

# Public Transit Advisory Council

May 10, 2021

8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

## Remote Access:

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://mainedot.zoom.us/j/91503596590?pwd=WXNuKzllUmdiUEpmUkI1QkdhcWpmUT09>

Meeting ID: 915 0359 6590

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## AGENDA

- 8:30 AM Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review
- 8:45 AM Approve January 2020 Meeting Minutes
- 8:50 AM MaineDOT Updates
- 9:10 AM Review of Biennial Report Statutory Requirements, 2021 Biennial Report and Progress Made on 2019 Recommendations to Date
- 9:30 AM Highlights of Relevant State Initiatives:
- Age-Friendly State Plan
  - DHHS Transportation Programs Evaluation
- 10:00 AM Roundtable – Announcements, Recent and Upcoming Efforts
- 10:15 AM Public Comment
- 10:25 AM Next Steps, Next Meeting, Report Finalization
- 10:30 AM Adjourn

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## Public Transit Advisory Council

### Meeting Minutes of January 17, 2020 (DRAFT)

Note: Decisions and commitments in *bold italic* type.

Members in attendance: Sandy Buchanan, Chris Chop, Mary Ann Hayes, Jonathan LaBonte, Rick Langley, Susan Lessard, Jess Maurer, Zoe Miller, Al Schutz, Duane Scott, Richard Taylor, Giselle White, Jen Williams. Attending by phone: Lisa Feldman, Katherine Freund, Casey Gilbert, Greg Jordan, Marcia Larkin, Patricia Quinn, Connie Reed, Tom Reinauer, Rep. Bettyann Sheats, Paul Towle.

Liaisons in attendance: Carolann Oullette-DECD, Roger Bondeson-DHHS, Kimberly Smith-DOL

Others in attendance: Lori Brann-clerk, Barbie-Jo Lord, Jen Brickett, Michael Hallundbaek, Nate Moulton, Steve Cole, Teresa Savoy, Elswyth Strassberger, Bruce Van Note. Attending by phone: Joy Saucier, Jay Kamm, Dawn Roberts, Liz Ray.

The meeting was called to order at 9:04. Welcome by Mary Ann and introductions by all. During introductions, Marcia shared this comment received from a rider of the Lynx who appreciates their service: "I'm now able to see my husband of 65 years in a nursing home."

No changes were made to the agenda.

**April 2019 minutes. *Motion to approve as presented by Jess, seconded by Duane. Unanimous.***

Working Cars for Working Families Program: Description of this program provided by Liz Ray. It is a program under development by the Office of Family Independence at DHHS and is a statutory requirement. A competitive procurement process will follow in the spring to seek vendor or vendors to provide transportation options for eligible families in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program with the launch anticipated by September 1, 2020. Hoping to have rulemaking completed in early May with an RFP posted by the end of May. The goal is to solve transportation barriers for families and to find solutions for members to engage in the workforce. It is understood that there may be multiple options and creative solutions are needed. The name of the program is deceptive as access to public transportation is one of the options that will be considered.

PTAC: Mary Ann provided an overview of the statute changes regarding terms. Members' terms have been adjusted. She then reviewed the by-laws and noted that the PTAC aims to meet twice per year with a statutory requirement of at least once. No changes were proposed to the by-laws.

Blue Ribbon Commission: Jess updated the group of the five meetings held to-date. A draft document was developed outlining information collected and considered. A subcommittee is trying to reach consensus on next steps. One recommendation is to allow the commission additional meetings over the five that were initially authorized. They are seeking four additional meetings and to issue a final report. Topics at the meetings have included: DOT's reliance on \$100M in annual bonding and existing federal funding; the current unmet need of \$232M; decreased reliance in bonding; increase in the gas tax,

tire/auto parts, car rentals; adding tolls to non-toll roads. The group understands that finding solutions that are politically acceptable to all committee members is challenging.

Economic Development Strategy: Monthly meetings were held to discuss economic issues in Maine and in the early fall held listening sessions across state. The final report included three goals: Increase workforce by 75K over next 10 years, increase average income of Maine earners by 10%, increase product value. The report sets goals and objectives but does not include tactical solutions. This is a state economic plan (not just the Governor's) and needs long term support. A more educated workforce is more productive and increases GDP. It will come together as partnerships are developed and more collaboration in growing local talent, attracting new talent, broadband connectivity, providing supporting infrastructure (transportation, child care and affordable housing), business environment and hubs of excellence. There is a focus on innovation and R&D. Maine's average wage is now 75% of national average. Maine's production per person less than national average.

