

PACTS Transit Committee

October 27, 2020

Workshop Meeting Minutes

| Member | Affiliation | Attendance |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Hank Berg, Vice Chair | Casco Bay Island Transit District | Y |
| Lori Brann | MaineDOT | Y |
| Robert Currie | YCCAC | Y |
| Jack De Beradinis | RTP | 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 |
| Donna Tippet | City of South Portland | Y |
| Cary Tyson | Portland Downtown | Y |
| Guests | | |
| Will Gayle | NNEPRA | |
| Greg L'Heureux | City of South Portland | |
| Doug Morison | BSOOB Transit | |
| For GPCOG | | |
| Chris Chop, Andrew Clark, Kristina Egan, Ryan Neale | | |

1. Welcome—Greg Jordan, Chair

Greg Jordan opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

3. Acceptance of September 22 Transit Committee Workshop Meeting Minutes

The group accepted the September 22 workshop minutes as written.

4. Review of Transit Agency CARES Act Revenue and Expense Projections Through 2022

Staff continue to work with some transit agencies as they submit their financial projections through 2022. Because there were some submissions outstanding, staff did not have final data to discuss. Ryan Neale suggested the group discuss a ridership recovery projection and present the data that staff have received so far.

Tony Scavuzzo and Hank Berg noted the ridership recovery metrics for BSOOB Transit and Casco Bay Lines were not accurate. Staff will reach out to both for updated figures. Donna Tippettt said that SPBS ridership data had been skewed by the fare-free period. She had noted ridership was down 30% based on October 2019 and October 2020. She suggested the group develop and agree on a set of assumptions—including changes in the pandemic recovery, State law, and vehicle capacity limits—to help estimate ridership recovery. Greg L'Heureux added that Southern Maine Community College's transition to fully online classes has also affected SPBS' ridership.

Greg Jordan felt there were differences between the agencies in terms of how their customer markets have been affected, which might make it difficult to develop common metrics. He also noted a potential second surge in COVID cases in the coming months, but, because of the contactless payment system and new shields to protect drivers, it may not be necessary to suspend fares a second time.

Tony said that October 1 was a milestone. With the reintroduction of fares, ridership data may be more reliable going forward.

Jack De Beradinis felt it would be difficult to determine a common set of assumptions because the nature of the pandemic and the response to it is so uncertain. RTP intends to update their projections as frequently as they need to, but urged the group not to try to predict the unpredictable.

Ryan said the intent is to allocate CARES funds in six-month increments. The financial projections through 2022 will help inform how funding should be allocated between

supplementing lost agency revenue and other priorities. Staff will follow up with agencies to help with submissions as needed in advance of the November 12 meeting.

Greg Jordan felt the goal was to be conservative with funding, but to also have funding available for other projects and priorities, which will help bring riders back.

Greg L'Heureux said SPBS has limited staff available for increased cleaning needs, and asked whether agencies have increased their operating budgets as shown in their submissions to account for that. Greg Jordan said that METRO is developing their 2021 annual budget and will be including one new full-time employee for cleaning, but noted that expense is better captured as part of Priority 2 for equipment and sanitation needs, rather than as a revenue offset. The group agreed to make a note of that kind of data in their submissions so staff can account for it. Kristina invited the group to submit data for Priority 2 so staff can have a better understanding of agencies' needs.

Greg Jordan noted an opportunity for a jointly procured cleaning service that could clean all vehicles as they arrive in downtown Portland. Most services converge near Monument Square.

5. General Staff Report

The Policy Committee approved the proposed PACTS committee restructuring at its October 22 meeting. One outcome is the increased transit representation, including four agencies represented on the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC), three on the Executive Board, and all seven on the Policy Board. There will also be equity advocates, environmental specialists, and active transportation specialists represented. Staff will work to update the bylaws in advance of the Policy Committee's January meeting, and will conduct additional transition planning.

Hank asked how the FTA's recent communication on funding roles and responsibilities will affect the new structure. While staff are still reviewing FTA's response, any necessary updates will be made to ensure compliance.

Will suggested staff develop a "roadmap" to inform current committee members on the committee transition process.

6. Transit Committee Membership

Bob Currie had suggested revisiting Gregg Isherwood's membership on the Transit Committee. In light of the approved committee restructuring, the group agreed not to discuss this item further.

7. Other Business

Several members of the committee have identified the current electric rates as cost-prohibitive for conversion to electric-powered vehicles. Staff suggest rekindling that conversation and identifying the appropriate channels. Tony said BSOOB has reached out to the state Office of the Public Advocate and MaineDOT. He supported advocacy for a new rate for charging transit vehicles. Hank agreed, adding that charging the diesel-electric hybrid Peaks Island ferry vessel would be cost-prohibitive during peak periods of electricity demand. Staff will coordinate a meeting with appropriate stakeholders.

Hank had identified an existing State law that requires applicants of disinfectants to be licensed by the Board of Pesticide Control. Staff have reached out to Maine Municipal Association (MMA) to pursue a statewide exemption for transit agencies. MMA suggested members of the Transit Committee submit a letter in support. Kristina urged that such a letter would be voluntary. Patricia Quinn requested a copy of the statute. Staff will distribute a copy to the committee.

At its 10/08 meeting, the Transit Committee provided guidance on priority programs and projects for the next allocation of CARES Act funding, including:

- COVID-19 operating best practices
- Improved safety and access for older adults, people with disabilities, and people of color
- Rapid transit alternatives analysis
- Expanded touchless payment and real-time information mobile app
- Transit signal priority (TSP) projects
- Microtransit feasibility analysis
- Automatic passenger counters (APC)

At the November 12 meeting, the committee will be able to evaluate the agencies' financial projections and discuss funding for the various priorities.

Greg said METRO will provide free rides on Election Day, continuing a program they have done in the past.

Tony announced the Zoom Express will return to full service on November 2, with expanded service to the Saco Transportation Center.

8. Adjourn

With no objection, the meeting was adjourned.