age Friendly Committee.** KVCAP has met regularly with the Augusta Age Friendly Committee to develop enhanced senior transportation services. The group conducted surveys among residents of Augusta's senior Housing sites and is using that information to enhance services to local seniors.
8. **Committees on Aging.** KVCAP met with community officials and representatives of Committees on aging to develop limited public transit services to the communities of China and Vassalboro. The group will continue to meet to assess ridership and develop alternatives.