

**PACTS Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC)**

June 6, 2023

9:00 a.m.

Approved Meeting Minutes

Seat	Representative	Attendance
PACTS Southern – Municipal	Diana Asanza	
PACTS Southern – Planning/ Economic Development	Emily Cole-Prescott	Y
PACTS Southern – Public Works/ Engineering	Tom Milligan	Y
PACTS Central – Municipal	Matt Sturgis	
PACTS Central – Planning/ Economic Development	Nell Donaldson, chair	Y
PACTS Central – Public Works/ Engineering	Melissa Hutchins	Y
PACTS Western – Municipal	Bob Burns	
PACTS Western – Planning/ Economic Development	Amanda Lessard	Y
PACTS Western – Public Works/ Engineering	Katherine Kelley	
PACTS Northern – Municipal	Nathan Poore	Y
PACTS Northern – Planning/ Economic Development	Erin Zwirko	Y
PACTS Northern – Public Works/ Engineering	Adam Bliss	
Transit	Hank Berg	
Transit	William Gayle	Y
Transit	Tom Reinauer	
Transit	Chad Heid, vice chair	
MaineDOT	Ryan Neale	Y
Maine Turnpike Authority	Rebecca Grover	Y
Active Transportation Specialist	Jean Sideris	Y
Environmental Specialist	Christian MilNeil	Y
Community Transportation Leader	Leeann Brionez	Y
Community Transportation Leader	Mireille Kabongo	
Private Sector Trade Association	Eamonn Dundon	Y

**1. Welcome**

Nell Donaldson opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

**2. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**3. Approval of the May 2, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Rebecca Grover noted that in regard to the Maine Turnpike's extension to Gorham, the Maine Turnpike Authority is not proposing the project, but rather is doing a study at the request of four municipalities (Scarborough, Portland, Gorham, Westbrook) and the Maine State Legislature.

Erin Zwirko moved to approve the May 2, 2023 meeting minutes as amended; William Gayle seconded. Emily Cole-Prescott abstained. All other members present were in favor. (Vote: 12-0-1)

#### **4. Staff Report**

The PACTS Policy Board unanimously adopted the PACTS Vision Zero Action Plan, unanimously approved the Five-Year Capital and Operating Plan (FYCOP) for public transit, and unanimously approved the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) recommendation for Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding for Complex Projects.

There were several new appointments to the PACTS Policy Board and RTAC. Jean Sideris, active transportation specialist, will be moving from RTAC to the Policy and Executive Boards; she will be replaced on RTAC by Jason Day. Tom Milligan will remain as the RTAC liaison to the Policy and Executive Boards. Guy Mpoyi and Cheryl Oldfield will be stepping in as Community Transportation Leaders on RTAC. Aubrey Miller (GPCOG) thanked Jean Sideris, and Community Transportation Leaders Leeann Brionez and Mireille Kabongo for their service on RTAC. Additionally, Emily Cole-Prescott (Saco) was welcomed as the PACTS Southern Subregion's Planning/Economic Development representative.

GPCOG hosts a radio show and podcast called "Let's Connect," hosted by Kristina Egan (GPCOG), and invites guests to discuss a variety of topics.

GPCOG will soon be ramping up work on the 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Plan. Recently, GPCOG solicited input from members on their priorities for the region.

#### **5. Community Transportation Leaders Presentations**

Community Transportation Leaders James Crow, Mukwiza Levi Bigwegwe, Cheryl Harkins, Susan Farwell, and Michael Stuckmeyer presented their groups' top regional transportation concerns and opportunities:

- Increased Bus Frequency and Service Hours in Priority Areas
- Improve Information Access for People with Limited English Proficiency
- Improving Transportation Options to the New Portland Homeless Service Center
- Expanding Micromobility Options for People Without the Means or Ability to Drive
- Extending Bus Service Hours on Metro's Route #8

Copies of their presentations are included in Attachment 3-A.1.

Eamonn Dundon requested written copies of the concerns and opportunities, along with an indication of which ones are already included in various plans such as Transit Together.

