

# **THE INAUGURAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION LEADERS TRAINING PROGRAM**

PRESENTATION OF IDEAS &  
CONCERNS FROM PARTICIPANTS

**JANUARY 7, 2020**

---

***GPCOG***  
GREATER PORTLAND  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

***PACTS***  
PORTLAND AREA COMPREHENSIVE  
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

# INTRODUCTION

## THE INAUGURAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION LEADERS TRAINING PROGRAM

---

In Fall of 2019, GPCOG staff worked with 23 engaged and energized participants who are learning about how to get involved with transportation planning and decision-making. The training is part of a larger effort by GPCOG and PACTS to advance the inclusion of underrepresented communities – including older adults, people with disabilities, and people of color. The pilot, including development of a curriculum for future use, was made possible with special funding from the Transit Planning 4 All initiative. Training program goals include:

- Supporting community members to gain the knowledge and tools needed for meaningful participation in transportation planning and decision-making.
- Providing a peer-to-peer network to assist participants in acting on the goals they set.
- Enabling decision-makers to hear directly from participants about the transportation needs and experiences of underrepresented communities.
- Acting as a gateway for participation in transportation decision-making

The Community Transportation Leaders training participants are excited to present to PACTS about their top transportation concerns – including why they matter and their ideas for solutions. The presentation will be followed by time for PACTS members to ask questions and share responses. What follows herein is a written record of these presentations, as well as additional concerns and ideas from participants.

# CTL CONCERNS & IDEAS

## 1. EXPANDING FREQUENCY - METRO BUS #8

**JANUARY 7, 2020**

---

### PRESENTATION BY:

**Patty Averill, Cecile Bitondo, Alfred Nyarwaya, Susan Fowler**

#### **BARRIER HIGHLIGHTED:**

We believe all the bus routes could be extended to put one more run on at night. This small change could help many residents to have time to schedule work or plan for family times or activities in the Portland area.

Our group would like to talk about the METRO Route 8 – the peninsula route. The first thing that would be helpful would be for the bus to run until 8-9pm. Right now, the last bus is at 5:30pm and earlier on weekends.

#### **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:**

Bus 8 has become the busiest bus even beating out the mall in the last few years as our city grows in new businesses and residents. The City of Portland is the place to be.

Bus 8 is the only bus that goes to Franklin Towers, 100 State Street, Harbor Terrace, North School, and Pine Street – all home to senior and handicapped residents. The population of each place is between 400-500 people.

Also, Bus 8 goes to Maine Med and Mercy hospitals and projects on Spring and Danforth St. where 100 or so families of low income live.

With Paul's Food Center gone, the seniors and handicapped residents now need to go to Hannaford and Trader Joe's – the only grocery stores for this area of town.

With all of these changes to our city, it's time to look at some needed changes for transportation for more residents of Portland. And when visitors to our city go around town they want to see the Old Port, the Victoria Mansion, they need the Route 8 as well. We would support a bi-directional circulator loop for Route 8.

### **PROPOSED SOLUTION OR IDEA:**

We believe that several changes would help the rider population:

- Adding more buses to the routes so that busses come every 15 to 20 minutes. This will mean less wait time in bad weather. Another option is to use double-buses that are used in bigger cities around new England.
- Running the busses later so that workers, shoppers and people who live downtown have safe access to the community, and reliable transportation home.

More service will mean new riders who can help pay for the changes. Advertisements for rent inside the buses could also help generate revenue.

Thank you for your time and for listening to us. We are really happy that METRO is demonstrating interest in making changes to bus service on the peninsula so that people can access the community safely.

# CTL CONCERNS & IDEAS

## 2. TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS FACED BY NEW IMMIGRANTS

**JANUARY 7, 2020**

---

### PRESENTATION BY:

**Guy Mpoyi, Bénédicte Wonganombe**

#### **BARRIER HIGHLIGHTED:**

We are here to speak today about transportation barriers of immigrants, especially when first arriving here. The specific barrier is access to information about METRO and RTP, and how and when they operate, in languages that new immigrants can understand.

#### **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:**

This is important because immigrants are arriving in Portland all the time. Immigrants want to learn and improve their English, but it is a process that takes time.

In the immediate time of arrival, and in the transition to getting established here, having access to basic information about METRO and RTP in many languages would be very helpful for immigrants getting around and getting what they need. Bénédicte will give you a couple of examples.

