

Regional Transportation Advisory Committee

September 6, 2022

9:00 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Seat	Representative	Attendance
PACTS Southern – Municipal	Diana Asanza	Y
PACTS Southern – Planning/ Economic Development	Jessa Berna	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	
PACTS Western – Public Works/ Engineering	Katherine Kelley	
PACTS Northern – Municipal	Bill Shane	
PACTS Northern – Planning/ Economic Development	Theo Holtwijk	
PACTS Northern – Public Works/ Engineering	Adam Bliss	
Transit	Hank Berg	Y
Transit	Patricia Quinn	Y
Transit	Jack De Beradinis	
Transit	Mike Tremblay, Vice Chair	Y
MaineDOT	Ryan Neale	Y
Maine Turnpike Authority	Rebecca Grover	
Active Transportation Specialist	Jean Sideris	Y
Environmental Specialist	Christian MilNeil	Y
Community Transportation Leader	Leeann Brionez	
Community Transportation Leader	Mireille Kabongo	Y
Private Sector Trade Association	Eamonn Dundon	

1. Welcome

Nell Donaldson opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of the July 5, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Mike Tremblay moved to approve the July 5, 2022 meeting minutes as written. Hank Berg seconded. All were in favor.

4. Staff Report

Tom Milligan was re-appointed as the RTAC representative on the PACTS Policy and Executive Boards.

In July 2022 RTAC recommended approval of a slate of PACTS Collector Paving Program projects for PACTS' annual allocation. The Policy Board approved.

In Spring 2022 RTAC recommended approval of the PACTS Regional Complete Streets Policy. The policy has been pushed off the agenda of the Policy Board due to other prioritized items. The Executive Board has reviewed the policy and provided preliminary feedback. The Regional Complete Streets Policy will be brought before the Policy Board later this month.

Lastly, in May 2022 RTAC recommended approval of the recommendations made by the Complex Projects Task Force. The Policy Board opted to reconvene the Complex Projects Task Force for additional work on a few topics. The task force reaffirmed their recommendations; more information will be provided to the Policy Board later this month.

Jean Sideris asked if the Regional Complete Streets Policy was approved. Chris Chop, GPCOG staff, answered it was not, but noted it has been reviewed by the Executive Board and will need to be voted on by the Policy Board.

5. Ride With Me Event

Staff presented on the Ride With Me event that was held in April and May 2022. The goal of the event is to empower people with lived experience of transportation barriers to share their experience, perspectives, and ideas with decision makers. Additionally, it enables decision makers to get first-hand experience to raise awareness in the region about transportation challenges and solutions. Eleven decision makers, which included six transit agency personnel and five elected officials, and 13 riders, which represented older adults, people with disabilities, immigrants, individuals who use mobility devices, and people with limited English proficiency, participated in this event.

The event highlighted a need for bus shelters and covered bike racks, enhanced customer service, and improved communication with riders to make transit as understandable as possible. Transportation barriers identified include the lack of late-night services, uneven sidewalks, inaccessible bus stops, lack of audible crossing signals, and an unfamiliarity with transit apps. Takeaways from the riders include a better understanding of the decision-making process and the opportunity to learn about the transit agencies' efforts, ideas, and projects.

Several actions have resulted from the event. Community Transportation Leaders (CTL) program members are now involved in Greater Portland METRO's bus operator training program. A Gorham resident has been highlighted in a video about their experience navigating the transit system. Bus shelters and bike rack installation have been advocated for in Yarmouth. And a bus stop in South Portland has been relocated for safety concerns.

Staff recommend hosting this event annually in the winter when navigating public transit is more difficult. Staff would also like to be more flexible in the format of the conversation between decision makers and riders, whether it is riding together or having a sit-down conversation. The event enabled decision makers to experience the challenges faced by the most vulnerable transit users and see the reality of the system from the perspective of those who depend on it. Additionally, this event was one of the effective strategies of advancing the inclusion of underrepresented communities in the transportation decision-making process and improving the current transit system.

Nell Donaldson asked for public comment. Ken Capron of Portland asked if efforts were made to reach out to various groups for the Ride With Me event. Marcel Ntagora, GPCOG staff, answered that flyers were created and posted on the website and hung up in specific locations such as the local library and

stores. The flyer, which was also translated into multiple languages, was shared with various organizations in the region. Nell closed public comment.