The committee discussed funding, with Kristina Egan (GPCOG) noting that Transit Together is cost neutral. Kristina also noted that the State of Maine has not invested as much funding in public transit as other states have, and having regional agreement on what investments are needed is helpful information to provide to the State.

William Gayle expressed appreciation for the Community Transportation Leaders program and commented that NNEPRA, after the Community Transportation Leaders' presentations to the Executive Board in April, looked into translation opportunities. Will also thanked staff for including the issues raised by Community Transportation Leaders on Transit Task Force agendas.

Jean Sideris spoke about the Bicycle Coalition of Maine's and other organizations' efforts related to e-bikes. She noted that South Portland and Portland have an e-bike rebate program, and there is a state bill to add e-bikes to the Maine Efficiency Trust. Both Jean and Kristina indicated people should reach out if they would like to try riding an e-bike.

Kat Violette (GPCOG) informed the committee that PACTS will schedule another Ride With Me event like the one held in Spring 2022.

## **6. Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **7. Adjourn**

With no objections, the meeting was adjourned.

**Community Transportation Leaders  
Presentations to the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee  
June 6, 2023**

**Increased Bus Frequency and Service Hours in Priority Areas**

James Crow & Melanie Masinga

**1. Barrier Highlighted:**

We believe that the limited bus frequency on some of the bus routes and the service hours on the weekends, especially in the mornings and evenings, impacts the ability to get conveniently and safely to work and access social services. Certain routes serve crucial social services, such as medical services, and some areas have multiple major employers that employ large numbers of people and people who depend on public transit. We believe certain routes can be prioritized for increased frequency and service hours, even for specific hours of the day or days of the week. Some routes are directly addressed in the Transit Together Study recommendations, while another is not.

**2. Why It's Important:**

**James:**

Maine Medical Center moved the Maine Medical Partners (MMP) practices to the Scarborough campus in mid-2021, which has made it difficult for community members to get to their appointments. Unless you are eligible and understand how to use RTP, the only other affordable transportation option is the one bus line that goes to the Scarborough campus. This is the Green Line operated by Biddeford, Saco, Old Orchard Beach (BSOOB) Transit, which only runs every 2 ½ hours. Due to the limited frequency, patients must wait hours after their appointment to get a ride back. This means your entire day, or at least half of it, is spent getting to and back from one doctor's appointment.

**Melanie:**

On a recent Sunday after work, I found myself walking a great distance because the bus service had not yet started. Despite being dropped off at Market Basket in Westbrook with the expectation of catching a bus to my home in Portland, I ended up walking the entire way. My experience is not unique, as many individuals encounter similar difficulties.

The Metro Bus number 4 does not cover significant locations in Westbrook, including Abbott, IDEXX, and Maine Native, on weekends. These companies hire many individuals who do not drive, and during the week, the bus service starts later than the work schedules for those working in this area. While we appreciate the current service provided, we recommend extending the bus service as many people who work in these locations do not own vehicles, and the current bus schedules do not meet their transportation needs.

### **3. Proposed Solution or Idea:**

#### **James:**

As for solutions for the Green line of BSOOB Transit, the Transit Together Study directly addresses the concern around frequency. Currently the line runs every 2 ½ hours and the Transit Together recommends it to run every hour. This will make a big difference for patients and caregivers and we are strongly in support of this recommendation.

Furthermore, it was great to see that BSOOB Transit heard from the community and added additional bus stops to 92 and 96 Campus Dr in February. This allows riders to get dropped off closer to the doctor's office and make it safer for patients and caregivers who use the bus to get to these locations.

#### **Melanie:**

Regarding bus route #4, the Transit Together Study recommends the frequency to be modified from every 30 minutes to every 60 minutes. We understand that this decision was made based on weighing the needs of all routes. However, given the amount of community members this route serves in reaching their jobs and social services, we hope a consideration for higher frequency can be made in the future.

Another solution could be to ensure this route is reached and considered through the Rapid Transit Study.

