

Community Connector

Contact Information

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Service Summary

Service area: Bangor, Brewer, Hampden, Veazie, Old Town, Orono
Type of service: Fixed route

Community Connector Bus Service

The City of Bangor owns and operates the public transportation system, commonly known as Community Connector. Community Connector serves Bangor, Brewer, Hampden, Veazie, Orono and Old Town, as well as the University of Maine at Orono. The City of Bangor provides service to the other communities on a contractual basis. Community Connector operates within and serves the urbanized area of the six communities. The routes are within walking distance of 95 percent of the population of the six communities.

Community Connector provides service system-wide Monday through Friday. Saturday service is offered for all routes except Hampden. There is no Sunday service. The basic hours of operation are from 6:15 a.m. to 6:15 p.m.

Except for the Mall Hopper and the Black Bear Orono Express, all buses offer service to and from a central terminal (Bangor Depot) located at Pickering Square in downtown Bangor. Most buses are scheduled to depart from the downtown terminal at 15 minutes either before or after the hour. Schedules are designed to allow quick and easy transfers between buses at Pickering Square.

- 1. Black Bear Orono Express.** This route serves the Town of Orono and University of Maine, operating during the school year. Major stops include Mill Street, Orchard Trails, Recreation Center, and UM Union. Monday through Friday, service every half hour begins at 6:55 a.m. and ends at 9:55 p.m.
- 2. Brewer South/Brewer North.** The Brewer South bus travels through the southern part of Brewer along South Main Street, Elm Street, Parkway South and outer Wilson Street. The Brewer North bus travels north on Main Street in Brewer, then serves neighborhoods north of Wilson Street before arriving at Wilson Street and traveling to Walmart. Major stops include Bangor Depot, South Main and Elm Streets, North Brewer, Brewer Shopping Center, Wal-Mart, Marden's, PCHC Medical Center, Lafayette Cancer Center, and the new Dialysis Center at the Brewer Shopping Center. Monday through Saturday, service every 60 minutes begins at 6:45 a.m. and ends at 6:22 p.m.

- 3. Capehart Route.** This route begins in Capehart and ends at the Airport Mall. The bus travels along Ohio Street and connects with the Mall Hopper at Airport Mall. Major stops include Bangor Depot, EMHC, Airport Mall, BIA/DHHS, Bolling Drive, Capehart, and PCHC. Monday through Friday, service every half hour begins at 6:06 p.m. and ends at 6:27 p.m. Saturday service every half hour begins at 7:06 a.m. and ends at 6:11 p.m.
- 4. Center Street.** This route provides service between Bangor Depot along Center Street to the Broadway Shopping Center, where it connects with the Mall Hopper. Major stops include Bangor Depot, Saint Joseph Hospital, Bangor Gardens and Broadway Shopping Center. Monday through Friday, half hour service (2-hour service to Bangor Gardens) begins at 6:15 a.m. and ends at 6:08 p.m. Saturday service begins every hour at 8:45 a.m. and ends at 5:45 p.m.
- 5. Hammond Street/Neighborhood Loop.** This route provides service between Bangor Depot, Union Street and Hammond Street and adjacent neighborhoods. Major stops include Bangor Depot, Union Street, University of Augusta-Bangor Campus, Hammond Street, Buck and Third, and Cedar Street. Monday through Friday, service every half hour begins at 5:53 a.m. and ends at 6:10 p.m. Saturday service every hour begins at 9:15 a.m. and ends at 5:40 p.m.
- 6. Hampden.** This route provides service between downtown Bangor and Hampden. Major stops include Bangor Depot, Shaw's, Beal College, Hannaford/Hampden Academy, and Downtown Hampden. Monday through Friday, hourly service begins at 6:15 a.m. and ends at 6:10 p.m.
- 7. Mall Hopper.** This route provides a link between Bangor Mall, Airport Mall, and the Broadway Shopping Center. Major stops include Airport Mall, Husson University, Broadway Shopping Center, Bangor Mall, St. Joseph Healthcare Center and Ohio Street. Monday through Saturday service begins at 6:55 a.m. and ends at 6:40 p.m.
- 8. Mount Hope.** This route provides a link between Mount Hope, Hogan Road, and Stillwater Avenue areas with Bangor Mall, Hannaford and Target. Major stops include Bangor Depot, Mount Hope/Elm Streets, Bangor Mall, Hannaford, Target, and EMCC. Monday through Saturday service begins at 6:15 a.m. and ends at 6:05 p.m. Evergreen Woods serviced by request at :25 after the hour.
- 9. Old Town.** This route provides service to Veazie, Orono and Old Town. Major stops include Bangor Depot, EMMC, Veazie, UM Union, Old Town, Old Town Plaza, University Mall, and Orono Research Park. Monday through Friday, hourly service begins at 5:45 and ends at 7:00 p.m. Saturday service every two hours begins at 6:15 a.m. and ends at 7:05 p.m.
- 10. Stillwater.** This route provides a direct link from Downtown Bangor to the Bangor Mall. Major stops include Bangor Depot, Broadway, Bangor Mall, Ridgewood Drive, Acadia Hospital and Wal-Mart. Monday through Saturday service begins at 6:45 a.m. and ends at 6:05 p.m.

