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**MaineDOT Locally  
Coordinated Transit Plan  
Region 2**

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**Cranberry Isles Commuter  
Ferry**

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**FY 2013 - 2017**

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## **CRANBERRY ISLES COMMUTER FERRY**

### **Description**

#### **Transit provider**

Provider: Town of Cranberry Isles  
Contact person: Denise McCormick  
Address: 59 Main Street, PO Box 56, Islesford, Maine 04646  
Telephone: 207-244-4475  
Email: denise@cranberryisles-me.gov  
Website: www.cranberryisles-me.gov

#### **Service**

Service area: Hancock County  
Type of service: Commuter ferry service

#### **Geographic area**

The Town of Cranberry Isles contracts with Downeast Windjammer, a privately owned company, to operate the winter commuter service between Great Cranberry Island and Little Cranberry Island and Northeast Harbor, and with Sail Acadia, also a privately owned company, to operate the summer service between the two islands and Southwest Harbor.

#### **Commuter ferry overview**

The Cranberry Isles Commuter Service is one of three ferry services providing transportation from Great Cranberry Island and Little Cranberry Island to the mainland. It supplements the year-round service provided by the Beal and Bunker Mailboat which arrives at the islands and Northeast Harbor at different times, and the Cranberry Cove Ferry which runs a seasonal service to Manset and Southwest Harbor. The Commuter Ferry allows islanders to arrive on the mainland earlier and return later than they could otherwise by taking the Mailboat.

#### **How tickets and passes are sold and documented**

Tickets are sold on the boat either by cash or credit card. Passengers can buy books of 10 punch tickets. The ferry operator keeps track of student riders and the Town subsequently bills the school department. One-way fares are \$6 for Cranberry Isles residents and \$8 for non-residents.

#### **Financial support**

Financial support for the commuter service comes from the Town of Cranberry Isles, from fares, and from MaineDOT. Municipal support from taxes is about \$35,000, or roughly 2% of the Town's annual most recent budget of \$1,794,407.

## **Commuter ferry passengers**

The people who most often use the ferry are commuters who work on the mainland and students. Other island residents, seasonal residents, and visitors sometimes also ride. Contractors are able to ride the ferry on its early morning trip from Northeast Harbor (NEH) and the late afternoon service to NEH.

## **Service by Route**

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*Simply the number of trips cannot measure the importance of transit services. Transit dependent individuals (including those with disabilities) require access to basic services in addition to all of the benefits their communities offer.*

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The commuter ferry leaves Northeast Harbor at 6:00 a.m., picking up passengers on Great Cranberry and leaving about 6:15 a.m., then picking up passengers on Islesford and leaving about 6:30 a.m. The ferry arrives at NEH around 7:00 a.m. and is met by a school bus that takes students to Mt. Desert High School. In addition to mainland workers and students, the commuter service is used by people who have morning appointments on the mainland and wish to return on the 11:00 a.m. mailboat.

The afternoon commuter service departs NEH at 5 pm in a counter clockwise service dropping off passengers and picking up NEH bound passengers, then to Little Cranberry Island for the same at 5:30 and returning to NEH, arriving at 5:45 pm. The commuter ferry carries an average of 6-7 people per day. During the summer months, the commuter ferry brings passengers to Northeast Harbor and makes an additional stop at Southwest Harbor. The Town of Cranberry Isles leases a parking lot at Northeast Harbor for its passengers but owns a parking lot at Southwest Harbor for its passengers.

## **Importance of Commuter Ferry to the Region and its Economy**

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*Public transit does more than ensure transit dependent individuals can move around their communities, and provide a safe alternative to using an automobile. The economy benefits on a variety of levels through residents and people visiting the community accessing local supermarkets, shopping centers, healthcare services and local neighborhood businesses.*

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In 2010, the Town of Cranberry Isles began a 2-year experimental commuter ferry that island residents hoped would spur island economic development and make it more attractive for people to live on Great Cranberry or Islesford and commute to work or high school on the mainland (there is a K-8 school on

Islesford that has about 10 students). The commuter service supplemented the regular ferry service that brings passengers from both islands to and from Northeast Harbor (and to Southwest Harbor in the summer months). The 2-year experiment was based on a contract with two private operators who provided the service.

In 2012, residents of Cranberry Isles unanimously supported continuation of the commuter service at their March 10, 2012 Town Meeting under the provisions of a 3-year contract. In the fall of 2012, the Town subsequently entered into a 3-year contract with Downeast Windjammer, a privately owned company, to operate the winter commuter service, and with Sail Acadia, also a privately owned company, to operate the summer service.