Maine Climate Council, Transportation Working Group: This group is led by MaineDOT Chief Engineer Joyce Taylor and Transportation Demand Management consultant Sara Cushman. It has held three meetings and now is breaking up into subgroups to address rural, urban/suburban, freight/trucking and resilience/adaptation strategies. There is a lot to learn with no easy solutions. There will be trade-offs. There is widespread consensus of the need to improve carpooling, provide buses in rural areas, reduce cars, reduce VMT, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Age-Friendly State: Maine is the 7<sup>th</sup> state to join the AARP Age Friendly Network. There are 70 communities in the network and 60 more are working on age-friendly initiatives. The age friendly concept comes from the World Health Organization. Bowdoinham was the first town in the state to become an age-friendly community. Maine is committed to collaborate on meeting all 8 domains with the initial focus on transportation. There is real interest in understanding how the brokerage system impacted the public transportation system and how to redesign the system while meeting public law. The eight (8) WHO domains are: Outdoor spaces and public places; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; work and civic engagement; communications and information; community and health services.

DHHS coordination efforts: Commissioner Lambrew wants collaboration between programs and agencies and is seeking to improve and align different transportation programs. Services are siloed from other state agencies, and within DHHS also. DHHS is reviewing all systems and has agreed on performance metrics and safety programs. The DHHS offices will jointly issue an RFP this spring to evaluate the existing programs and survey the beneficiaries of each program for quality, access, and comparison. This was last done in 2014 for NEMT only. Hopeful to identify key areas for improvement. Attracting and retaining drivers is a challenge.

MTA Directory: A new directory of public transportation services is to be printed within the next month. Sought to be more user friendly. More generic, removed specific names. Tourism regions were used as basis.

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CCAM Strategic Plan: There are 130 federal programs to support transportation. Each program has its own requirements which make coordination very challenging. At the federal level there is progress to make improvements. Strategies seek to improve access, strengthen partnerships, enhance cost effectiveness, and demonstrate innovated coordination. May seek congressional action to solve issues. SBIR discretionary grant is to develop technology to track and coordinate transportation costs by trips. There are 3 technical assistance centers to help with developing coordination. Mobility Management training is being held across the country with one in Springfield, MA March 25-26. Monthly webinars will feature each agency explaining its transportation programs beginning in February.

Status Update on other PTAC Recommendations: An update had been provided in the packet. There were no further questions raised.

Commissioner's Remarks: MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note joined the meeting and spoke in support of everyone's efforts. He said there is a window to do something now to improve financial support for public transportation programs. Both he and the DHHS commissioner are willing but a plan needs to be developed that outline the strategies and priorities to sell to legislature. DOT will need to work with DHHS to develop a plan that breaks down challenges into parts that can be implemented and built upon. Commissioner Van Note thanked the members of the group for their efforts. He looks forward to working with the other commissioners to make something happen.

Moving Maine: Zoe provided an overview and update of work to-date. Mobility management is a coordination effort to help communities and individuals create and manage their mobility options. Following a Moving Maine conference held in May 2018, collaborators and steering committee developed the statewide model and then applied for FTA funding late in 2018. Awards were announced in May 2019 and work is now beginning. Peer learning efforts are ongoing and working. Objectives seek to share best practices, spur innovation, and connect stakeholders. While the grant focuses on pilots in southern Maine, Moving Maine overall seeks to facilitate regional mobility management networks as were identified during the Locally Coordinated Plan outreach. The final outcome will be providing more access to affordable and convenient transportation, starting locally and growing statewide. Technical assistance is provided through the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center. There are three program goals (see presentation on Moving Maine sent via email by Mary Ann for more detail):

- Goal 1. Improve coordination among transportation stakeholders statewide
- Goal 2. Improve access to Transportation Resources and Information (one call one click service).
- Goal 3. Build Capacity for Mobility Management Programs across Maine.

