

**American Rescue Plan (ARPA) Call for Projects
Application Form—NON-SPATIAL**

Promotional Half Price Fare Initiative

Regional Significance Threshold—Please check any boxes that apply to your project. If you cannot check at least one of the boxes, your project does not meet the regional significance threshold and you should not complete the application.

- My project serves regionally significant origins, destinations, and corridors, defined as PACTS priority centers and corridors, including those identified in Transit Tomorrow and the upcoming Metropolitan Transportation Plan (an update to Destination 2040). Regionally significant origins, destinations, and corridors include highly-travelled roads; transportation terminals; employment centers; higher education campuses; major tourism, entertainment, and recreation venues; equity target areas; and places zoned for higher density and affordable housing.
- My project has systemwide benefits. Systemwide benefits include improving the region's major intersections or traffic signal network, applying a technology for system improvement or revenue generation, supporting the transit customer's regional experience, or making a significant connection in the active transportation network.
- My project meaningfully reduces regional greenhouse gas emissions or improves the resiliency of the regional transportation network.

Optional Comments

This project will provide a significant cost-savings benefit for transit users within the reaches of four transit agencies for a nine-month period, with a goal of changing travel habits long-term. This could have significant positive and lasting results on ridership, resulting in a lower percentage of the region's population using a personal automobile for every trip, with all the economic, environmental, and traffic reduction benefits that increased transit use provides.

Municipality/Agency

Greater Portland Metro

Regional Partners—Regional coordination is encouraged. If you are working with other municipalities/agencies on this project, please briefly describe your coordination efforts.

City of South Portland, Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit, Casco Bay Lines

Primary Contact Name

Mike Tremblay

Email Address

mtremblay@gpmetro.org

Telephone Number

207-517-3023

Project Name

Promotional Half Price Fare Initiative

Project Location—To the extent applicable, describe the location of this project.

Within the municipalities served by four transit agencies (Greater Portland Transit District, South Portland Bus Service, Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit, and Casco Bay Lines).

Project Description/Scope—Provide a brief description of the scope of the project.

The proposed promotional fare reduction seeks to reduce fares by half across three agencies (Greater Portland Transit District (hereinafter referred to as "Metro), South Portland Bus Service ("SPBS"), Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit ("BSOOB") for a period of nine months (April 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022). The fare reduction would apply to all riders who pay using cash or stored value (using the DiriGo card or app). This also halves the fare cap (e.g. \$60 monthly for local trips), so that riders will continue to be incentivized to ride frequently. The fare reduction would not apply to pass programs, whose riders do not pay directly for rides. Additionally, the promotional fare reduction would reduce fares by 50% for all ticketed service fares, including reduced fares, on Casco Bay Lines, for five months (May, June, October, November, and December), excluding the high-ridership months of July and August. These reduced fares are estimated to generate an additional 280,000 rides across all modes between April and December, 2022.

Purpose and Need—Describe the “problem” this project will solve. What are the regional and/or local benefits of this project?

In 2020, ridership on transit nationwide plummeted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Greater Portland, ridership was consistently at levels 60% lower than in 2019. While ridership steadily increased to about 58% of pre-pandemic levels by Fall 2021, it is clear that ridership will not recover to pre-pandemic levels for years unless some intervention is. The proposed promotional fare reduction is intended to boost ridership in 2022, reducing the barrier to entry and welcoming new riders to transit, ideally changing travel habits for "choice" riders.

Funding Request—Please indicate how much funding you are requesting for this project. (Please also note if you have obtained or are seeking funding from other sources.)

The requested amount is \$1,128,018. The funding breakdown is included as an attachment to this application.

Regional Plans and Studies—Was this project included in a regional plan or study? Please list the plan(s) and page numbers. If possible, provide a link to an online copy of the plan.

No; this initiative rose out of the pandemic. Transit agencies throughout the country have been experimenting with reduced fares (or free fares) in order to sustain and encourage ridership during the pandemic. C-TRAN, public transit agency in Clark County, Washington, is reducing fares for local trips in 2022 from \$1.80 to \$1.00. Boston is making three bus routes free in 2022. And Chicago Transit Authority is proposing to make promotional pass programs, introduced in 2021 as a way to encourage transit use, permanent beginning in 2022.

GPCOG's Inclusive Transportation Planning Toolkit—GPCOG's Inclusive Transportation Planning Toolkit offers resources on best practices for accessible and inclusive planning. We strongly encourage use of the toolkit in designing and implementing public involvement. Have you implemented any of the practices described in the toolkit?

No

Please tell us about your experience.

This initiative did not evolve from a significant public involvement process. The fare reduction is an across-the-board benefit to all riders. Riders will continue to use the same fare payment systems they already use on Metro, SPBS, BSOOB, and Casco Bay Lines; the only difference is that fares will be cheaper. As such, extensive public involvement/education for this initiative is not necessary. The focus of outreach will be for marketing and promotion of this initiative.

Title VI Compliance—PACTS is required to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the related executive orders and regulations, which are intended to ensure that traditionally underserved populations are included in the planning process, benefit equally from investments, and do not experience a disparately negative impact from decisions. Please describe how civil rights requirements have been or will be considered in the development of this project.

