# PACTS Transit Committee Workshop Minutes

**February 25, 2020**  
1:00 – 2:30 P.M. at GPCOG

## In Attendance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Members</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hank Berg, Vice Chair</td>
<td>Casco Bay Island Transit District</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lori Brann</td>
<td>MaineDOT</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Chop</td>
<td>Maine Medical Center</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Currie</td>
<td>YCCAC</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jack De Beradinis</td>
<td>RTP</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casey Gilbert</td>
<td>Portland Downtown</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebecca Grover</td>
<td>Maine Turnpike Authority</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art Handman</td>
<td>City of South Portland</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bruce Hyman</td>
<td>Planning Committee Appointee</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greg Isherwood</td>
<td>Custom Coach &amp; Limousine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greg Jordan, Chair</td>
<td>METRO</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patricia Quinn</td>
<td>NNEPRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony Scavuzzo</td>
<td>BSOOB Transit</td>
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<td><strong>GUESTS</strong></td>
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<td>Will Gayle</td>
<td>NNEPRA</td>
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<td><strong>GPCOG</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kristina Egan</td>
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<td>Aubrey Miller</td>
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<td>Ryan Neale</td>
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1. **Welcome** – The workshop started at 1:00 p.m.

2. **Open Public Comment** - There were no public comments.
3. Acceptance of October 22, 2019 Transit Committee Workshop Minutes
There were no issues or concerns regarding the workshop minutes.

4. Updates on Existing Regionally Administered Discretionary (RAD) Projects
It was decided prior to the meeting that this would be included as an agenda item. BSOOB Transit, South Portland Bus Service, METRO, and NNEPRA provided handouts and brief summaries of their respective projects.

**BSOOB Transit**
Tony Scavuzzo said BSOOB Transit’s Hub has been operating successfully since August 1 with three staff at the Saco Transportation Center. The Center will have BSOOB’s new signage and branding. The Zoom Express service will be enhanced to account for new housing in downtown Biddeford/Saco. The new charging station is expected to be ready in 2021. The new onboard Wi-Fi is fully installed and ready to support electronic fare collection and be open to passengers. This already exists on Zoom Express buses.

BSOOB’s new AVL system was launched recently. The last piece is the GTFS. There was a training on the automatic fare collection system on February 12. The farebox should help operations and the rider experience. The on-board video will be implemented in the next fiscal year as BSOOB Transit focuses on these other projects.

Greg Jordan asked if all the projects listed in the handout (the Pulse project, on-board Wi-Fi, AVL, electronic fare collection, and on-board video) were funded through the RAD application. Tony said the Pulse project was the main one funded through RAD.

Bruce Hyman asked if new route maps would be available soon. Tony said the new route maps are expected soon on web and printed versions and many other improvements are coming as well.
**SPBS**

Art Handman noted that the target of 300 SPBS Sunday riders has been hit once between the last RAD project report and February 2. The average is 256 with the one snow day eliminated. Art thinks this project is a success and he looks forward to continuing it. In response to a question from Greg Jordan, Art said the RAD signals project was finalized and he has done a final report to the Committee on that project.

**METRO**

Greg Jordan summarized METRO’s two projects, the Breez and Transit West. The Breez ridership chart is updated through December 2019. Greg said the project is a success based on ridership and community support. The goal was to bring the new communities onto the METRO board of directors and make the service permanent as communities increased their support of the service. All three communities voted to support the service, increase their level of funding, and join METRO. METRO had to change its bylaws to allow this. This brings METRO’s member communities to six. said this has moved from a pilot project to a permanent service. He offered to continue reporting on it if the Committee desires but feels the project is a success.

Transit West is in year two. Ridership is doing well. The chart shows all of METRO’s bus routes in comparison to peer systems in the region on average boardings per hour. Route 3 is just above the lower end of the spectrum and the Husky Line is in the middle.

