

**MaineDOT Locally Coordinated Transit Plan**

**Region 1**

**Aroostook Regional Transportation System  
(ARTS)**

**FY 2013 – FY 2017  
Locally Coordinated Plan Update**

**Updated May, 2017**

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**Region 1  
Aroostook County and  
Danforth in Washington County and Patten in Penobscot County.**

**AROOSTOOK REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

**Summary of Service Changes since FY 2012**

- Service continues within Region One providing weekly opportunity for transportation to every town in Region One.

**Accomplishments since FY 2012**

1. **Working with Local Contractor.** ARTS continues to work with Aroostook Area Agency on Aging within a MeFAF grant to identify and develop solutions in assisting seniors get to medical appointments who are non-MaineCare clients.
2. **Non-Traditional Riders.** ARTS has provided an increase in transportation for non-traditional riders within Region 1 within the last two years. The non-traditional riders include Amish communities and general public travelling from town to town.
3. **Financial Funding Deficit.** ARTS reviewed the bus schedules and implemented changes to the bus schedules and decreased staffing to offset the financial funding deficit while still maintaining a creative efficiency in operations that continues to meet Region 1 transportation needs and within the budget restrictions. These changes have allowed ARTS to sustain a positive balance.
4. **Helping Other Agencies.** ARTS has worked numerous times with other agencies to assure their transportation needs were met. Examples: Assist in providing a licensed driver to Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP) so they could continue to transport their pre-k/daycare clients to their program when ACAP has no driver available, worked with Cary Medical Center L'Acadia (intermediate care facility) and Maine Veteran Association when their vehicles are unable to transport and worked with Pines Health Services to get their clients to medical appointments that were non-MaineCare eligible.

**Projects and Priorities Identified in the FY 2013-2017 Locally Coordinated Plan**

1. **High Quality Service.** Since 2012, ARTS has continued to maintain and provide high quality demand response transportation for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and the general public within budget restraints as well as limited staff resources.
2. **Additional Contracting.** ARTS has worked with a local contractor, Aroostook Area Agency on Aging (AAAA) to assist non-MaineCare seniors in getting to medical appointments by using volunteers who transport clients in their personal vehicle. The clients are billed for their

transportation. In addition to volunteers, AAAA has used a handicapped van with a volunteer. Their volunteer drivers have received training by an ARTS PASS trainer to help assist and secure passengers in the vehicle. Last year, this program provided 670 trips to/from medical appointments. ARTS is working with AAAA to transition this program over to ARTS. ARTS and AAAA continue to work together in recruiting volunteers throughout Aroostook County. Using volunteers will enhance transportation for all clients.

- 3. Additional Service Days.** ARTS continues to review ridership to the four HUB communities (Fort Kent, Caribou, Presque Isle, and Houlton) in Aroostook County. According to the ridership, day of service and/or times of service, it's a continuous review to see where the additional transportation services are needed. Presently, services to/from Caribou are done daily with two to three units depending on the day of week where multiple trips are provided. Service to Presque Isle has increased due to the fact that the other HUB communities have inefficient stores and medical providers. This service is provided to/from Presque Isle to Caribou with multiple trips on Wednesday as well as a single trip on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Ridership varies during the year for a couple of reason. Summer ridership is a lot different than winter ridership due to clients driving in the summer and storing their vehicles in the winter. Ridership variation also depends on whether it is the beginning of the month or the end of the month. Either time period can change our ridership by 50 to 100 trips per day.