Summary of Service Changes

There have been no major service changes within the past five years.

Summary of Accomplishments

1. **End of life Overhaul.** Community Connector rebuilt four New Flyer buses that were at the end of their useful life. The work was done by Loring Industries.
2. **Service to area colleges.** Community Connector has agreements with area colleges under which students use their school IDs as bus passes. The five colleges served include Eastern Maine Community College, Husson University, Beal College, UMA Bangor, and University of Maine.
3. **New Offices.** Community Connector moved into new offices on the grounds of the Fleet Maintenance Facilities in January of 2018.
4. **Bangor Depot upgrade.** The City of Bangor will be undertaking renovations at Pickering Square Parking Garage including changing the entrance to the parking garage, relocation of Community Connector waiting area, and adding parking spaces. An office trailer will be used as the depot for a period of 15 months until a more permanent facility can be constructed. Community Connector will hire staff to maintain the Depot.
5. **Paratransit service.** As of late summer, 2018, Community Connector is providing its own paratransit service for customers unable to use the regular bus system. This service was previously provided by Penquis.
6. **Technology upgrades.** Community Connector has issued a Request for Proposals for technology upgrades including automated announcements, GPS/AVL, paratransit software and fixed route scheduling software. We are temporarily using CTS Software Trip Master to schedule our paratransit service until the bid process is completed.
7. **Remix Software.** Community Connector has purchased transit-planning software to help with the ever-changing transportation needs.
8. **Bus Purchases.** We purchased 4 new buses in 2017 and 2018
9. **Discretionary Grants for Bus and Bus Facilities.** Community Connector received \$1.4 million in FY16, \$1.9 million in FY17 and 2.89 million in FY18

Future Priorities

1. **Transit planning.** Undertake a study of community changes and trends and how the bus system can be adapted to changing community needs.
2. **Technology.** Upgrade bus system technology to better document use of the system and provide bus system information to customers.

3. **New buses.** Continue to upgrade the fleet.
4. **New depot.** Continue to work on changes to Bangor Depot to ensure that it serves the public as efficiently as possible.
5. **System changes.** Implement changes to the system to possibly include:
 - A new name (e.g. revert to “BAT” for Bangor Area Transit)
 - New logo (e.g. a BAT logo)
 - Change name of routes (e.g. update route names to colors)
 - Discuss designated bus stops
6. The University of Maine and the City of Old Town have requested that hours of operation be extended. Community Connector would like to extend the hours of operation on the Bangor run to 9:00 p.m. on a pilot-project basis in 2019.

Plans and Studies

- **Hub study.** Between 2012-2014, a study was undertaken to determine the best location for a system hub. The study determined that the best location is the current one – Pickering Square.
- **System study.** Stantec was awarded the bid for a system study that would analyze community changes, including the growth of the medical community and changes in shopping patterns, and how the bus system can better serve the six communities. Kickoff is scheduled for February 7, 2019.

Ridership

As shown in the table below, ridership has declined since FY 2014, in part because gas prices have stayed flat and the local economy has improved.