58% of Husky Line boardings are USM and 42% are general public. The hope was that it would not all be USM riders. Husky Line boardings were 81% of USM’s total METRO boardings in 2018 and 73% in 2019. USM riders are becoming familiar with and using more of the system than just the Husky Line.
NNEPRA

Patricia Quinn said the Royal Junction siding project was construction of double track in Falmouth and Cumberland to allow trains to pass each other. Service was extended to Freeport and Brunswick in 2012 with two round trips per day and a third was added in 2016. All ten Downeaster trips have been operating between Brunswick and Boston since November 2019. Ridership north of Portland grew from 48,000 in 2018 to 82,000 in 2019. The construction on the project was completed on budget in December 2019. Pan Am had allowed NNEPRA to run all ten trips to Brunswick Monday through Friday in January but there were delays and conflicts. All ten trips began running to Brunswick seven days a week in May. The addition of the second track in November reduced the delays and improved reliability. Patricia thanked the group for the support of the project and noted that the project is complete and achieve its objectives.

Art Handman asked if the ridership increase was Brunswick to Portland or included further south. Patricia said the numbers show boardings and alightings north of Portland. She does not have destination data currently but can get that if desired. The vast majority of NNEPRA passengers travel to Boston. In January, the fourth largest city pairing was Brunswick to Boston.

Art noted that several agencies consider their projects to be closed. SPBS considers Sunday service to be part of their regular service. Greg said the METRO Breeze was a three-year pilot project. Patricia said NNEPRA’s project is done; this report is a summary and she is willing and able to provide ridership data going forward. Art said he would like to eliminate Sunday service as a separate item in the SYCOP as it is part of their service, to which the group agreed.

The group agreed that going forward, RAD updates would include Transit West which is still in its pilot phase and BSOOB Transit’s Pulse project.
5. Discussion of Next Steps on AVL process

Aubrey Miller summarized that several transit providers are likely exploring new Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) or Computer Aided Dispatch vendors soon. One of our goals is to have a single regional public facing app that can provide trip planning and real-time information from different systems. We want to ensure that vendors can provide quality open access data that can support this app or website. To ensure fair procurement, staff has talked to several different vendors and consultants and reviewed a range of options with a range of costs.

Donna Tippet has submitted a proposal that is likely to achieve those goals without being cost prohibitive. Staff feels that Donna’s local knowledge, experience, and understanding of our region will be helpful. Donna’s proposal includes documenting the history of GTFS in the region, surveying vendors, creating sample RFP language and a requirements matrix that agencies could use in soliciting a vendor. Donna’s cost estimate is $7,000 and her timeline is 3.5 months. Staff wants to see if there is buy-in from the transit agencies on going forward with Donna and to answer any questions.

Ryan Neale said there were many unknowns with what vendors could deliver and how and a wide range of costs. Donna is a known quantity, the price is manageable, and there’s a good probability we can accomplish what we want to with this approach.

Hank Berg said he agrees with this direction and asked where the funding comes from and if it would need to be used up by the end of 2020. Aubrey said it is PACTS funding and is in the 2020-2021 Unified Planning Work Program. We are in the first year of the UPWP so funds would not need to be used this year.

Art, Greg, and the group overall agreed with this approach. Based on this, staff will work on an arrangement with Donna.
6. Review of Initial 2020–2025 Six Year Capital and Operating Plan (SYCOP) Funding Requests (Attachments B–F)

The group reviewed the updated SYCOP which includes initial funding requests from transit agencies and fiscal year 2020 apportionments for 5307 formula and 5337 state of good repair funds. Ryan Neale noted that the 5307 apportionment is approximately $10.8 million, approximately $80,000 over the projection. The actual 5337 amount is about $8 million, approximately $650,000 less than the projection. The 5307 summary shows a deficit of about $875,000 in 2022. This is a deficit of nearly $2 million from the Committee’s target of maintaining a surplus of $1 million. It was noted that this does not include discretionary funding.

Agencies provided brief summaries of their projects and funding requests.