**Example 1** – *"When I first arrived here, I encountered a problem that would have been preventable if I had had access to information about RTP. I was staying in the shelter, and the rules in the shelter say that when we wake up, we must leave because they need to clean. So, when I left the shelter on that particular morning, I fell down when I was walking because the sidewalk was slippery due to the weather. If I had known I could call to request an RTP bus to*

*take me to the library, I could have avoided that walk and wouldn't have fallen down. There are many immigrants with disabilities who need to know about the RTP bus, just like I did."*

**Example 2** – *"An immigrant friend of mine told me that the first time he rode the bus, when he sat down, people on the bus told him to go to the back of the bus. He didn't understand why. He felt bad, thinking it was due to discrimination, but in reality, he didn't know the rules of the bus. If there were information in multiple languages inside the bus about how rules (in this case, the rules about dedicated seating for people with disabilities, where my friend was sitting), it would have helped him understand why he needed to move seats, that it wasn't discrimination, it was about maintaining space for people with disabilities on the bus."*

### **PROPOSED SOLUTION OR IDEA:**

Solutions we believe would address this barrier include:

- Creating informational materials in many languages for new immigrants
  - Create a METRO map in multiple languages besides English
  - Create the METRO schedule in multiple languages besides English
  - Create and post flyers inside the bus explaining METRO rules (i.e., how fares work, where to sit, getting off, etc.)
  
- Distribute these materials at places where many immigrants go, for example:
  - General Assistance office
  - Churches (St. Dom's parish, others)
  - Any immigrant-supporting organization

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues. We would love to assist you however we can.

# CTL CONCERNS & IDEAS

## 3. FINANCING STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE SYSTEM-WIDE NEED FOR METRO BUS SHELTERS

**JANUARY 7, 2020**

---

### PRESENTATION BY:

**Bukuru Mutima (presenting), Patrick Nyenge, Mireille Kabongo**

#### **BARRIER HIGHLIGHTED:**

The issue we are here to discuss today is the need for bus shelters across the METRO bus system. The specific barrier we're highlighting is that certain bus stops, especially where there are high volumes of vulnerable populations waiting for the bus, lack a bus shelter.

#### **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:**

This is important because people need protection from intense weather conditions that are common in Maine in all seasons (snow or rain, sun and heat, wind) while waiting for the bus.

Many people—children, pregnant women, elders, people with disabilities, and many other vulnerable members of our community— have difficulties waiting too long outside, unprotected, in the elements.

This can be especially problematic at times when the bus is full. The driver says it cannot accept any more passengers, and people must wait for the next bus.

We understand that METRO is aware of this bus shelter issue, and has been taking steps to increase the number of shelters across the system over the last few years. I speak for many bus riders when I say “thank you!” for that.

However, there are still many riders waiting without shelters, and we wish financing were not a barrier to fulfilling this need.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION OR IDEA:**

The solution we would like to see is: METRO’s development and use of a public-private partnership financing strategy for bus shelters across its system like the one I found out about, which is used by the City of Chicago.

- To manage its bus shelters, the City of Chicago has engaged in a renewable five-year contractual agreement (which it has already renewed at least once) with a private company.
- The private company provides design, installation, operation, and maintenance of certain street furniture, including bus shelters, all over the city.
- The private company also manages advertising on the bus shelters, and pays the City of Chicago a fee for the privilege of selling and maintaining advertisements in keeping with requirements described in the agreement.
- The private company’s obligation to pay fees is independent of its revenues and all other obligations under the contractual agreement.
- The contract also contains a commitment to retaining Minority-Owned and Women-Owned Business Enterprises for work associated with this agreement.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. We would like to assist you however we can.



# CTL CONCERNS & IDEAS

## 4. A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO CREATING A SAFER PORTLAND FOR PEDESTRIANS

**JANUARY 7, 2020**

---

### PRESENTATION BY:

**Ed Ashley, Michael King, Dave Lawrence, Bud Buzzell, Abdigafar Said**

#### **BARRIER HIGHLIGHTED:**

The barrier we are here to discuss is how the built environment—sidewalks, roadways, and intersections—in Portland is unsafe in many places for pedestrians, especially children, elders, and people with disabilities who use have visual impairment or use mobility devices.

We are grateful for the City of Portland’s process of “piggybacking” on existing development and construction projects to get sidewalks, bike paths, and other improvements built as part of those projects. But we need to go further.

#### **WHY IT’S IMPORTANT:**

This is important for numerous reasons. Here are just a few that matter to us:

- **It’s important for elders.** Maine is one of the oldest states in the US. Our elder population will continue to get larger. Fewer people have cars. Use of sidewalks is going up.

- **It's important for people with visual impairment.** Every trip starts and ends with walking. For me, as a person with low vision, improving walkability means adding things like audible pedestrian signals at crossings.
- **It's important for people using wheelchairs.** Existing sidewalks in places along Congress Street are difficult to navigate in my wheelchair, forcing me to go against traffic in the street.
- **It's important for everyone.** Kids need to get to school. People need to get to work. If we don't get out and about, our physical health can suffer. We can become isolated, and our mental health can suffer.

