

Public Transit Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes of June 12, 2024 – Held via Zoom

PTAC Members in attendance: Ryan Neale, Stephanie Carver, Larry Allen, Maddie Jensen, Andrew Clark, Jess Maurer, Eamonn Dundon, Chris Hall, Michael Hallundbaek, Jay Kamm, Erin Binghamlib, Dana Knapp, Senator Brad Farrin, Katherine Freund, Jonathan Labonte, Barbara Schneider, Duane Scott, Amanda Dioszeghy, Josh Caldwell, Mike Tremblay, Chad Heid, Omolola Achuba, Cheryl Harkins, Cole Cochrane.

Others in attendance: Jennifer Grant, Lori Brann from MaineDOT; Megan Salvin, Disability Rights Maine; Natalie Bogart, NNEPRA; Emma Durand, Jackson Labs; Tom Reinauer, YCCAC; Zoe Miller, Moving Maine Network.

(Note: Substantive chats from this meeting are found at the end of the minutes.)

1. **Call to Order:** Chad called the Zoom meeting to order at 9:04 am.
2. **Ascertain Quorum:** It was determined that the quorum requirements were met.
3. **Approval of Previous Minutes:** Jess moved to approve the April 22 minutes, and Steph seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.
4. **MaineDOT Update:**
 - L/A to Portland commuter bus service: Ryan said that the cooperative agreement had been finalized for the new contracted bus service. The vendor selected was RTW Management out of Utah and the service will begin running in early July. Larry Allen asked about stops and schedules. Ryan responded that this is being discussed now, and MaineDOT will work with RTW on necessary adjustments once the service starts. MaineDOT will work with existing providers to coordinate schedules. At Cole's request, Ryan will share the RFP with the PTAC members.

Erin asked what the funding source is for this service. Funds are from state multimodal funding which is for rail, ports, bike/ped, aviation, etc. to supplement federal funding and local share. The selected proposal is for \$2.8M for two years.

Chad asked how performance metrics will be reported and if urbanized areas will be asked to provide funding. Ryan said that this is a two-year pilot with state funds and all metrics will be evaluated throughout.

Cole requested funding amounts for multimodal accounts and was referred to the state budget. Lori will prepare a query showing how this funding is distributed for projects.

Mike asked to meet with MaineDOT and RTW to provide coordination with Metro.
 - FY25 Funding Program: The \$2M allocated for SFY2024 has been fully expended. There is an additional \$5M dedicated to transit for SFY2025. \$3M will be for operating assistance with a \$2M set aside for other projects. The \$3 will be available July 1 and the other funding will be for

projects to advance transit objectives in the Maine State Transit Plan and Locally Coordinated Plan. Assignment letters will be issued in July for operating assistance.

Amanda asked what is defined as transit. Transit refers to passenger rail, passenger ferry, and bus.

Tom noted that he is current president of Maine Transit Association and said that the transit funding being discussed is \$3M plus regular transit funding of \$1.147M. Tom asked if all funding (urban and rural) will be distributed. MaineDOT staff answered yes.

New members: Chad noted that two new members, Jay Kamm and Representative Lydia Crafts, had been appointed. Jay introduced himself as the Senior Planner Northern Maine Development Commission.

- 5. Committee Structure Recommendation:** Chad and other members have met to identify committees and their roles and responsibilities. The five recommended committees are: Steering, State of Transit, Research & Policy, Equity, and Mobility Alternatives. Chad outlined each and said each would need a chair and volunteers. The PTAC will meet every other month, with committees meeting during the off month. The Council discussed the proposed committee structure.

Mobility Alternatives committee: Steph asked if this committee is part of the PTAC charter. Jess noted the importance of mobility alternatives as first and last mile options that feed the transit system. The transit system and volunteer driver networks could complement each other if they work together. Mobility management, GO MAINE, etc. should all be coordinated to build a stronger transit system that is better coordinated and less fragmented. Mobility alternatives besides public transit should be part of the discussion. Katherine noted the importance of volunteer drivers to public transit. Steph said that local match is always a challenge that could be explored.

Chad noted that he is seeking approval of these committees, or suggestions for modifications, and volunteers for each. Andrew shared that the focus of the Mobility Alternatives subcommittee on mobility for all, first/last mile to support transit system, and a system approach seems appropriate. Also, the bike and pedestrian advisory committee should be coordinated with these committees. Senator Farrin cautioned to stay focused on the PTAC charter or the legislature's Transportation Committee may lose interest. The PTAC should not duplicate the work of existing work groups.

Katherine thinks innovation and technology is missing, such as autonomous technology. Josh suggested this might fit with the Research Committee. Jess recommended that this group identify mobility options outside of the transit network and asked where GO MAINE fits into the discussion.