**BSOOB Transit**

Tony Scavuzzo noted the increased request for preventive maintenance in 2020 is because the average life of BSOOB Transit's fleet is 14 years. BSOOB Transit is trying to mitigate this by replacing twelve vehicles in the next few years. The surveillance/security/fare equipment category stays the same and supports the on-board video project. The mobility management request is for education and community outreach. BSOOB Transit is asking for an additional $100,000 (bringing the total to $1.1 million) for trolley purchases. This mirrors the 5339 grant from this year that will replace four trolleys. The SYCOP request would replace the other four trolleys. The future trolley purchase for 2022 could be rethought given the 5339 grant. The utility vehicle request in 2021 would replace two vans which transport drivers for shift changes and passengers in the event of a breakdown. These both have lifts. A service truck that is over 10 years old also needs to be replaced. The 2022 bus wash request would replace the existing portable system with a permanent one. The $850,000 facilities request in 2024 is for a parking expansion. Several vehicles are currently stored at public works in winter. BSOOB Transit owns the land adjacent to its facility and would like to convert that into parking to bring all vehicles onsite. The $850,000
request also includes a new fuel system which would replace the current 30-year old system. The system has issues and will certainly need to be replaced by 2024. The $200,000 facilities request in 2025 is for a generator to support electric vehicles. This may be moved forward a few years depending on the status of the electric vehicles.

CBL

Hank Berg summarized Casco Bay Lines’ requests. The facility request in 2020 is due to cost estimates for the terminal renovation being much higher than projected. The $78,130 customer service request in 2021 is for the AVL replacement project which would replace five systems and a central dispatch unit. Hank said the discretionary amount of $2.4 million for the terminal renovation will be repurposed for the electrification of the ferry system. CBL is pursuing another round of funds from the Ferry Boat Discretionary Program for this project. The vessels request in 2023 is for an engine rebuild for the Maquoit ferry. This was added because it was overlooked in previous plans. CBL projects that the set number of operating hours by which the engine rebuild is required will be reached in 2023. $162,230 was added in 2025 for the rebuild of the Aucocisco engine and van replacement. These are all in sync with CBL’s asset management plan. IT replacement is projected every 3-5 years, accounting software upgrade, gate winches, and forklifts. 2025 includes approximately $2 million for preventive maintenance. CBL is required to dry dock each vessel every two years, so every other year three vessels are in dry dock.

In response to a question from Greg Jordan, Hank said that he would like to increase the $3 million facilities request to $5.5 million.

METRO

Greg Jordan summarized METRO’s requests. Most of the $1.6 bus replacement request had been included on the discretionary side through last year. METRO had pursued but was not awarded 5339 funds. The funds would replace five buses in total (three 2005 CNG buses and two 2004 diesel buses). The certification on the fuel tanks
for the three CNG buses expire this year. Replacing the tanks does not make sense on vehicles of this age. The diesel buses are past METRO’s policy of replacing vehicles over 14 years of age. These use lifts instead of ramps and are less accessible and thus a challenge to operate. There is state funding to replace the 2004 buses.

The bus replacement in the discretionary tab is to replace Breez shuttles that are rated for 7 years or 200,000 miles. The goal is to replace them in 2022 when they will be at 7 years and closer to 300,000 miles. They are not designed for the current level of use and are difficult to maintain given the level of ridership. This also represents the replacement of seven 2011 buses in 2023. METRO will pursue 5339 funds in each grant cycle and other funds for this purpose.

The 5307 preventive maintenance request represents cost of labor and benefit increases rising faster than expected and the loss of the federal CNG tax credit. Greg noted that METRO had a difficult budget cycle for 2020. The budget package is included in the packet. The operating assistance request represents the hiring of a fare system administrator to manage the new regional fare collection system. This is necessary to maximize the ridership and revenue potential and with pass programs and employer support will pay for itself going forward. There is also the hiring of a fourth dispatcher to ease the burden on staff. This also represents the expiration of METRO’s AVL grant and the need to pay maintenance fees and the cost of METRO’s texting service. Costs of the texting service have been higher than expected for and METRO has absorbed rather than passed on these costs to SPBS and Casco Bay Lines. The service is popular and the additional funds would help to offset the costs.

The cost of Route 3 and the Husky Line are higher than expected. METRO was not able to restructure as much service as hoped due to concerns from the communities. Because this is a few years out and relates to a new service still in its pilot phase, METRO would be willing to hold this in abeyance for now and do a Regionally Administered Discretionary (RAD) application.
Hank asked if any new bus purchases would be electric. Greg said the purchases for this year would not be. METRO will not be making any electric bus purchases until the current electric bus project for 2021 is implemented. If that proves successful, future procurements, including those mentioned as discretionary projects, would be electric.

