

PACTS Executive Board

September 28, 2021

9:00–10:30 am

Meeting Minutes

Affiliation	Member	
Policy Board Chair	Matt Sturgis	✓
Policy Board Vice Chair	Hope Cahan	✓
Central Subregion Rep.	Keith Gray	
Central Subregion Rep.	Kate Lewis	
North Subregion Rep.	Bill Shane	✓
South Subregion Rep.	Jim Bennett	✓
West Subregion Rep.	Eric Dudley	

Affiliation	Member	
MaineDOT	Jennifer Langland	✓
Maine Turnpike Auth.	Erin Courtney	✓
Active Transp. Specialist	Kara Wooldrik	
RTAC	Tom Milligan	✓
Transit Rep.	Tom Reinauer	✓
Transit Rep.	William Gayle	✓
Transit Rep.	Donna Tippett	✓

1. Welcome

Matt Sturgis opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

3. Acceptance of the June 22 Executive Board Meeting Minutes

Tom Milligan moved to accept the June 22 meeting minutes as written; Erin Courtney seconded. All were in favor.

4. Chair's Report

Matt noted transportation funding currently under debate in Congress. He welcomed the opportunity to work with state and federal partners to maximize the region's ability to leverage any future funds.

5. Staff Report

Staff are developing the draft vision and goals for *Connect 2045*, the region's upcoming long-range transportation plan. Staff launched a "question campaign", which has generated over 400 questions from the public on the future of transportation in the region. Staff also launched a "visioning lab" identifying major themes from the questions, where the public can provide further input. Next steps include reviewing the themes with the public, presenting the draft vision and goals informed by these themes to the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) and the Connect 2045 Project

Advisory Committee, and seeking formal approval from the Policy Board at its October meeting. Visit connect2045.org for more information.

To allow for construction work on the new Veranda Street overpass, Interstate 295 over Veranda Street in Portland will be closed from 7:00 pm on October 22 to 11:00 am on October 25. Veranda Street under Interstate 295 will be closed from 2:00 pm on October 18 to 2:00 pm October 25. Visit verandaplan.org for more information. *[Note this construction work was subsequently postponed.]*

Erin Courtney noted that Maine Turnpike Authority is working to reopen the toll plaza damaged by an accident at Exit 52, which will be the primary detour route during the Veranda Street overpass closure.

6. Concord Coach Lines CARES Funding

In early 2020, the CARES Act provided \$53 million to support the region's public transit agencies through the pandemic. However, no similar program existed to support the private motor coach industry. After a significant decline in ridership, Concord Coach Lines approached PACTS seeking CARES funding support. Subject to Concord Coach Lines receiving relief funding under any future programs, PACTS allocated \$3.5 million to Concord Coach Lines through Phases II and III. With ridership slow to recover, Concord Coach Lines requested and PACTS allocated an additional \$1.5 million in Phase IV, subject to Concord Coach Lines receiving funding through the CERTS program, which had been developed to support the private motor coach industry. Concord Coach Lines had not formally received funding under the program at the time, but agreed to revisit their CARES funding requests if they were to. While no specific conditions were established, Concord Coach Lines agreed to reduce their future requests should funding from other sources become available.

Staff have since learned that Concord Coach Lines is expected to receive \$3.66 million under the CERTS program. CERTS funding is eligible for spending between September 2021 and October 2022, though Concord Coach Lines informed staff that this funding would be used in 2022, while the CARES funding would be used in 2021. MaineDOT informed staff that Concord Coach Lines had recently submitted for reimbursement of their Phase IV CARES allocation, but had not yet been reimbursed.

Meanwhile, the region's transit agencies have tentatively identified \$20 million in revenue recovery needs; though only \$15 million in CARES funding remains. Staff have not developed a recommended action, and seek guidance from the Executive Board.

Matt asked for public comment. Ben Blunt of Concord Coach Lines noted that CARES funding supports only service between Portland and Boston, while CERTS funding would help support service to other locations. The Portland to Boston corridor encompasses 42 percent of Concord Coach Lines' vehicle revenue miles and is currently seeing 37 percent of pre-pandemic ridership. He stressed there would be no overlap of funding.

Greg Jordan of METRO and chair of the former Transit Committee noted that there had been concern around supporting a private company with public funding. The Transit Committee agreed to support the request with the understanding that Concord Coach Lines would refund PACTS should it receive funding from other sources. He emphasized the projected CARES funding shortfall through 2023 faced by the region's transit agencies. He supported seeing the CARES funding returned, and noted the significant CARES allocations to support NNEPRA's service along the same corridor. Matt closed the public comment period.

