

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

Greater Portland Metro Comprehensive Service Improvements

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 makes significant improvements to frequency and/or of service on several Metro routes, bringing these routes in line with other routes in terms of a standard 30-minute frequency and more closely aligning the start and end of service. These routes include PACTS priority corridors including Congress Street and Washington Avenue in Portland as well as Route 1 in Falmouth, Yarmouth, and Freeport. The proposed improvements also include extensions of existing routes to regional transit hubs (Casco Bay Lines and Portland Transportation Center), increasing the ability to connect between transit routes. Additionally, the proposed microtransit pilot in Falmouth would replace two of the least efficient fixed-route segments in Metro's network with Maine's first ever microtransit service (on a 12+ month pilot basis), which Metro expects will improve and expand service in east Falmouth while test-driving a new technology that could be applied in numerous other places in the Greater Portland region.

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.

None

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Project Name

Greater Portland Metro - Comprehensive Service Improvements

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

Municipalities of Brunswick, Falmouth, Freeport, Gorham, Portland, South Portland, Westbrook and Yarmouth.

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

The proposed service improvements are as follows: 1) Improved frequency of three routes: Route 7 (all day), Route 9 (off-peak), and BREEZ (off-peak). Route 7 and Route 9 service frequency would improve from 60 minutes to 30 minutes. BREEZ off-peak service would improve from up to 150 minutes to between 30-50 minutes. 2) Improved span of service on three routes: Route 7, Route 8, and Route 9. Hours on these routes would be extended 1-3 hours to more closely align with other routes. 3) Incremental modifications to two existing routes, including the Route 7 (ending service in Falmouth Village, eliminating the inefficient "loops" serving Oceanview and Town Market; as well as extending service along Congress Street to PTC/Thompson's Point) and the Husky Line (extending service to Ocean Gateway) 4) Introduction of a new microtransit service in Falmouth, replacing the loops discussed in (3) above, and potentially expanding to serve more of Falmouth in a more efficient and usable manner than the loops. 5) Increased Sunday span of service on three routes (Route 7, Route 8, and Route 9), and introducing Sunday service on the BREEZ 6) Introduction of service on four holidays (Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day) at a baseline level (Sunday service).

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

The strategic goal of these service improvements is to create a more consistent and useable baseline network for riders that creates greater network simplicity, easier transfers between routes, and expanded access to employment and recreation during early morning and later evening hours. Transit networks function best when its services are consistent, predictable, and flexible. Transit policy and planning experts advocate for transit bus networks characterized by high and consistent headways, simple and direct routes serving major corridors while forming a grid-like pattern, use of technology and infrastructure to improve travel times, affordable and equitable fares, and safe and dignified spaces. Transit planning and policy expert Jarret Walker states that “personal mobility – the freedom to move – is still transit’s primary product” (Human

Transit, p. 12). Transit Center’s Director of Research Steve Higashide reminds us that “bus and rail lines across the country attract rider under the same circumstances: when they are fast, frequent, and connect many destinations that can be walked to” (Better Buses, Better Cities, p. 18). Underlying this initiative is the emerging consensus in the public transit field that lasting changes associated with remote work are will likely reduce relative transit demand during peak periods and increase relative demand during off-peak periods. A report by Transit Center suggests that “agencies should prepare for a sustained shift to greater off-peak ridership, providing consistent frequency throughout the day” (https://transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TC_Covid_FINAL_Pages-1.pdf And in light of the prospect of a greater percentage of higher income workers working from home more often than before the pandemic, it follows that lower income workers will make up an even greater percentage of transit boardings. The Center for Law and Social Policy reports that about 50% of lower income workers do not have typical 9 to 5 jobs. www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2018/05/2018_lowwagework.pdf While peak period headways better than 30 minutes on key routes remains a goal for Metro, it seems a prudent near-term strategy is to build a solid baseline system. Most of Metro’s weekday peak period service operates at 30-minute headways. Slightly fewer routes maintain 30 minutes headways all day and into the evening. Span of service varies by route and is generally consistent in the early morning, but inconsistent in the evening with different routes ceasing service at different times between 7pm and 11pm. The proposed changes correct issues with our current service levels. Off-peak headways of 60 minutes (or more, in the case of BREEZ) reflect lifeline service that does not encourage ridership unless the rider has no other option. Service that starts later or ends earlier than it should cuts out potential riders who need to travel outside of our service span. The proposed service improvements all aim to use existing Metro fleet more efficiently and in a more consistent, predictable way, resulting in significant benefits for our ridership.

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.)

\$2,868,704 over 3 years. This project is scalable; the proposed improvements can be prioritized and triaged as necessary if not completely funded; however, Metro believes that each proposed improvement benefits from the others; in some cases, a proposed improvement relies on another proposed improvement.

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.

