

PACTS TRANSIT COMMITTEE WORKSHOP MINUTES

July 09, 2020

Name	Affiliation	Attendance
Hank Berg, Vice Chair	Casco Bay Island Transit District	Y
Lori Brann	MaineDOT	
Chris Chop	Maine Medical Center	Y
Robert Currie	YCCAC	N
Jack De Beradinis	RTP	Y
John Duncan	City of South Portland	Y
Amy Geren	Portland Downtown	Y
Rebecca Grover	Maine Turnpike Authority	Y
Bruce Hyman	Planning Committee Appointee	Y
Gregg Isherwood	Custom Coach & Limousine	N
Greg Jordan, Chair	METRO	Y
Patricia Quinn	NNEPRA	Y
Tony Scavuzzo	BSOOB Transit	Y
Guests		
Price Armstrong	AECOM	
William Gayle	NNEPRA	
Nate Moulton	MaineDOT	
For GPCOG		
Andrew Clark, Kristina Egan, Rick Harbison, Zoe Miller, Ryan Neale		

1. Welcome

Greg Jordan opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2. Open Public Comment

There were no public comments during this portion of the agenda.

3. Acceptance of the May 26, 2020 Transit Committee Workshop Minutes

The group accepted the May 26 workshop minutes as written.

4. Presentation on the Medium- and Long-Term Impacts of COVID-19

Staff and consultant AECOM have conducted research to better understand the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic and their implications on the region's transit system. This work has included interviews with local and national leaders and experts, focus groups, a survey, and other state-of-practice research. Staff will soon author a white paper on the complete findings.

Key takeaways from the interviews included:

- Helping the public be confident that service will be reliable, convenient, clean, and safe
- Considering the opportunity to reallocate street space to transit service, walking, biking, or other uses
- Recognizing the pandemic as a catalyst for a digital transformation, especially with regard to working from home

Survey respondents' priorities for use of federal funds included ensuring the public and operators' continued health and safety, and system innovation. Respondents considered the greatest unknowns to be rider behavior, the development of a vaccine, and whether the popularity of working from home would continue. The major long-term transformations anticipated by respondents included increased rates of working from home, continued social distancing, impacts to the economy, and increases in people walking and biking.

The findings have been compiled into a matrix which visualizes the level of uncertainty and the level of impact of certain items. Items which are highly uncertain and highly impactful—such as *When will a vaccine be developed? How will funding be impacted?*— will need to be studied in greater detail. Another matrix involves the rate at which a vaccine is developed versus whether transit funding increases or decreases. Staff and AECOM are developing a white paper that will include each of these scenarios to identify low-risk, high-reward strategies based on different assumptions of the future. We may want to pursue some of these initiatives, such as automated ticketing, regardless of how these scenarios develop going forward. The technology, demand, and rationale are in place for this initiative. Another issue to be thinking about is how changes in fuel prices would affect our priorities.

Bruce Hyman asked how the research could inform the committee's work on allocating funding toward the CARES Act Phase II priorities. Price Armstrong noted there was still more work to do before they could offer additional specific recommendations. Kristina added that committee members and other interested parties will have an opportunity to hear the final results of the research work before the Transit Committee's next meeting. Greg noted the committee need not feel rushed in making long-term allocations, and that the immediate priority will be for the next six months.

William Gayle suggested staff also consider vaccine adoption rates as well as development; a vaccine being developed does not guarantee that people will use it. He also suggested considering the impact of potential changes in fuel prices. Greg underscored the importance of understanding where the transit industry and mobility in general are headed. He recommended that the group not focus solely on returning to a pre-pandemic system and assumptions.

5. Overview of Funding Opportunity: Inclusive Transportation Planning Mobility on Demand Grant Program

GPCOG has been made aware by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) of a grant opportunity to fund identifying, developing, and implementing a mobility-on-demand program. The Request for Proposals stresses taking a human-centered design approach to improve mobility and access for people who traditionally experience barriers to transportation. The grant provides up to \$300,000 over 18 months.

Jack De Beradinis commented on MaineDOT's upcoming Transit Technology Summit. He asked whether the work being discussed would have a regional or statewide focus. Zoe said the work would initially be focused on the regional level, with an eye toward scaling up to a statewide program once it is feasible to do so.

Rebecca Grover noted that Go Maine has been revamped towards a statewide trip planner, and encouraged Zoe to explore this. Zoe said Go Maine could be folded into the work as a partner.

The committee was supportive of staff pursuing the opportunity.

6. Discussion of Framework for Transit Agency CARES Act Phase II Requests

Staff are proceeding with the one-on-one meetings with each transit agency to help refine the data collection effort in support of allocating Phase II funding. Meetings with all agencies except YCCAC are happening this week.

Greg has been in contact with Concord Coach Lines (CCL) with regard to their request for CARES Act funding. He has sent them a list of questions and a template similar to that used by the other agencies so the group can have further clarity on the details of their request. He hopes to hear back from CCL by early next week.

Greg asked the group to consider rescheduling its July 28 meeting to July 23. The group agreed to reschedule the July 28 meeting to July 23 at 9:30 a.m. Staff will work to resolve any potential scheduling conflicts.

7. Other Business

GPCOG has received a grant to bring on 14 AmeriCorps volunteers in October. Kristina anticipates twelve of them will be working directly for member municipalities or transit agencies. If any member is interested in hosting a volunteer, they are encouraged to let staff know.

Patricia Quinn shared that NNEPRA had just received approval to add three more round trips on the Downeaster beginning July 20.

8. Adjourn