Jen Langland noted that MaineDOT—as designated recipient of Concord Coach Lines' funds—had a grant in place for the Phase IV allocation as of August. She said the timeline of Concord Coach Lines' request for reimbursement was within the normal range. She noted that MaineDOT provides funding assistance for at least one rural Concord Coach Lines route, and that MaineDOT is not seeking reimbursement and will continue to provide funding under the current agreement.

Ben added that Concord Coach Lines received no funding under Phase I, and is currently seeing approximately 60 percent of pre-pandemic ridership systemwide. He committed that Concord Coach Lines will seek no additional CARES funding from PACTS.

Will Gayle noted that while NNEPRA serves the Portland to Boston corridor, they also provide service from Brunswick and within the Portland region from Freeport to Saco.

Donna Tippettt supported having the funding returned to the region. She said that while South Portland Bus Service did not see a decline in ridership as significant as that of Concord Coach Lines, driver and parts shortages are limiting the agency's ability to return to pre-pandemic levels of service.

Jim Bennett asked whether there was a deadline for needing to make a decision. He added that he anticipated significant pressures on municipal finances in the near future. Staff said that there is no deadline for obligating CARES funds.

Hope Cahan noted that the region is already missing out on federal relief funding because CARES and ARPA funds remain unobligated. She stressed the urgent needs in the region, and noted that nearly 50 percent of CARES funding has gone to NNEPRA and Concord Coach Lines to support the Portland to Boston corridor while only 50 percent has stayed wholly within the region. She asked for the amount of Concord Coach Lines' most recent invoice.

Ben said it was less than \$10,000. He urged the board not to fully withdraw its support for Concord Coach Lines, but felt a pro-rated return where funding timelines overlap may be appropriate.

The group discussed and generally supported determining a pro-rated amount of funding for Concord Coach Lines to return to PACTS based on the September to December 2021 period where CARES and CERTS funds overlap.

Jim moved to reconsider the Executive Board's June 22 decision to approve Concord Coach Lines' request for \$1,522,583 in CARES Act funding; Bill Shane seconded. All were in favor.

Jim moved to table the item to a special meeting within 45 days; Bill Shane seconded. All were in favor.

7. UPWP StreetLight Contributions

StreetLight is an online analytics tool that compiles smartphone location data to generate transportation planning data, including trip origins and destinations, travel times, and trip purposes. GPCOG and several partners throughout the state have been using the tool for several years.

In December 2019, the Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) and MaineDOT entered into a contract with StreetLight effective March 11, 2020 through March 12, 2021. PACTS contributed \$25,000 in UPWP funds to that contract. MTA and MaineDOT renewed the contract through March 2022 and have asked PACTS to again contribute to the cost. While funds were not budgeted in the current UPWP for that purpose, staff have identified \$10,000 that will otherwise be unspent and rolled into the 2022–2023 UPWP. (Remaining unspent funds in the current UPWP will be rolled over to support several upcoming planning projects, including *Connect 2045*, the region's upcoming long-range transportation plan.)

It is not anticipated that the other MPOs in the state will be in a position to contribute financially to the contract. Staff have expressed to MTA and MaineDOT that PACTS may be similarly constrained with regard to future contributions.

Bill moved to approve the \$10,000 contribution as presented, and to authorize staff to work with the other MPOs in the state to encourage MTA and MaineDOT to continue renewing the StreetLight contract, while extending its services to regional planning agencies, municipalities, universities, and other institutions who may use the data to inform transportation planning and decision making; Tom Milligan seconded.

Will supported continued use of StreetLight, saying it is a powerful tool and critical to the future of transportation planning.

Erin said MTA will be in contact with the MPOs in the state prior to future contract negotiations.

On the motion, all were in favor.

8. Revised Collector Paving Program Projects

Every year, PACTS selects roadway segments for inclusion in the region's Collector Paving Program. A prioritized list based on preliminary cost estimates was presented to and approved by the Executive Board at its June 22 meeting. Staff and MaineDOT have since conducted field audits to verify project scope and costs. At these field reviews, it was discovered that the sections on Running Hill Road in

Scarborough would not have the required useful of 10 years. Staff recommend removing those segments from the program. It was also discovered that significant ADA improvements will be required at certain locations. Because of the increased associated costs, the lowest-priority project—Hill Street in Biddeford—cannot be funded and is recommended for removal from the program.

Bill asked if Scarborough had been notified of the decision. Staff replied that they have been.

Bill moved to approve the revised list of Collector Paving Program projects and a transfer \$2,331 from the Holding WIN to fully fund the program; Tom Milligan seconded. All were in favor.

9. 2023–2023 UPWP Local Match

Bill moved to table the item to the upcoming special meeting; Will seconded. All were in favor.

10. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

11. Adjourn

Hope moved to adjourn; Erin seconded. With no objection, the motion carried.