For years, the winter ferry schedule made it difficult to reach the mainland hub or NEH much before 9:00 a.m., while the last boat back to the islands left NEH at 3:30 p.m. This schedule made it difficult for island residents to work on the mainland, and it made it impossible for island students to reach Mount Desert Island High School before classes began. For people with non-fishing jobs or children in high school, it was necessary to move to Mount Desert Island between October and May to meet these obligations.

The commuter ferry allows people to live on Great Cranberry Island or Little Cranberry Island and commute to jobs or school on the mainland. This, in turn, helps sustain a greater year-round population and a stronger local community and economy.

## Accomplishments

- Finalized and signed a 3-year contract for the commuter service.
- Obtained strong local support for the commuter service.
- Secured landing rights at Northeast Harbor for the 6 am departure and 7:00 a.m. delivery of island passengers to Northeast Harbor, and the 5:00 p.m. boarding of passengers for the trip to the islands and return to NEH, departing GCI at 5:15pm and LCI at 5:30pm
- Improved lighting and handrails at Great Cranberry Island and Islesford.

## Service gaps

- **Geographic coverage.** Not applicable. The commuter service does not serve Baker, Sutton and Bear Islands, but seldom does anyone need a ride from these islands. There are only 3-4 houses on Baker Island; Sutton Island is only seasonally occupied, and Bear Island has only one residence.
- **Time of day/weekend.** Not applicable.
- **Clients.** Not applicable.

- **Service quality.** Not an issue. Passengers appear to be happy with the service. The Town supports the service, as evidenced by the recent municipal decision to enter into a 3-year contract with Downeast Windjammer to provide commuter service.

## **Future Priorities and Projects**

The future priorities and projects shown below reflect future investments that were first identified by Cranberry Isles Commuter Ferry and subsequently modified and prioritized by the public at a MaineDOT-sponsored Regional Transit Summit that was held at the Ellsworth City Hall auditorium in Ellsworth on December 13, 2013. Attendees were provided the opportunity to add a potential project or identify an issue for consideration at any time during the meeting.

In order to ensure maximum participation, MaineDOT sent an invitational letter, an agenda, and a list of potential priorities and projects to riders, social service agencies, healthcare facilities, chambers of commerce, private businesses, other transit operators in the region, members of the general public who had previously expressed an interest in transportation issues, and area legislators. Invitees unable to attend were afforded the opportunity to e-mail MaineDOT and make comments and recommendations both prior to, and following the meeting—these comments were included when compiling the ratings for each identified project.

A representative of MaineDOT provided an outline of the purpose and need for public input in this planning process to attendees and encouraged their full participation. A representative from each transit agency in attendance provided a brief history of their services and fielded questions from attendees. A facilitator presented the provider-identified future projects to the group and invited discussion which gave them with an opportunity to add to the list of potential projects. Attendees were provided with scoring sheets and rated each project. This process was repeated for each FTA/MaineDOT funded transit agency in the region.

The results of the Regional Transit Summit are reflected in two tables on the following pages. The first table shows the number of people who identified each of the priorities/projects as very important, somewhat important, not important, and no opinion. The second table shows the percentage ranking of the various priorities and projects in priority order.

**NUMERICAL RATING OF PRIORITIES AND PROJECTS  
Cranberry Isles Commuter Ferry**

<b>Future Priorities and Potential Projects</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Little Importance</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
A. The highest priority is to be able to take passengers on the 6:00 a.m. empty run from Northeast Harbor to Great Cranberry and Islesford.	10	2	1	8
B. Continue commuter ferry service.	14	3	0	4
C. Improve docks in length and wave protection to make landings safer and easier in rough weather.	5	9	1	6

**PERCENTAGE RATING OF PRIORITIES AND PROJECTS  
Cranberry Isles Commuter Ferry**

<b>Future Priorities and Potential Projects</b>	<b>Very Important to Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Little Importance to No Opinion</b>
B. Continue commuter ferry service.	81%	19%
C. Improve docks in length and wave protection to make landings safer and easier in rough weather.	67%	33%
A. The highest priority is to be able to take passengers on the 6:00 a.m. empty run from Northeast Harbor to Great Cranberry and Islesford.	57%	43%