PTAC Workplan 2020: Mary Ann noted that it is only in odd-numbered years that a report is due to the Governor and Legislature so there are no statutory requirements this year. Zoe-jump on commissioner's comment to prioritize needs and how we would spend the money. Lisa-need a statewide trip planner or one-call network. Mary Ann-working with Maine turnpike authority/agile mile to develop the all-purpose trip planner at no charge to MaineDOT, also working with GoVermont to mirror their model. Need to get all routes mapped out. Volunteers for the working group: Giselle, Duane, Chris. Giselle-veterans now receive healthcare in the community. VA is authorizing payment for care in the

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community more than ever. Calls now for community care. Has a volunteer driver for downeast area with vehicle. Machias driver gets riders to Bangor. Friends in action can also give rides to Bangor. Wreaths Across America also gives rides to appointments. The trip planner would allow more collaboration. Mary Ann-PTAC working group for finding funding for public transportation: Sandy, Carolann, Susan, Greg, PACTS designee.

Public Comment: Elswyth-Seniors need transportation to be able to age in place. Difficulty to walk or bike along Route 1. Can't live car free like she would like. More trips on public transit decrease the need to spend money on roads and bridges.

Meeting Feedback/Announcements/Comments: Funding prioritization-Is that for operations? Yes, funding gap. Promote more public transit. Glad to join. Informative. ATRC and LATC will have an RFP this spring to a transit study for the Lewiston Auburn transit system. Augusta: writing comprehensive plan to include the 8 domains of age friendly communities. Augusta certified by WHO as age friendly. As volunteer at Maine General, sees how patient transportation works and doesn't work. Bucksport age friendly through AARP. Transportation is number 1 need. People don't coordinate – silo system. Maine Housing-Older adult projects to begin with bond funds. Mostly rural housing. Giselle-VA thanks Penquis Lynx. Piscataquis most highly rural county in Maine and Lynx provides the trips. Such a relief that Lynx provides these trips. Marcia-Lynx also has Penobscot county grant for VA appointments. Community Concepts provides rides for dialysis for veterans. MCPT helped with emergency rides to dialysis from Belfast to Rockland. Appreciates partnerships with Maine Transit Association. Maine Cancer Foundation-working with oncology in Scarborough Maine Health to partner with uber and lyft for non-mainecare patients.

Adjourn at 11:27. Next meeting TBD. Mary Ann invited members to request a meeting if desired.

**Public Transit Advisory Council 2019 Report  
and 2019-2023 Locally Coordinated Plan for Public Transit  
Recommendations Status Update – April 2021**

**RECOMMENDED PRIORITY STRATEGIES, ASSIGNED ACTION STEPS & STATUS UPDATE**

**A. Immediate (2019-20)**

**Increase State Operational Funding to Transit Agencies (Lead = Legislature and MaineDOT)**

- Increase state funding share from 9% to 25% of operational costs in FY2020 (\$4.25 million) and to 35% national average (\$6.8 million, \$5 per capita) in FY2021 – Funding source TBD
- MaineDOT may utilize a portion of the funds for statewide initiatives such as the Moving Maine Mobility Network, volunteer driver support system, rider information systems and cost-effective centralized purchasing of shared infrastructure and services.
- Distribute 50% of the remaining state funding by formula to be used as needed and 50% on a competitive basis for service expansions requiring the new locally-sourced matching funds
  - **MaineDOT is currently evaluating State funding for public transportation, and has also updated its reporting numbers to more accurately reflect the total amounts provided. Previous reporting did not include funds for the Maine State Ferry Service, NNEPRA/Downeaster and GO MAINE for example.**