The proposed changes are all consistent with the region's Transit Tomorrow plan (2020); specifically, with Goal 2: Create Frequent Connections. The proposed changes improve frequency, extend service hours, and connect riders to new neighborhoods and transit modes. These improvements align with PACTS’ Moving Southern Maine Forward initiative (2017), which identifies “improve connections between routes and schedules” as a top priority. These improvements align the headways and service spans of several routes, making connections easier and making the system as a whole more predictable and user-friendly. Additionally, the extension of the Route 7 to Thompson’s Point creates a synergistic effect along Congress Street, aligning three routes with 30-minute headways to create a high-frequency corridor with headways as low as 10 minutes. The connections of the Route 7 and Husky Line to Thompson’s Point and Ocean Gateway, respectively, also create additional connections to regional bus/rail and ferries. In a recent GPCOG Transit Together Project Advisory Group meeting, GPCOG’s consultant, Nelson\Nygaard, outlined several aspects of their planning process, including microtransit. While Transit Together has not yet identified locations for future microtransit services, it is clear that microtransit will be a strategy for reaching lower-density areas in the future. The proposed improvements also align with Portland’s Plan 2030, which lists investing in public transit as a transportation

action item, with specifics including increased frequency, span, and reach of transit service (page 76). The improvements affecting Falmouth were approved unanimously by Falmouth Town Council on December 13, 2021.

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?

Yes

Please tell us about your experience.

Most proposed service changes proposed by Metro are outright improvements, such as improvements to the frequency, span, and reach of existing bus routes. For most communities, Metro is working with municipal leadership to ensure that we have support. Improvements affecting Falmouth include a transition from existing, limited service fixed route loops to a microtransit pilot. Metro recognized that this change warranted additional public process. In order to solicit feedback from as many members of the community as possible, Metro presented at two Falmouth Town Council meetings, and conducted our own virtual public meeting on December 2, 2021, to discuss changes and solicit feedback. Feedback was also sought via an online survey. The project page, which includes links to the survey as well as to the presentation, was advertised on hangings in buses during the leadup to the December 2 meeting. The December 2 meeting had 18 participants, which, according to Falmouth officials, was great turnout. To date, the survey has received 52 responses, overwhelmingly in favor of the proposed changes. In the event funding is awarded, Metro commits to utilize the tool kit to engage with riders and the public during the planning process to refine and finalize service improvements.

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 Metro projects and initiatives are subject to Metro's Title VI program (<https://gpmetro.org/DocumentCenter/View/459/2019-Title-VI-Program-final-with-attachments-040119?bidId=>). Metro announces significant service changes in six languages (English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, and Somali). The proposed microtransit service would include the ability to summon a ride using a typical telephone call; a smartphone would not be required like they are for using a transportation network company (TNC) such as Uber or Lyft. All other improvements are universally beneficial, and provide the greatest real benefit to those who use transit as their primary form of transportation.

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

Improved service span allows for more workers, who may have more "irregular" work hours, to use transit to get to and from work. Those whose work hours start or end outside of our span of service likely rely on their personal vehicle. For example, our proposed improvements to the service span of the Route 8 bus is centered around being a viable option for Maine Medical Center workers, many of whom have shifts that run from 7am-

7pm or 7pm-7am. Improved frequency of service makes transit more viable for all workers, allowing them to comfortably rely on transit without worrying as much if they miss a bus. Those that would need to transfer in order to use Metro to get to work would be able to do so more easily with improved headways.

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)

Improved span of service improves access to all tourist, entertainment, and recreation destinations within the reach of Metro. Improved service span allows Metro to be used as an option for more evening events. Improved service frequency improves the usability of the transit system, particularly for tourists, who may be less aware of the service schedule and may be particularly likely to utilize the system during off-peak hours, when the bulk of the frequency improvements are proposed. Specifically, the proposed Route 7 route extension will improve transit access to Congress Street in Portland including Maine Medical Center, the Portland Transportation Center and Thompson’s Pointe. The proposed Husky Line extension will add stops adjacent to Portland’s Old Port and Eastern Waterfront near the Casco Bay Lines and Ocean Gateway terminals. With the combined improvements on the Route 7 and headway improvements on the Route 9, there is the opportunity to create a High Frequency Corridor (HFC) on Congress Street in Portland. With these improvements, we can achieve 10-minute headways on this corridor. The HFC can specially branded and marketed to has the potential to elevate transit use on the peninsula across markets.

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)

The proposed service span and frequency improvements will greatly improve access to Metro's network, as these improvements will provide more buses, more frequently and for more of the day than we currently provide. The improvements add connections to regional transit; the extension of the Husky Line to Ocean Gateway would create a new connection between Metro and Casco Bay Lines, while the extension of the Route 7 to Thompson’s Point adds another connection between local bus service and regional bus and rail at Portland Transportation Center.

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)

Transit and active transportation have a symbiotic relationship. Improved transit service expands the access and usability of the walking, bicycling, and trail network, much like how improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improves the access to public transit. The proposed service span and frequency improvements will help to augment the pedestrian and bicycle network, allowing bicyclists and pedestrians to go greater distances without use of a personal vehicle.