Thank you for your time and we would be happy to provide more insight in support of current transportation efforts.

## **Improve Information Access for People with Limited English Proficiency**

[Albert Senzara](#), [Mukwiza Levi Bigwegwe](#), [Josee Nyiragazura](#) & [Andre Ruresha](#)

### **1. Barrier Highlighted:**

The issue on which we focus is related to access to information related to public transport. Most immigrants arriving in Maine from several countries around the world have no means of transportation other than public transportation. However, they do not have access to information because of the language barrier. Therefore, it is difficult for them to use it.

### **2. Why It's Important:**

This is important for us because we also have the right to get around in the region. For example, to go to work, visit friends and families, and move freely.

In our research, we found three locations in the United States that had similar issues, of language access barriers for riders, and they fixed those issues. It would be beneficial for our local transport agencies to follow the example.

First, New Jersey Transit had the same problem for non-English speakers who could not access public transportation information. As a solution, they used multilingual signs as well as sound announcements in buses and pictograms (schematic figurative drawing, used as a symbol or as a graphic sign [road signs, signs in public places, etc.]).

Second, in the Washington DC metropolitan area, in cities like Arlington, Alexandria, and Langley Park, immigrants also had the same language problem, but they solved that problem by using audio announcements on their buses.

Third, King County created a Language Access Plan to establish procedures to help non-English speakers access public transit information.

### **3. Proposed Solution or Idea:**

Beyond the research carried out, we suggest the following solutions:

- Have fare indications in different languages in the buses to indicate the next bus stops.
- Combine visual indications with vocal indications to allow all users to understand bus mobility.
- Make multi-language leaflets available inside and at bus stops to guide immigrants.
- Translate bus timetables.
- Visualize the stops inside the buses in luminous colors.

We visited the websites of local transportation agencies to explore their language access plans, but we couldn't find it. If our transport agencies have these plans, they publish them and make them accessible to the public in different languages. and if they do not have one, that they create them as indicated by the presidential decree number 13166 of August 11, 2000. The decree requires institutions to create this plan to allow people who do not speak English to access information in the same way as others.

We appreciate your kind attention.

## **Improving Transportation Options to the New Portland Homeless Service Center**

[Cheryl Harkins & Kathy Hand](#)

Good morning. My name is Cheryl Harkins. I am a homeless advocate with both Homeless Voices for Justice and Homeless Advocacy for All. I am also a board member of the Statewide Homeless Council and Maine's Continuum of Care.

Today I speak for my group partner, Kathy Hand. We are greatly concerned about the ability of the unhoused to be allowed to have a stable and safe way to travel from the new homeless services center that recently opened on Riverside St.

Currently, there is no clear transparent system to help this community get to critically important appointments. A shuttle bus with an 11-person capacity is clearly insufficient for building housing 208 clients who have doctor's appointments, jobs, and chances to view apartments to achieve their goals of housing stability. This is a large sized population truly stuck as the location of this new homeless services center is miles from the heart of Portland.

With only one City of Portland driven van available, we need Metro's help. Advocates would be more than willing to assist Metro services with pertinent information needed to solve this dilemma.

A suggestion Kathy and I would bring to your committee is to adjust Metro's route #2 slightly to make a diversion, only for a few runs per day, by taking a right turn onto Riverside St on the return trip from Pride's Corner. The times most desperately needed are early morning, midday, and at the end of the workday.

This small diversion would also allow many others to access Metro's services because there are multiple very busy businesses that people cannot currently access without a car. Adding a way to increase rider abilities will do nothing but add a crucial and important service that is greatly lacking.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

## **Expanding Micromobility Options for People Without the Means or Ability to Drive**

Susan Farwell

### **1. Barrier Highlighted:**

I'm here today to discuss the need for more micromobility options for those who do not have the means or ability to, and/or no longer want to drive. This especially is the case for older adults, people with disabilities, low-income individuals, immigrants, and other populations. Micromobility, which includes small, low-speed, human- or electric-powered transportation devices, including bicycles, scooters, e-bikes, to name a few.