**Accelerate Fleet Modernization (Lead = MaineDOT)**

- Pursue federal discretionary grants
  - **2019: MaineDOT supported fleet upgrade grant applications with matching funds for Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit (BSOOB), Greater Portland Transit District (METRO) and the Lewiston Auburn Transit Committee (citylink) as well as for the rural fleet. BSOOB and rural fleet grants awarded. Bangor applied for and received funding for Pickering Square Transit Hub redevelopment.**
  - **2020: Maine did well in 2020 discretionary grant applications. MaineDOT was awarded \$9M to support construction of the Acadia Gateway Center so did not apply for vehicle funding but provided match funding for successful FTA grants awarded to METRO for buses and Casco Bay Island Transit District (CBITD) for the Peaks Island hybrid propulsion ferry and shore charging system. Additional funds were also awarded to support the pier extension needed for the vessel. Bangor received FTA funding to support a system of bus stop shelters.**
- **Apply VW Environmental Mitigation Funds as match when eligible**
  - **Over \$7M has been programmed for transit investments, providing 20% match to federal funds for the purchase of 39 clean diesel vehicles. The VW funds are providing the majority share of funding for battery electric buses for BSOOB Transit and Metro, the shore power system for CBITD's new hybrid Peaks Island Ferry and replacement of the Thompson Ferry engine with a hybrid propulsion engine. All investments should be delivered by 2022.**
- Budget for state matching funds in transportation bond
  - **Matching funds for federal grants are included as needed in transportation bond requests. The VW funds have reduced the need for bond funds over the last few years but bonds have covered the need for gasoline-powered transit vehicle replacements used by most rural transit providers as well as replacing the pre-2009 diesel vehicles that did not qualify for VW funds. By 2022, all older diesel vehicles will have been replaced.**

- Prudently invest in electric and hybrid propulsion systems and charging infrastructure
- Greater Portland Transit District and Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit finalizing engineering for battery electric buses & charging infrastructure to be delivered in 2021. CBITD building hybrid propulsion ferry to replace the Machigonne II serving Peaks Island. MaineDOT exploring hybrid propulsion technologies for all future ferries and committed to Captain E. Frank Thompsen (serving Vinalhaven) hybrid engine replacement in 2022. MaineDOT following industry developments and will include all viable fuel and propulsion system options in transit bus bid specs as they become available.
- Seek assistance from FTA and AASHTO in addressing small transit bus manufacturing quality and delivery problems
  - At MaineDOT's request, AASHTO hosted a discussion and coordinated a survey of state vehicle purchase agents which returned mixed experiences.

#### Support Volunteer Driver Networks (Lead = MaineDOT)

- Develop scope of services
- Hire consultant using federal planning funds to provide collaborative technical assistance
- Evaluate after two years and propose budget going forward if justified
  - Consultant contract expected to be awarded in May 2021.

#### Launch Moving Maine Network (Co-Leads = Greater Portland Council of Governments, Maine Cancer Foundation, Maine Primary Care Association, MaineDOT)

- Secure core funding (FTA grant application pending); \$250,000 start-up funding for Network could be secured by state in FY2019 budget if funding is increased as proposed above
  - FTA funding secured in 2019. Maine Cancer Foundation replaced by MaineHousing as backbone team member. DHHS has also joined as backbone team member.
  - <https://www.gpcog.org/389/Moving-Maine-Network>
- Formalize steering committee
  - Complete and steering committee has been meeting regularly.
- Confirm goals and work plan (to include mobility navigator development plan)
  - Ongoing.
- Engage working groups
  - The Peer Learning and Professional Development Work Group has hosted several well-attended webinars in association with MassMobility, as well as two successful Moving Maine Network Gatherings. The Technology and Innovation Work Group has begun meeting and will oversee coordination of the many technology-related initiatives underway including the follow up from the Maine Transit Technology Summit held in July 2020. The Policy and Advocacy Work Group will be led by the Maine Primary Care Assn and began meeting in February, 2021.

#### Develop Medical Scheduling Pilot Program (Lead = Maine DHHS)

- Convene MaineCare Advisory Board to engage providers
  - Tried but unsuccessful in identifying willing medical providers in 2019.
- Work with Mobilize Maine working group to create framework
  - Maine Primary Care Assn is willing to work on this with its members once pandemic is under control.
- Identify pilot providers & region(s)
- Trial and record value to medical providers, patients and transit providers
- Evaluate and replicate

### Explore GoMaine Trip Planner (Co-Leads = MaineDOT and Maine Turnpike Authority)

- Create work plan and budget with technology consultants advised by GoVermont
  - Trip Planner with new capacity to serve individual trips of any type and with increased capacity overall was launched in June 2020 at no additional cost to the Turnpike Authority or State. Ridesharing was not able to be promoted since March with pandemic, so it is difficult to evaluate appreciation by users. A project team reporting to the Moving Maine Technology & Innovation Working Group is looking at GTSF Flex data for demand response routes, so that all public transit options could be included on the GO MAINE site.
- Perform cost-benefit analysis; evaluate and proceed accordingly (may require new funding)
  - MaineDOT to consider contributing to the cost of GTSF Flex data administration within its FTA Planning, Administration and Technical Assistance budgets. Further improvements will need to be evaluated.