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.

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 improved service span and frequency would benefit all users of Metro, but they especially benefit those who rely on Metro as their primary mode of transportation. This may include those who cannot drive a personal vehicle due to their disability, children and teens, older adults who may not feel comfortable driving at night or in poor weather, etc. The proposed improvements improve equity in the transportation network, allowing users to travel during more hours of the day, and with less wait time. Additionally, according to an MIT study (How Low-income Transit Riders in Boston Respond to Discounted Fares: A randomized Controlled Evaluation, by Jeffrey Rosenblum et. al.), low-income riders are more evenly distributed throughout the day than full-fare riders, who are more concentrated during peak hours. As Metro's proposed improvements focus primarily on off-peak frequency improvements and increased span of service, it is likely that these improvements would be more beneficial to low-income riders and others who do not ride on a nine-to-five workday schedule.

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)

The safety benefits of these service improvements are not explicit; however, any shift in mode to transit has inherent safety benefits, as bus travel is only behind air travel in terms of fatalities passenger mile. Reduced auto dependency due to improved transit is a safety benefit, and if a marked reduction in personal vehicle traffic results, these safety benefits may be applicable to other active transportation modes as well. According to the American Public Transit Association (APTA), modest increases in public transit mode share can provide disproportionately larger traffic safety benefits, and that traffic fatality rates, especially among children, decrease as transit trips per capita increase (APTA: The Hidden Traffic Safety Solution: Public Transportation).

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 these service improvements succeed in their 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. Additionally, regular headways throughout the would reduce the number of miles driven by out-of-service buses (i.e. "deadhead" miles), meaning a greater percentage of bus miles are being used to transport passengers rather than traveling to/from the bus depot.

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 these proposed service improvements succeed in their 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 service improvements would apply to all users of Metro, which includes those within Environmental Justice and Title VI communities. All improvements improve access to and within Portland's peninsula, where many of these populations are located.

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)

The proposed service improvements are harmonious with the goals of transit-oriented development and smart growth. These proposals, all aimed at improving the appeal, usability, and flexibility of our transit network, will help encourage "choice riders" at TOD's to opt to use transit, and will ideally encourage car-free or car-lite individuals and families to choose to live in the Greater Portland area.

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

The proposed service improvements will benefit the Greater Portland region as a whole. However, the service improvements are focused on several PACTS priority corridors: Congress Street, Washington Avenue, and Franklin Street in Portland, Route 1 in Falmouth, and Route 1 in Yarmouth and Freeport. The extension of the Husky Line to Portland's Eastern Waterfront also benefits riders who board the Husky Line along Route 25 in Portland, Westbrook, and Gorham.

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)

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>.

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

Yes. These improvements are harmonious with Transit Tomorrow's stated goals of improving service span and frequency, and connecting to more neighborhoods. Additionally, Transit Together envisions use of microtransit to serve lower-density communities, such as Falmouth. Improved transit frequency, span, and reach are identified as action items in Portland's Comprehensive Plan and PACTS' Moving Southern Maine Forward plan from 2017.

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)

Yes. These improvements affect routes that serve numerous affordable and workforce housing developments, including, but not limited to several Portland Housing Authority locations (Carleton Street Apartments, Boyd Street, Front Street). In transit systems across the country, it has been shown that people of color and people on the lower sides of the earnings scale have continued to ride transit, while white riders and those with higher incomes contribute heavily to the drop in ridership. In Washington DC's Metro system, while rail ridership dropped to 18% of pre-pandemic levels, 82% of Black customers continued to ride, and 70% of those who earn less than \$30,000 kept riding during the pandemic (source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/interactive/2021/public-transit-ny-dc-metro/>). While these riders are already using transit, improving service frequency, hours, and reach may unlock more ridership amongst those who would like to ride, but are unable to during their schedule or destinations.

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)

These service proposals have the potential to significantly reduce VMT by making transit a more appealing and available option for all residents within Metro's reach. The additional frequency, service hours, route changes, and the microtransit pilot will all make Metro more competitive with personal vehicles, further aligning with the work and play schedules of more potential riders, connecting more neighborhoods with jobs and regional transit connections, and making transit generally more reliable and available to a greater share of our region.

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 making transit more frequent and far-reaching has the potential to significantly reduce emissions by making transit a more appealing and available option for all residents within Metro's reach. The additional frequency, service hours, route changes, and the microtransit pilot will all make Metro more competitive with personal vehicles, further aligning with the work and play schedules of more potential riders, connecting more neighborhoods with jobs and regional transit connections, and making transit generally more reliable and available to a greater share of our region.

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 the proposed service improvements may reduce the demand for impervious area such as excess pavement for parking and lane miles. Additionally, improved

frequency, span, and reach of transit can only encourage the development of, and demand for, transit-oriented developments both immediately and going forward, meaning less space dedicated to surface parking, less impact to wetlands, and more density in development.

Supporting Files

- None.