Mirielle Kabongo noted that the Ride With Me event is a great step in the right direction toward making transportation more accessible in the region for underrepresented groups. She thanked the decision makers who participated and GPCOG for coordinating the efforts.

Chrisitan MilNeil suggested that affordable housing officials and developers should go through this program because access to transit is not generally a focus when designing affordable housing neighborhoods.

6. Transit Together Project Update

Staff gave an update on Transit Together. At a June 8 workshop, the region's transit agencies developed preliminary network design scenarios. The project team has been refining these scenarios and will release them for public feedback later in September.

At an August 2 workshop, the agencies discussed seven opportunity areas to improve regional transit based on coordination and cooperation between agencies. The opportunity areas are bus stops and hubs, regional information and branding, fare payment, other technology, service standards, vehicles/fleet, and microtransit. The consultant team took the information collected and is currently working on recommendations. However, there was broad support for each of the opportunity areas.

Bus Stops and Hubs. The quality of bus stops varies greatly throughout the region. Better stops would increase ridership by increasing safety and comfort, and by making service easier to recognize and use. There is an opportunity to develop stop standards and coordinated signage.

Regional Information and Branding. Due to a large number of providers for a small urban area, it is difficult to understand the system as a whole and to know where to find information. There is an opportunity to develop regional branding and regional route numbering and naming conventions.

Fare Payment. Aside from the Dirigo pass offered by Greater Portland METRO, Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach (BSOOB) Transit, and South Portland Bus, each agency maintains distinct fare payment media. Easier fare payment across the region would encourage more transit trips and create opportunities for regional fare promotions, bulk transit fare purchasing, and discounts. There are a number of examples from across the country of multiple agencies—including across modes and across local, regional, or state jurisdictions—of unified fare payment systems.

Other Technology. Not all transit providers have technology resources, including the ability to create and maintain general transit feed specification (GTFS) files, and access to automated passenger counters (APC) and automatic vehicle locators (AVL) varies across the region. Implementing a consistent level of technology across agencies would result in improved performance monitoring, service planning, and information sharing.

Service Standards. Service levels vary greatly across the region, resulting in challenging transfers among services. Developing minimum frequency standards would reduce rider wait times and make transfers more seamless.

Vehicles/Fleet. As transit moves to zero-emissions vehicles, technology interoperability will be more important. Joint procurements or regional cooperative purchasing can save money and support efficiencies (e.g., joint training on new vehicles and shared charging infrastructure).

Microtransit. Microtransit can serve areas where demand for fixed-route service is low. There is an opportunity to develop regional service standards for microtransit and determine an approach to delivering the service.

Nell Donaldson asked for public comment. Ken Capron of Portland asked if having fareless free transit is cheaper than running background software, programming, and credit card processing. He also wondered if it is worth the time in looking into unified signage for the region. He also identified that there is a driver shortage for public transit that needs to be addressed before looking to solving future issues. Andrew Clark, GPCOG staff, answered that fareless transit had not been considered but noted that the cost to collecting fares is not negligible. Nell closed public comment.

Christian MilNeil added that having unified and consistent signage would be very helpful for transit users and might attract new riders. Additionally, he suggested that service standards are needed for ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility at bus stops.

Diana Asanza commented that the unified bus schedule is important and will benefit transit users. She also agrees that accessibility at bus stops is an important opportunity area that should be focused on.

Jean Sideris agreed that the opportunity areas list is in the correct order of priority, especially the first three (bus stop/hubs, regional information and branding, and fare payment).

Ryan Neale agreed there is nothing missing from the opportunity areas. He noted that the bus stops/hubs is the most important priority. However, he added that technology is also something that should also be focused on but conceded that all the opportunity areas are a priority for the region.

Tom Milligan agreed that the bus stop/hubs opportunity area is the number one priority for the region. He noted, however, there are not enough riders to make the proposed changes self-sustaining. He added that long-term funding is also a concern when looking at these changes.

Mike Tremblay stated ridership might be down because these changes have not been implemented and he believes the improvements suggested are worth pursuing.

Christian MilNeil added that if ridership is not increased, other goals such as Maine's climate goals will not be met either. He added that widening roads has proven not to be the solution and that funds should not be used for that endeavor.

Tom Milligan stated that funds will still need to be used to maintain roads. He understands that there must be changes but suggested starting at major routes and tracking progress and effectiveness.

7. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

8. Adjourn

With no objections, the meeting was adjourned.