Chad summarized that the Mobility Alternatives Committee needs to include first/last mile, alignment with the Transportation Committee, and other publicly funded services. The committee will evaluate what is currently inside and outside of publicly funded transit and include a first/last mile systems approach.

Erin noted mobility management is a new concept and included in the state transit plan for the first time. The PTAC should include projects that have historically been outside of the scope of transit.

Jess stated that older adults need transportation alternatives as 70% live outside of an urbanized area or access to transit.

Chad modified the charge of the Mobility Alternatives committee (**see attached**). This revision needs a recommendation to move forward from here.

Erin stated that the Maine Department of Health and Human Services should be on the committee. Ryan noted that a DHHS representative is on the interested parties list and attends frequently.

Josh offered a motion to accept/adopt/approve the proposed committee structure with the modification to the charge of the Mobility Alternatives committee, seconded by Steph. The motion was approved unanimously.

6. Regional State of Transit Presentations:

The Council heard presentations from 2 of the 8 transit regions. These presentations provide an overview of services in those regions. Presentations are attached for Region 6 – Cumberland County and Region 8 – York County, southern Oxford County.

Chad thanked the presenters and noted the purpose is to show what currently exists for transit services. There were no comments on the presentations.

7. Discussion Items: Josh said the Council will meet every other month. Calendar holds have been sent out. MaineDOT will follow up with a Zoom link for the meetings. Committees will meet during the off months. The next full Council meeting is in August. Committees will begin meeting in July to bring items of discussion to the August Council meeting.

8. Public Comment: There was no public comment.

9. New Business/Meeting Feedback: Chad discussed the report due to the Legislature. MaineDOT provides administrative support, but the content is up to members of the Council. He encouraged members to participate in committees or help with the report. Chad will reach out for committee volunteers. Josh will develop a spreadsheet for committee membership.

10. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 11:43 by Chad.

Substantive Zoom meeting chat comments:

09:17:30 Jess Maurer: Might I suggest that the better question is less about how funding decisions have been made before and instead focus on how we could collaborate or participate in funding decisions?

09:19:58 Jonathan LaBonte: If we are going to do a dive into funding decisions and ROI, we might as well include the ~\$3 million that has been targeted for passenger rail to Rockland seasonally.

09:51:58 Jennifer Grant, MaineDOT: The Introduction to the MaineDOT Work Plan has a comprehensive discussion on sources and uses of funds, as well as some explanation of how we allocate resources and ultimately select work to be funded. For the next meeting we will

also provide a listing of all projects from the Work Plan that are funded with State Multimodal Funds.

<https://www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/workplan/docs/2024/2024%20Work%20Plan%20Introduction.pdf>

- 09:55:07 From Barbara Schneider: But isn't what Jess and the others are saying is that the line between public and private with respect to services has to be fluid and interrelated, even if funding sources are different. Private services meet a public need and need to be integrated.
- 09:55:36 From Jess Maurer: Yes exactly, Barbara.
- 10:03:07 From Cheryl Harkins: There's a whole group of people in and around the Portland area who still have many barriers when faced with the task of traveling out of the immediate areas. I'm a person who's disabled. I need to get to specialists out of my area. I am forced to take a ride with Modivcare. It's always taking a large chance. I have been left in Sanford, Brunswick and various other areas when the drivers never came for me. Expanding our abilities is extremely necessary. I know I would prefer to travel with Metro Services. I'd be happy to work on one of the mobility groups.
- 10:22:23 From Barbara Schneider: I'd like to serve on the equity committee. Due to a large commitment to Maine Family Planning I can't chair.
- 10:22:32 From Cole Cochrane: I would prefer to be on the Research and Policy committee, as well as Steering.
- 10:22:33 From Jess Maurer: I will happily serve on the equity and mobility alternatives, but cannot serve in a leadership role in this time.
- 10:22:54 From Eamonn Dundon: I would like to serve on the research and policy committee, although I won't have the capacity to chair
- 10:23:04 From Duane Scott: I volunteer for the Mobility Alternatives Committee
- 10:23:22 From Andrew Clark: Research and Policy
- 10:23:28 From Stephanie Carver: I volunteer for steering committee
- 10:24:22 From Amanda Dioszeghy: I'll volunteer to join the research and policy committee as a rep from The Jackson Lab.
- 10:25:27 From Omolola Achuba: I can Serve on Mobility Alternative
- 10:26:50 From Cheryl Harkins: I'd like to work with the Mobility Committee. I have opinions about the disability aspect but I am also a Lived Experience Advocate with the unhoused. I can share the challenges faced by that group as well. I'm with Homeless Voices for Justice, (SHC, COC NAEH).
- 11:41:23 From Barbara Schneider: How will some committees deal with public access to meetings? Will DOT host them?