Currently, those who lack the means and/or ability to drive look to the region's transit system – the bus, train, ferry, and paratransit services. These options can be limiting and inconvenient at times. This is especially heightened depending on where someone lives and their physical abilities. The lack of options and stability to get one's needs met can be extremely stressful and disempowering.

### **2. Why It's Important:**

Expanding mobility options through introducing more micromobility options can improve the quality of life for many people in the region. Having more options provides flexibility and convenience to manage one's life and could foster a stronger sense of independence. Given that Maine has the highest population of older adults in the nation, I believe it's crucial that we consider ways to reduce stress and encourage self-directed transportation.

Specifically in Portland and on the peninsula – which has the highest density of older adults in the region – something like an e-bike can ease the physical challenges of Portland’s hilly topography for compromised individuals.

Having more accessible micromobility options can also bridge the first and last mile gap, which would allow more people to access public transit.

Moreover, this effort would be in alignment with the goals identified in *Connect2045* to Provide Equitable Access, to Expand Choices, and to Protect the Environment. This would also support the state’s *Maine Won’t Wait* climate action plan.

### **3. Proposed Solution or Idea:**

To provide more mobility options and to add to the region’s transportation system, an idea for a solution could be to start a pilot program to provide low-speed e-bikes to deserving populations.

We have seen multiple cities across the US implement programs that provide e-bikes to low-income individuals and older adults. The program does not only provide free or discounted bikes but empowers community members through training and education on how to use the bike and on road safety. Cortez, Colorado, and Worcester, Massachusetts, are cities that have implemented such programs and have done so with funding through their state’s energy offices.

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, they offer the Healthy Aging Bicycle Program, which works to address barriers to cycling for older adults through a series of educational and physical trainings.

I believe a similar program can be achieved in Greater Portland given the state’s push to advance cleaner transportation options and in partnership with local bike-pedestrian organizations.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues. I would like to assist or support any efforts around this however I can.

## **Extending Bus Service Hours on Metro’s Route #8**

Marie Peck, Mike Stuckmeyer, Bridget Parker

### **1. Barrier Highlighted:**

We believe extending bus service hours can help people comfortably commute to work and access social services and recreational activities in the Portland area.

Our group would like to talk specifically about Metro’s route #8 and its service hours. Currently, the #8 ends at 6pm during the week and earlier on the weekends.

Additionally, we’d like to address the overcrowding that occurs on the bus during peak hours, around 2-5pm during the weekdays.



## **2. Why It's Important:**

Metro's route #8 serves the Portland peninsula, which has the highest population density, employment density, density of low-income residents, and the most density of households without a vehicle in the region. The route also reaches many crucial social services and recreational activities.

This makes route #8 a very important line for people who rely on public transit as their primary or only means of getting around. The #8 is not the route with the highest ridership, compared to some routes, but it serves a high concentration of vulnerable populations.

With the service ending at 6pm, and earlier on weekends, it significantly limits one's life and doesn't allow people to do things past 5pm. This causes mental impacts for older adults, people with disabilities, and everyone who doesn't have a choice but to rely on public transit.

Given the services that route #8 reaches and the populations that utilizes it, the bus often gets overcrowded during peak hours from around 2pm-5pm. With more riders and people with walkers and carts, it can get very difficult and uncomfortable to navigate inside the bus.

## **3. Proposed Solution or Idea:**

As solutions to this, we strongly support the recommendations made in the Transit Together study to extend the service hours for route #8 until 10:00pm on weekdays, 7:30pm on Saturdays, and 6:00pm on Sundays. Given the large population and services that the #8 serves, we are grateful to see that Metro is planning to implement these changes as soon as the fall of this year.

The bidirectional nature of #8, as it is recommended by Transit Together, we hope will also address the overcrowding of the bus during peak hours and help people use the bus comfortably.

Thank you again for your time and all these efforts in place to improve the transit routes. We are happy to support and provide insight as direct users. Thank you again.