Community Connector Fixed Route Trips					
	FY2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
General Public	941,484	900,076	875,807	818,010	763,391
ADA			16,837	5615	6930
Total	941,484	900,076	892,644	827,442	770,321

Fares

Fare	\$1.50 Local one-way
Exact Fare Required?	Yes
Electronic Fare?	No
Senior/disabled Half fare available?	Yes - \$0.75

Senior/disabled half fare pass required?	Yes
Other discounts?	\$0.75 under 12 with adult \$0.75 Student 12-18 years old Free under 5 with adult \$6.00 5-ride tickets \$45 monthly pass \$20 student monthly pass (students up to grade 12 or Job Corps Free: transfers Free: with UMO, Husson University or EMCC, Beal College, University of Maine Augusta Bangor Campus ID card
Multi-ride prepayment?	Yes
Monthly pass prepayment?	Yes
Passes available from:	Bangor City Clerk, Bangor Public Library, Fairmount Market, Garland Street Market, Hannaford Locations, Paradis Shop N' Save, Orono Town Office, Bell's IGA, Old Town City Hall, Veazie Town Office, Bus Depot, Community Connector Office, Leadbetter's

Buses/Facilities

Many of Community Connector's buses are beyond their useful life and/or are expensive to maintain. However, since September of 2017, Community Connector has purchased two new buses and has received grant money to purchase the federal share (85%) of several more. In January 2018, Community Connector moved into new, temporary office space.

Agency Volunteers

Community Connector has a Bus Ambassador program, under which people that ride the bus assist others who want to ride but are not familiar with the system. In addition, people receiving benefits under the City Welfare Program who are mandated to undertake community service have cleaned buses and picked up trash.

External Volunteer-Based Transportation Groups

Transportation for All is a volunteer group under the direction of Food and Medicine that advocates for more transit in the area served by Community Connector.

Coordination/Outreach/Partnerships/Unmet Needs

- St. Joseph's Hospital is working to establish a bus shelter to encourage staff and patients to ride the bus.
- Community Connector is working with a number of agencies on an employee rides program including Penobscot Community Health Care, Acadia and Maine Cancer Care.
- Intercity Connections: Community Connector makes connections to three of the four intercity bus routes in Bangor. Connections are made with West's Transportation at the Bangor Airport Mall. Connections are made with Concord Coachlines on Union Street, which is also a stop for

Cyr Bus. There is no connection to Greyhound as that station is in Hermon which is beyond the Community Connector service area.

- Bangor Housing is working to establish a bus shelter on Davis Rd.
- Bangor DHHS is working to establish a bus shelter on Corporate Dr. for their new office space.

Innovations/Creative Approaches

- 1. Municipal partners group.** Beginning in FY 2018, Community Connector worked with BACTS to start a municipal partners group, composed of representatives of the communities served by Community Connector. The purpose of the group is to bring people to table to discuss issues of mutual concern and to help formulate strategies to address those issues.
- 2. Bus ambassador program.** As previously discussed, the Bus Ambassador program help new riders become familiar and comfortable riding the bus.
- 3. Local share funding.** For many years, local costs were based on a formula whereby various costs are divided according to the formula. Beginning in FY 2019, costs will be assigned based on an average of hours driven. Community Connector worked with the municipal partners group to develop the new funding formula.
- 4. Special occasion trolley.** The City of Bangor purchased a special occasion trolley with city funds, which can be used for civic, non-profit, or school purposes at a cost of \$100/hour.

Major Challenges

- **Age of the fleet.** The older buses are a major challenge because of high maintenance costs (in FY 2017, these costs amount to \$702,000 or 28% of the total \$2.5 million budget. Five buses have over 500,000 miles on them.
- **Cultural barriers.** There are cultural barriers, based on negative stereotypes, which prevent some people from riding the bus.
- **Driver retention.** Hiring, training and retaining drivers and administrative staff continue to be an ongoing challenge.
- **Additional hours of service.** While there has been some demand for additional hours of service in the evening, the potential for expansion is limited because of the poor condition of many of the older buses, and the difficulty of finding and retaining bus drivers. Bus maintenance would have to be reconfigured to accommodate later hours.
- **Advertising dollars.** Community Connector lost a major source of advertising revenue when U.S. Cellular stopped advertising on the buses. Finding new sources of advertising revenue has been a challenge, despite working with the Bangor Chamber of Commerce to reach out to businesses that may be interested in purchasing advertising.

Summary of Public Participation

During the period of July 2017 through June 2018, Community Connector staff participated in a number of public events, including:

1. Senior Expo.
2. University of Maine Student Orientation.
3. University of Maine Foreign Student Orientation.
4. Eastern Maine Community College Student Orientation.
5. Husson University Student Orientation.
6. Group meetings with Transportation For All.
7. Bangor House senior/disabled outreach.