

PACTS Transit Committee

February 11, 2021

9:30--11:00 am

Meeting Minutes

Name	Affiliation	Attendance
Hank Berg, Vice Chair	Casco Bay Island Transit District	Y
Lori Brann	MaineDOT	Y
Robert Currie	YCCAC	Y
Jack DeBeradinis	RTP	Y
Rebecca Grover	Maine Turnpike Authority	Y
Bruce Hyman	Planning Committee Appointee	Y
Greg Jordan, Chair	METRO	Y
Patricia Quinn	NNEPRA	Y
Tony Scavuzzo	BSOOB Transit	Y
Donna Tippet	City of South Portland	Y
Cary Tyson	Portland Downtown	Y
Guests	Affiliation	
Tom Reinauer	MaineDOT	
William Gayle	NNEPRA	
For GPCOG		
Chris Chop, Andrew Clark, Kristina Egan, Aubrey Miller, Ryan Neale		

1. Welcome

Greg Jordan opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

3. Acceptance of December 10, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Hank Berg noted the funding amount shown in the table did not reflect the amounts in the CARES Phase III split letter. At the December 10 meeting, the committee agreed to add a 10 percent contingency to submitted Priority One amounts for the purpose of reaching a not-to-exceed total for Phase III. The Priority One amounts were subsequently revised.

Hank moved to accept the December 10 meeting minutes as written; Tony Scavuzzo seconded. All were in favor.

4. Update on Electricity Rates Discussion

In December, staff from GPCOG and several transit agencies met with staff from Central Maine Power and Avangrid to discuss barriers to electrifying the region's transit network. Staff await the State's Electric Vehicle Roadmap, which will outline a plan to accelerate widespread adoption of electric vehicles. GPCOG is represented on the Maine Climate Council's Transportation Working Group. Staff will keep the region's transit agencies informed of opportunities to be involved.

Hank asked who was present from Central Maine Power and Avangrid. Ryan said he would follow up with a list of attendees. Hank also asked whether the issue of charging during peak demand was discussed. Tony said that it had been, including the need for transit providers to charge electric vehicles throughout the day.

Donna asked who is on the Transportation Working Group. Ryan said he would follow up with a list of members. Sara Mills-Knapp, GPCOG's Sustainability Program Manager, represents GPCOG on the Working Group. Greg Jordan is also a member.

5. Regional Transit Data Standards Report

In February 2020, the Transit Committee identified a need for regionwide automatic vehicle location (AVL) and trip planning systems. At the time, several agencies were preparing to implement elements of such systems. While they elected not to pursue a common vendor due to different needs among the agencies, the region can still benefit if the agencies agree to a common data standard. The group agreed to hire a consultant to identify opportunities to align around a common data standard and develop draft

language for procurement documents. The group selected Donna Tippet Consulting to develop these materials.

The final report recommends adopting the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data standard, and includes sample language agencies can use in RFPs to ensure it will be possible to develop seamless rider tools, including trip planning, real-time vehicle tracking, electronic information displays and signage, automatic fare payment, and more. The report included several next steps:

1. Educate the agencies on the importance of GTFS.
2. Form a GTFS data working group to discuss ways to use GTFS data effectively.
3. Develop and share feeds on an open and accessible platform.
4. Identify any data collection or publication gaps in the region.
5. Plan for a regionwide transit tracker.

Staff recommended each transit agency identify a staff member to serve on the GTFS data working group, and commit to using the sample RFP language.

Hank asked what level of technical knowledge a GTFS data working group member would be expected to have. Donna clarified that her consultant role had expired, and said that the individual need only be aware of GTFS, understand its importance, and know who to be in contact with should an agency's GTFS feed be maintained by an external provider. She encouraged agencies to be proactive in the use of GTFS.

Patricia Quinn expressed support for the report and its recommendations, but noted that NNEPRA may have limited control over its GTFS data, which is provided to NNEPRA by Amtrak.

Tom Reinauer shared that the Moving Maine Network's Technology and Innovation Working Group has also been working on this issue, and encouraged the two groups to coordinate. He said an important next step is to add GTFS-Flex support to GoMaine's trip planner to support on-demand ride requests.

6. Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) Funds and Remaining Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Funds

The region received \$53 million in CARES Act funding, with \$21 million remaining unallocated. On December 27, 2020 CRRSAA allocated \$14 billion nationally to support transit through the pandemic. \$13.3 billion of that will be allocated to urban areas via the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Regions which received 75 percent or more of their 2018 operating costs through CARES are ineligible for CRRSAA funding. FTA's regional apportionments were published on January 11, 2021 and do not include funding to the PACTS region through CRRSAA.

CRRSAA requires that all CARES funding unobligated as of December 27, 2020 be directed to payroll and operations, unless the recipient certifies to the FTA that no employees had been furloughed as of December 27, 2020. This applies to individual agencies and not to the region as a whole. Each agency confirmed that no such furloughs had been made.

Greg asked about the anticipated impacts of CRRSAA on Concord Coach Lines (CCL) and NNEPRA. Patricia said that while \$174 million had been allocated to Amtrak nationwide, it had not yet been determined how the funding would be distributed. She said she would keep the group updated as information becomes available. Chris Chop said that, based on discussions with CCL and MaineDOT, it is not anticipated that CCL will receive funding under CRRSAA. Part of the agreement between CCL and PACTS is that CCL keep PACTS informed if it has received additional funding to ease the burden on the CARES funds. Greg recommended staff research the process by which CRRSAA funds will be distributed to private motor coach operators.

Will Gayle asked whether there is an opportunity for YCCAC and RTP to draw on FTA's Section 5311 Rural Area Formula Grant funds instead of CARES funds. Lori Brann said that MaineDOT has CARES funds for YCCAC and RTP through June 2021, and CRRSAA funds for operations in rural areas. Both agencies have a cost allocation plan to keep rural and urban costs separate. Tony added that BSOOB's Zoom Express is funded through Section 5311 funds.

7. Annual Apportionment of FTA Fiscal Year 2021 Funds

The region received \$10.9 million in FTA Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant funds and \$8.8 million in FTA Section 5339 State of Good Repair Grant funds. Staff have been updating the Six-Year Capital and Operating Plan (SYCOP) to include these amounts and facilitate planning for fiscal years 2021–2026. Staff anticipates making this year's document available on a shared platform to improve efficiency and transparency.

Hank asked when the agencies should be prepared to submit data. Chris said that staff continue to work with the region's designated FTA recipients to reach final agreement on the funding framework. The outcome of that agreement may impact how the SYCOP will be set up. He encouraged each agency to begin assembling data for operations, capital needs, and enhancement projects. Staff will discuss sharing a version that updates the years and formulas with no other changes, but noted that it would likely be revised based on the final funding framework agreement.

Greg noted a critical deadline of the first week of June, by when agencies will need to submit grant requests to FTA. In the past, staff have had the split letter prepared by April for PACTS approval in May.

8. Other Business

Ryan announced that he will be leaving GPCOG for MaineDOT. The committee thanked Ryan for his hard work. Tony announced that he will be leaving his position as Executive Director at BSOOB. The committee thanked Tony for his hard work.

Patricia felt ridership may be on the rebound, and asked others for their outlook. BSOOB is running at 50 percent ridership; METRO is at 50–60 percent; Casco Bay Lines is at 40 percent ridership but has seen an increase in vehicles and freight, and is considering another summer without group sales; South Portland ridership is flat and has seen significant reductions with Southern Maine Community College conducting online classes.

9. Adjourn

Bruce Hyman moved to adjourn; Patricia seconded. With no objection, the motion carried.