- 4. Change to Brand.** ARTS has promoted service to a broader community which includes non-traditional community members (seniors and/or individuals with a disability) such as the Amish population. This promotion has increased ridership from Fort Fairfield to Caribou/Presque Isle and Smyrna/Sherman to Houlton.
- 5. Building/Vehicle Purchases.** The garage roof was replaced in June, 2014. During this same period, ARTS received three ramp equipped mini-vans, three school buses and seven general public buses. These vehicles have replaced units that were past their useful life. ARTS has submitted for two low floor ramp buses that will replace two more buses that are past their useful lives.
- 6. New Freedom Grant.** ARTS received a New Freedom Grant that helped to enhance transportation services. ARTS expanded service for the Houlton area and Caribou to/from Presque Isle. Once the grant expired, ARTS continued the service until the Houlton area couldn't sustain itself and this run was eliminated. The Houlton bus schedule was changed to reflect the elimination. The Caribou to/from Presque Isle route has sustained itself.
- 7. Develop Strategies for Deficit.** ARTS has successfully addressed the deficit by decreased staffing, adjusting current staffing hours, and taking advantage of lower fuel prices. Local contracts have remained constant, the DHHS contract varies yearly (currently in an RFP process), and rides generated through the non-emergency broker system continue to decrease. The MaineDOT contract helped ARTS manage the deficit.
- 8. Weekend Service.** Currently, ARTS provides weekly service to every town in Aroostook County. Expanding service to weekends is not financially feasible at this time due to limited funds.

## **New Topics of Interest**

The following ideas were identified at a public transit workshop held on October 11, 2016, at the University of Maine Presque Isle Campus Center.

It was explained to those in attendance that support for a topic of interest does not guarantee its implementation. Transit providers face many challenges, not least of which are budget considerations, as well as opportunities that may not be foreseen at this time.

In addition, MaineDOT reserves the right to address service gaps by redirecting funds to other groups and organizations, even though such actions could negatively impact one or more of the identified areas of interest summarized below.

The new topics on interest from the audience included the following:

1. Continue to upgrade the fleet of vehicles.
2. Provide additional services for veterans.
3. Conduct a survey of riders.
4. Provide an in-town bus service in Van Buren.
5. Expand other in-town services.
6. Provide more short-trip services.
7. Provide personal services transportation.
8. Implement a volunteer feeder program.
9. Coordinate available medical services with transit.
10. Collaborate with other transit providers.
11. Improve transportation to employment.
12. Implement a fixed route, circulating service.
13. Conduct a feasibility study in Presque Isle for a fixed or flex route system.

**One-Way Trips FY 2013 – 2016**

<b>ARTS Demand Response Trips</b>				
	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>	<b>FY 2016</b>
General Public	41,694	34,693	34,711	30,193
MaineCare	174,204	0	0	0
DHHS Other	6,940	8,340	7,034	10,377
Other Contracts	14,644	32,836	28,607	27,528
<b>Total</b>	<b>237,484</b>	<b>75,869</b>	<b>70,352</b>	<b>68,098</b>

**Public Participation Summary**

Public participation has played a central role in planning and providing general public transit services in Aroostook County. ARTS 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.

- May 2015** Met with Tim Goff with the Fort Fairfield Chamber of Commerce to work with them in doing a senior driver expo. Cary Medical Center (hospital) and Aroostook Area Agency on Aging (elderly) were included.
- May 2015** Met with Joy Barressi-Saucier and The Aroostook Medical Center (TAMC-hospital) about what they feel transportation needs are going forward.
- May 2015 & 2016** Participates in a yearly senior expo put on by Aroostook Area Agency on Aging which includes discussions on elderly transportation needs.
- May 2015-2017** Attend monthly meetings with a Thriving in Place group to discuss senior problems and solutions. Lack of transportation options is always on the prior list.
- May 2015** Met with City Manager, Martin Puckett, along with health services departments, social services agencies and school department (SAD#1) to discuss a possible Presque Isle Intra-City Shuttle bus service.
- June 2016** Met with Aroostook County Action Program representative to discuss problems with the mobility of low income people trying to get transportation to services.
- October 2016** Attended a Region 1 Transit public transit workshop held on October 11, 2016, at the University of Maine Presque Isle, Campus Center.

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- November 2016*** Met with City of Caribou officials and the Caribou Rotary Club officials and discussed transportation concerns within Caribou and the surrounding towns.
- November 2016*** Met at Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP) to discuss issues for low income, seniors, individuals with handicapped, and others in the Aroostook communities and to resolve the issues.
- November 2016*** Attended a Visioning Workshop Transportation held by Aroostook Band of MicMac and Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) representative, Charles Rutkowski, to discuss transportation issues dealing the tribes and non-tribe residents.
- December 2016*** Talks with both Fish River Health Services and Katahdin Valley Health Services along with executing a Letter of Agreement/Understanding for both.