All riders are expected to benefit equally from a promotional fare reduction. The fare reduction will proportionally benefit those who spend a larger portion of their income on transit fares. Those who already have reduced fares, such as elderly people, people with disabilities, students, etc. would also see a 50% fare reduction (\$0.50, down from \$1.00, for a local bus ride). The threshold for the fare capping program used by Metro, South Portland Bus Service, and Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit would also be reduced by half, meaning that all riders who use transit frequently enough to enjoy the benefits of fare capping would also benefit from the promotional fare rates.

Access to Jobs—How, if at all, will the project improve access to existing and/or future jobs? (3 points)

A promotional fare reduction would improve access to all jobs within the reach of the participating agencies (Metro, South Portland Bus Service, Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit, Casco Bay Lines) by reducing the barrier of entry to transit.

Access to Prominent Tourist, Entertainment, and Recreation Venues—How, if at all, will the project improve access to regionally defined tourist, entertainment, and recreation destinations? (2 points)

A promotional fare reduction would improve access to tourist, entertainment, and recreation venues within the reach of the participating agencies by deducing the barrier of entry to transit. Additionally, an inexpensive barrier to entry to transit will lend itself well to marketing partnerships with event spaces, downtown organizations, and other points of interest.

Access to the Region's Transit Network—How, if at all, will the project improve access to the region's transit network, including regionally defined bus stops,¹ ferry terminals, and/or rail stations? (3 points)

A promotional fare reduction would directly improve access to the region's transit network by reducing the barrier of entry to transit.

Access to the Region's Active Transportation Network—How, if at all, will the project improve access to the region's active transportation network, including regionally significant bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure? (3 points)

Reducing the cost of transit improves and augments the multimodal network by providing affordable alternatives to motor vehicle travel. Transit tends to be just one leg of a multimodal trip; most transit trips start and end with a walk or bicycle ride to/from home or to/from a destination. Reducing the cost of transit makes non-auto travel more appealing, thus encouraging people to use transit, and by extension, walking and biking.

Universal Access—How will the project accommodate a diverse range of users—including, but not limited to: older adults, children (including parents or guardians with young children), people of color, blind and visually impaired people, deaf people and those with hearing loss, people with intellectual disabilities, people with limited mobility and those who use mobility devices and strollers, people with limited English proficiency, unbanked or underbanked people? (3 points)

The proposed promotional fare reduction would apply to all users who pay using stored value or cash, within the reach of the participating agencies. This includes those on reduced fare programs, who would see the cost of a local trip reduced from \$1 to \$0.50 during the promotional period. The fare reduction makes the transit network more accessible to all, which proportionately has greater benefits for those for whom the cost of transportation is a significant burden. Reducing fares may also incentivize people who are already riding to ride more; according to a survey by DC Metro, 70% of those earning less than \$30,000 continued to ride through the pandemic, compared to an overall ridership total of 18% of pre-pandemic levels.

Safety Improvements—How, if at all, will the project improve safety for active transportation users (pedestrians, cyclists)? How, if at all, will the project aim to reduce crash severity and crash risk, or improve emergency response, particularly in a regionally defined High Crash Node or Road Segment? (5 points)

¹ Regionally significant bus stops will include those identified in the Transit Stop Access Project Phase I Report as potential locations for mini-hubs. The list of locations is included in Appendix B of the PACTS Transportation Funding Framework.

One goal of a promotional reduced fare program is to encourage drivers to consider taking the bus instead. Reduced vehicle traffic can help improve safety for active transportation users by reducing the amount of interactions between a bicyclist/pedestrian and motor vehicles. Additionally, traveling by bus is statistically extremely safe, with significantly lower number of deaths per mile traveled than driving a personal automobile, walking, or bicycling. Encouraging more transit use by reducing fares can move people from more statistically dangerous modes to a safer mode.

Asset Management—How, if at all, will the project improve the pavement condition and prevent the roadway from deteriorating into lower categories (reconstruction/rehabilitation)? How, if at all, will the project improve the longevity, lifespan, and functionality of a transit asset (vehicle, facility, guideway)? How, if at all, will the project improve the longevity, lifespan, and functionality of active transportation infrastructure? (5 points)

If a promotional fare reduction succeeds in its goal to encourage more transit use by road users who typically travel by personal vehicle, this would help reduce the rate of pavement degradation, as fewer personal vehicles would be on our roads.

Flow of People and Goods—To what extent does the project improve commercial operations and safety at a regionally significant intersection(s) or corridor(s)? To what extent does the project enhance truck or rail freight reliability and performance on key corridors (highways, rail) and facilities (terminals, ports)? (5 points)

If a promotional fare reduction succeeds in its goal to encourage more transit use by road users who typically travel by personal vehicle, fewer passenger vehicles would be on the roads, reducing the number of potential conflicts for commercial vehicles and improving safety at intersections. Additionally, reduced personal vehicle use improves the demand on curbside parking, allowing commercial vehicles to more reliably use curbside space for loading, instead of stopping in a travel lane or median, where the commercial vehicle driver would be less safe.