Greg said METRO has to order buses for this year in the next month and need some certainty around that and will not pursue 5339 funds this year. METRO will pursue those funds next year.

Ryan noted that, according to FTA Region 1, RTP is no longer eligible for 5307 operating assistance funding but is eligible for 5307 capital funding. RTP’s funding request has been moved from operating assistance in the MaineDOT tab to the capital section. There was no net change, the funds were just moved from one program to the other. Ryan noted that the requests from other agencies were consistent with years past or fell below the threshold for additional information.

Art Handman said that SPBS’ request is straightforward and modest. He noted that last year METRO had asked for a one-time increase in operating assistance with 2% increases thereafter and SPBS had done the same. SPBS’ budget went up 7% this year but they requested a 2% increase as he thought 5307 funds were under duress. Given the amount of some of the other requests, he would like to see SPBS’ budget increase covered. This should remain below the $100,000 threshold for additional review. Art will provide Ryan with a formal revised request for SPBS.

Hank said several years ago CBL’s 2022 request of $8 million for vessel replacement was moved from 5307 into the discretionary funds for a year. CBL received discretionary funds for the first vessel and the remaining funds were moved from discretionary back to 5307. CBL would be willing to move some of the $8 million
increase to discretionary as they have had success with the Ferry Boat Discretionary Program. CBL would take this risk to help the bottom line on 5307 funding.

Kristina asked if it would be possible to submit discretionary proposals before November. Hank said CBL is putting a $3 million request in this year. CBL has won a sizable amount of the Ferry Boat Discretionary funds in past years. This year’s request is for electrification of the vessel currently being built and there has been support from both Maine senators and FTA Acting Administrator Jane Williams for that.

Greg asked Hank how much funding he would be comfortable moving to discretionary. Hank said he wanted to see the overall bottom line before deciding on an amount to help bring us closer to the $1 million reserve. He noted that the Ferry Boat Discretionary total is capped at $6 million in federal funding.

Hank said he was in Washington recently to see about other funding sources and there is nothing else available other than the Lo-No funds. CBL can’t use this for the new ferry because it requires scrapping the propulsion system being replaced. He noted that $530 million in discretionary funds for buses was recently released by FTA.

Hank suggested we consider if anything else could be moved from the 5307 side to the discretionary side. Greg said METRO is at the point where it has to buy for some things. Tony said BSOOB Transit’s trolley purchase of $1.1 million needs to happen this year as they are 20 years old. They would like to do one procurement if possible. Greg said the replacement of the two 2004 diesels could be pushed out another year and METRO could apply for 5339 funds over the summer. If they were not successful, they would have to revisit it again next year. This would move $820,000 out of the 5307 side and to the discretionary side for 2020.

Hank asked if the 5339 requests are done as a state or individually by agency. Greg said they have been done separately which he thinks weakens our chances. Hank
suggested doing a combined proposal for the state supported by MaineDOT with allotments for each agency. Lori said that previously MaineDOT had submitted on behalf of METRO. She said the City of Bangor submitted on their own three years in a row and was successful each year. She said she thinks Senator Collins has a lot to do with that success. She said MaineDOT is working on a 5339 application for Acadia Gateway Center and suggested that PACTS agencies may not want to compete with that. An official request to combine with that could be sent to Jennifer Brickett of MaineDOT.

Kristina said that requests for federal discretionary funds are more likely to be successful when the state supports one overall application. Lori said this has not been her experience. Greg said a joint application with several requests for buses, ferries, the Portland Transportation Center, and other items may not be competitive because it would be difficult to parcel out the funding amounts. Hank said the Ferry Boat Discretionary Program application asked if the project was scalable and could be done for less.