### Foster Age-Friendly Community Development (Lead = Maine Council on Aging)

- Launch Municipal Task Force on Healthy Aging (Lead = Maine Council on Aging)
  - Phase 1 was completed in October 2019. Phase 2, entitled M-DASH (Municipal Data Across Sectors for Health), was launched in December 2019. Transportation is one of four key issues to be considered. Four pilot communities of different scales have been selected to demonstrate best practices: South Portland, Gray, Hallowell and Eastport. South Portland has gone first and developed the data dashboard that will be used by all; its top priority was fall prevention rather than transportation. A Steering Committee is being formed to guide the future of the initiative.
- Develop long range development and transit plan for southern Maine: Transit Tomorrow project (Lead = GPCOG/PACTS)
  - Final report released in early March: <https://www.gpcog.org/176/Transit-Tomorrow>
- Enable optional local and regional sales taxes with portions dedicated to public transportation, transportation-oriented development, transportation demand management strategies and Age-Friendly Community design (Lead = Maine Municipal Association, MPOs)

### Update Maine Transit Association Directory (Co-leads = Maine Transit Association and MaineDOT)

- Establish data repository and updating procedure
- Model print version after Southern Maine Mobility Guide <https://www.gpcog.org/mobility-for-all/>
  - Directory completed in early 2020. Available on the MaineDOT Public Transit page: <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/transit/>

### Deepen State Agency Coordination (Lead = MaineDOT)

- Department of Education (multi-use of buses & drivers, driver recruitment & training; transit buses on school grounds)
  - No progress to report. Maine Won't Wait Climate Action Plan calls for developing plans and incentives to migrate to electric and hybrid school and transit vehicles.
- Department of Labor (workforce transportation, employer-sponsored routes, driver recruitment & training)
  - First step proposed to assemble workforce transportation working group under Moving Maine umbrella.
- MaineHousing (transit-friendly development requirements and developer outreach; residential housing manager engagement as mobility managers)
  - Residential housing manager training to be incorporated into Southern Maine Mobility Solutions for Maine Grant pilot project under Moving Maine.

- Department of Economic and Community Development (employer-sponsored routes, age-friendly community development, tourism & outdoor recreation transport)
  - Included public transportation funding in Economic Development Strategy. Liaison assigned to PTAC.
- Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry (age-friendly community development)
  - Age-Friendly Steering Committee established. MaineDOT participated on the Committee and final report was released: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/Age-Friendly-State-Plan.pdf>
- Department of Health and Human Services (engage MaineCare medical providers in coordinated appointment scheduling; seek opportunities to enable multi-funder ridesharing; work with State and District Health Coordinating Councils and hospital networks to address transportation challenges for patients and workforce)
  - Commissioner Lambrew has convened high-level interagency meetings to explore coordinated transportation options. DHHS conducted outreach sessions on MaineCare transportation and rural health needs, is consolidating program performance standards; creating RFP for consultant to evaluate and recommend system efficiencies with DHHS programs and public transit; Office of MaineCare Services and DOT exploring shared ride options for longer distances – will require subsidy or risk share for operator. Following CCAM activities; hoping for federal initiatives to address regulatory barriers.
- Bureau of Motor Vehicles (CDL process)
  - No progress.

#### **B. Mid-Term (2021-23)**

- Develop Transit and RideSharing Promotional Campaign (after information is easy to access)
- Explore Coordinated Statewide Electronic Ticketing/Transit Pass System (following evaluation of METRO system implementation)
  - Project team formed to work on this under Moving Maine; same recommendation resulted from Transit Tech Summit in July 2020. MaineDOT worked with METRO and others to provide more detailed presentation on the DiriGo pass on April 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, currently in use by METRO, BSOOB and South Portland Bus Service.
- Explore Relationships with Independent Transportation Networks for End Mile Services
  - Moving Maine subcommittee is exploring data sharing requirements among providers to coordinate complete trips.
- Encourage Employer-Sponsored Transit Routes; develop and share models that work
  - Nothing yet initiated. Jackson Labs, one of the most involved employers in this realm, is joining the PTAC.

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