Social Equity—To what extent does this project benefit or harm the health or mobility of Environmental Justice (EJ) and Title VI populations? (3 points)

Consider addressing poverty, racial and ethnic minorities, population aged 65 and over, foreign-born population, limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, households with no vehicles available, etc.

The proposed promotional fare reduction would apply to all users who pay using stored value or cash, within the reach of the participating agencies. This includes those on reduced fare programs, who would see the cost of a local trip reduced from \$1 to \$0.50 during the promotional period. The fare reduction makes the transit network more accessible to all, which proportionately has greater benefits for those for whom the cost of transportation is a significant burden.

Transit-Oriented Development—Will the project have any impact, positive or negative, on an existing or proposed transit-oriented development (TOD), or the goals of TOD?² (2 points)

A promotional fare reduction would go a great deal in supporting any existing transit-oriented development within the reach of the participating agencies by further encouraging the use of transit instead of personal automobiles. TOD's will be able to use the reduced fare program to encourage their tenants to try transit for the first time.

Regionally Significant Locations—Will the project have any impact, positive or negative, on a PACTS priority center or corridor? (2 points)

Many bus routes are along PACTS priority corridors. If a promotional fare reduction is successful in encouraging people who typically drive motor vehicles to instead use transit, traffic on these corridors may be reduced. Transit routes along PACTS priority corridors include: Congress Street and Washington Avenue in Portland (Routes 1, 7, 9, and BRZ), Brighton Avenue in Portland (Routes 4 and HSK), Forest Avenue in Portland (Route 2), Route 1 in Falmouth (Route 7) and in Yarmouth and Freeport (BRZ), Ocean Street in South Portland (Route 21), and Route 1 in Biddeford, Saco, and Old Orchard Beach (most BSOOB routes).

Consistency with Local Plans—Is the transportation investment consistent with local plans (e.g., comprehensive plan, locally adopted neighborhood plan) and will the investment complement or support smart growth³ development? (3 points)

Please reference plans, public forums, zoning provisions, etc.

Yes. Portland's Plan (2030) outlines numerous goals to support transit, transit oriented development, and promote use of the Casco Bay Ferry Terminal. A promotional fare reduction program would encourage use of transit in the Greater Portland region. Additionally, Transit Tomorrow's Goal 1 is to make transit easier, which includes lower fares for low-income households.

Proximity to Affordable or Workforce Housing—Will the project have any impact, positive or negative, on the residents of affordable or workforce housing? (1 point)

A promotional fare reduction makes the transit network more accessible to all, which proportionately has greater benefits for those for whom the cost of transportation is a significant burden, such as those in affordable or workforce housing. Reducing fares may allow these riders to ride more frequently. According to a survey of Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) riders, the share of riders in 2020 compared to 2018 has halved among those earning more than \$100,000 per year, and has more than doubled among riders earning less than \$50,000 per year.

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)—How does this project impact the number of miles driven in the region? Does it encourage a mode shift away from single-occupant vehicles (SOV)? (3 points)

² Transit-oriented development (TOD) will be defined during the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Until then, applicants are asked to provide narrative regarding the project's impact on the goals of TOD.

³ Smart Growth is defined by the EPA at <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/about-smart-growth>.

Yes. A promotional fare reduction program would encourage mode shift from automobile to transit in the short term, and may help motorists form new habits that help them reduce the amount of miles driven in the long-term. A reduced fare program would go hand-in-hand with marketing efforts to encourage motorists to try transit, with the goal of familiarizing more potential users with transit and changing commuting behavior.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions—How does this project help meet the state's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals? These can be found on the Maine Climate Council's website. (3 points)

According to Maine Won't Wait, 59% of Maine's transportation-related emissions come from light-duty passenger cars and trucks. Making transit more competitive with driving a personal vehicle by reducing the cost of transit would encourage mode shift from automobile to transit in the short term, and may help motorists form new habits that help them reduce the amount of miles driven in the long-term. Every SOV trip that is eliminated due to increased transit use represents reduced tailpipe emissions.

Climate Resilience—How does the project prepare the region's infrastructure for climate impacts (heat, flooding, storm surge, etc.)? (4 points)

The increased short-term and long-term transit use that a promotional fare program may encourage may reduce the demand for impervious area such as excess pavement for parking and lane miles.

Supporting Files

- A. GP Metro Application 1 - Ridership Generation and Cost Estimate for Reduced Fare Promotion.pdf

Attachment A

Greater Portland Metro

ARPA Application #1 - Reduced Fare Promotion

12/20/2021

Agency	Estimated Cost	Estimated Ridership Generated ²
Greater Portland Metro	\$ 494,586	164,862
South Portland Transit Service	\$ 90,000	30,000
Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit	\$ 75,000	25,000
Casco Bay Lines	\$ 468,432	59,595
Totals	\$ 1,128,018	279,457

1. Cost estimates generated based on a 50% cut in average fare for 2022 projected non-pass program boardings

2. Ridership for bus agencies generated based on a 20% increase in riders compared to projected 2022 ridership.