Greg said that in recognition that we will be going through a process this year to develop a funding prioritization framework, it may make sense to approve a two-year operating plan and start fresh with the new framework. Hank said we would still not want to show a negative number in out years. Kristina said approving a two-year operating plan would still account for the data in the out years. Art asked if FTA requires more than a two-year outlook. Lori said it’s a five-year requirement. Kristina said we could look at additional years but not lock anything in beyond two years as this would allow us to develop the prioritization framework that we’ve all committed to developing. Greg said we can show a forecast but not worry about maintaining a $1 million reserve in 2022 because we will have a new prioritization framework in place. Kristina summarized that the intent is to adopt a two-year plan and show three out years with the goal of not having a negative balance. Greg said the understanding is that the
new prioritization framework will start us from square one anyway and we are less concerned about this SYCOP not showing the $1 million reserve in 2022.

Art said this all highlights that we need another funding source. Every request seems valid and necessary. Kristina said this has been an ongoing theme here, in Transit Tomorrow, and with the PACTS Policy Committee. Elected officials and residents agree that we need more investment in all modes of transportation. This will be the key theme of GPCOG’s first State of the Region in March. This complements the work of MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note. The intent is to develop stakeholder and public support to get more resources for transportation. This is the start of a year-long process to identify what those resources could be and to move to a discussion of specific revenue sources.

Art said that regionalization is important. Other regions don’t want to pay for something that benefits Cumberland County so this needs to be on a statewide and multi-modal basis. Kristina said the Blue-Ribbon Commission is not close to a solution and that this needs to be a grass roots effort. There are numerous stakeholders and we want to show the region’s support. We need to highlight the impact of more resources and we need a broad coalition to do it.

Lori said the Governor’s effort to move towards electric across the board is a challenge as well. The plan to move everything towards electric adds more costs. METRO and BSOOB’s electric initiative is a model. There are few if any electric vehicles available for small transit providers. Hank noted the challenge of CMP’s peak demand charging.

Kristina said the Governor’s goals on climate change will not be met by electrifying rural transit as that is not the best use of the money. The Transportation Working Group is working on this now and it will be done by June. There are more effective ways to use funds to address climate. Greg said the state fleet may not have a real impact but it is symbolic.
Greg, Hank, and Tony will follow up with Ryan with revised requests to move toward eliminating the future deficit. The group agreed this should be a topic for another workshop before going to the Transit Committee for approval. Ryan suggested that the Transit Committee meeting on March 12 be repurposed as a workshop to continue this discussion. The time will be kept the same.

Ryan mentioned there has been some discussion among staff and informally with agencies about grant opportunities around innovation and technology. It may be helpful to think collectively about what agencies are planning for or wanting to do around innovation and technology. This could be similar to the effort to identify capital projects for Transit Tomorrow. This would help us individually and collectively as a region to proactively identify goals and initiatives for which funding could be sought rather than trying to develop initiatives in response to funding opportunities. Hank noted that the Passenger Ferry Grant program this year has innovation as a scoring category. The group generally agreed this would be a good topic for a workshop.

Ryan asked all transit agencies to review their portions of the SYCOP to correct any potential inaccuracies.

7. Other Business
Lori noted that the Town of Brunswick has asked MaineDOT for a transit study for the town. MaineDOT agreed as long as the scope includes connections to the Breez, Downeaster, and Bath’s system. MaineDOT is providing approximately $80,000 of a $100,000 study which is expected to be completed by July 1. Lori said the Town of Brunswick is leading the effort. Greg noted that Ryan Leighton of Brunswick is a new board member of METRO.

Hank said he was disappointed that the recent Portland Press article on the region’s transit system was not more positive when we are doing such good things. There are
things we can improve but the article was very negative. Art said he gave positive
comments that were construed negatively by the reporter. He said he did not receive
any comments and the article did not have much impact. Tony said he didn’t think the
dots were connected and that there was a lot of underlying knowledge in the questions
that were directed to him. He thought his comments were positive. Hank said he was
talking about the overall tone rather than specific comments. Lori said there was also a
very positive letter to the editor about riding METRO. Greg said the fare collection
system is a step in the right direction to bring things together for the rider and we
should continue to work on those public facing elements. Kristina said that we are
making progress on some recommendations of Moving Southern Maine Forward but
not on others. Continued progress will help make us the best system we can be.

8. **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 2:26 p.m.