MaineDOT Locally Coordinated Transit Plan - Cranberry Isles

<b>TOWN OF CRANBERRY ISLES</b>		
<b>Annual Report – Past Two Years</b>		
	<b>FY 2011</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>
<b>Volunteer Resources</b>		
Volunteer Drivers		
<b>Vehicles</b>		
Number of Active Vehicles in Fleet	1	1
Number of Inactive Vehicles in Fleet	1	1
Number of Spare Vehicles in Fleet		
Number of Vehicles Disposed		
Number of Vehicles Sold		
Number of ADA Accessible Vehicles	2	2
<b>Annual Operating Expenses</b>		
Annual Transit Operating Expenses*	\$50,522	\$49,181
Annual Social Services Operating Expenses		
<b>Annual Administrative Expenses</b>		
Annual Transit Administrative Expenses		
Annual Social Services Administrative Expenses		
<b>Annual Operating Revenues</b>		
Fare Revenues**	\$10,437	\$7,784
Transit Contract Revenues		
Social Service Contract Revenues		
FTA-Federal Operating Assistance	\$19,512	\$17,349
MaineDOT – State Operating Assistance		
Local Operating Funds	\$31,010	\$31,832
Total Annual Operating Revenues	\$50,522	\$49,181
<b>FTA-Sources of Capital Funds</b>		
FTA-Federal Capital Assistance		
MaineDOT-State Capital Assistance		
Local Capital Funds		
Total Capital Funds		
<b>Annual Miles</b>		
Annual Transit Miles (vehicle miles)	1,245	1,245
Annual Social Service Miles (passenger miles)		

MaineDOT Locally Coordinated Transit Plan – Cranberry Isles

		<b>FY 2011</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>
<b>Annual Vehicle Hours</b>			
<b>Annual Passenger Trips</b>			
	Annual Transit Passenger Trips	1,491	1,112
	Annual Social Services Passenger Trips		
<b>Safety</b>			
	Fatalities	0	0
	Major Incidents	0	0
	Major Injuries	0	0

\*Cost to town after fare revenues are deducted from ferry service provider's bill to town

\*\*Fares are collected by private operator and deducted from amount billed to town

<b>Capital Plan</b>	
<b>Project</b>	<b>Amount</b>
LCI Dock Extension, new wave fencing & Mooring Reconfiguration	\$900,000
GCI Dock Extension and Wave fence.	\$800,000

<b>Town of Cranberry Isles Trips, Vehicle Miles Past Two Fiscal Years</b>				
<b>ROUTE</b>	<b>One-Way Trips</b>		<b>Vehicle Miles</b>	
	<b>FY 2011</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2011</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>
Northeast Harbor/Cranberry Isles	1,491	1,112	1,245	1,245

<b>Town of Cranberry Isles Revenues By Passenger Fare Category Past Two Fiscal Years*</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>FY 2011</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>
Full Fare	\$9,093	\$6,811
Student	\$1,344	\$973
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,437</b>	<b>\$7,784</b>

\*Fares are collected by private operator and deducted from amount billed to town

MaineDOT Locally Coordinated Transit Plan – Cranberry Isles

<b>TOWN OF CRANBERRY ISLES</b>		
<b>Revenues And Expenses – Past Two Years</b>		
	<b>FY 2011</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>		
State (non-capital, administered by MaineDOT)		
Other State MDOT Bond for Used Bus Purchase		
FTA:		
5307 (small urban area systems)		
5309 (capital assistance) State of Good Repair		
5310 (elderly, disabled)		
5311 (rural area systems)	\$19,512	\$17,349
5316 (job access, reverse commute)		
5317 (new freedom)		
Passes – Monthly Pass		
Fares		
Advertising		
Contract Revenue		
Community Support	\$31,010	\$31,832
Other		
MaineCare		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$50,522</b>	<b>\$49,181</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Ferry provider contract	\$50,522	\$49,181
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$50,522</b>	<b>\$49,181</b>

MaineDOT Locally Coordinated Transit Plan – Cranberry Isles

<b>TOWN OF CRANBERRY ISLES</b>		
<b>Budget For FY 2013 and 2014</b>		
	<b>FY 2011</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>		
State (non-capital, administered by MaineDOT)		
Other State MDOT Bond for Used Bus Purchase		
FTA:		
5307 (small urban area systems)		
5309 (capital assistance) State of Good Repair		
5310 (elderly, disabled)		
5311 (rural area systems)	\$22,000	\$22,000
5316 (job access, reverse commute)		
5317 (new freedom)		
Passes – Monthly Pass		
Fares		
Advertising		
Contract Revenue		
Community Support	\$35,456	\$35,456
Other		
MaineCare		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$57,456</b>	<b>\$57,456</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Ferry provider contract	\$57,456	\$57,456
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$57,456</b>	<b>\$57,456</b>