### **PROPOSED SOLUTION OR IDEA:**

We want to see Portland take a more comprehensive approach to creating a safer built environment for people who walk.

We know that Portland has already adopted a "Complete Streets" policy. That is helping to guide our community's future investments in a safer built environment.

Portland could be a real leader by adopting Vision Zero. In cities that have adopted Vision Zero, lowering vehicle speeds has been shown to reduce pedestrian fatalities dramatically.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. We are eager to assist you in pursuing these actions however we can.

# CTL CONCERNS & IDEAS

## 5. BUILDING METRO RIDERSHIP & INCREASING RIDER CAPACITY FOR UTILIZING THE BUS

**JANUARY 7, 2020**

---

**PRESENTATION BY:**

**Leeann Brionez, Karen Perry**

### **BARRIER HIGHLIGHTED:**

We want to talk about how to get more people using the trip planning apps. It's great that we have the Transit and Google Apps to plan bus trips but many people have challenges in using them. We are concerned that many people – especially older adults— are not using them because they don't know how or because they find them confusing. Riders get overwhelmed by information on the Apps.

### **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:**

This is a missed opportunity because the app is a simple way to understand the schedule.

Many people are still using the paper schedules and have difficulty knowing when the busses are supposed to come.

Without understanding the schedule, people can't also get to their appointments, they can't visit family and friends, and they don't have access to community meetings and events.

Not being able to use the apps, especially for older people, creates obstacles and barriers.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION OR IDEA:**

As a solution, we suggest hosting workshops to teach people how to use the transportation apps. We also suggest that the bus agencies encourage riders to teach other riders how to use the apps. Many of us would be interested in teaching other riders if the bus agencies want our help.

We thank you for hearing our concern.

# CTL CONCERNS & IDEAS

## 6. EXPANDING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICE TO PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES SURROUNDING PORTLAND

**JANUARY 7, 2020**

---

### PRESENTATION BY:

**Jayne Chandler, TyTy Chila, Becky Johnson**

#### **BARRIER HIGHLIGHTED:**

We'd like to see communities outside of Portland gain access to more reliable public transportation options.

#### **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:**

Expansion of service is important to many people living outside of Portland proper. Here are examples illustrating why this is important to each of us:

**Jayne:** As a resident of Gray, I'd like to see Gray & New Gloucester get public transportation to Windham and Portland. As a senior citizen, I have no public transportation options available. RTP only takes to my doctor appointments, but will not take me to pick up my scripts, get groceries, library, etc. I have to depend on a few close friends to give me rides where I need to go because I cannot afford alternative options like Lyft/Uber.

**TyTy:** I live in Westbrook and bus service in Westbrook is lacking. Infrequent bus service from Westbrook to South Portland has caused major inconveniences for me to be able to find work and keep a job. Either there isn't a bus early enough to get to work, or a bus that runs late enough to be able to leave work and go home. Another concern I have is that Westbrook

doesn't have a Metro ticket office where residents can buy bus passes.

**Becky:** I'm a South Portland resident with an Autistic 5 year-old son, and another one on the way. We need both bus lines (24A, 24B) in SoPo to run hourly, not bi-hourly, with extended night time hours. We also need more frequent 24B service on the weekends. Right now, the 24B has no weekend service. I live in a neighborhood with children and elderly residents, and with the cold weather upon us it makes it more difficult to live with inadequate bus service. No one wants to walk a half mile on the weekend to get the 24A bus, especially in bad weather. It also shouldn't take 4 hours to do a Walmart run and come home. The South Portland buses from my experience tend to be unreliable and often late. This needs to change.

### **PROPOSED SOLUTION OR IDEA:**

Portland has a population of 66,882. The combined populations of SoPo, Westbrook, Gray, and New Gloucester are 57,975. These communities outside of Portland are in need of either new bus routes or expanded bus service, and we hope you will take this into consideration. Thank you.

# CTL CONCERNS & IDEAS

## 7. SUPPORTING SENIORS & MAKING METRO EASIER TO USE FOR ALL

**JANUARY 7, 2020**

---

### PRESENTATION BY:

**Emily Murray, Cheryl Oldfield**

#### **BARRIER HIGHLIGHTED:**

Seniors and people with disabilities struggle to know how to use public transportation. They don't where to get information about transportation in general. And for those who already use buses, the transition to electronic fare collection is creating confusion.

#### **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:**

I'm Cheryl, and I live in Falmouth. I just recently moved in a 55 plus facility. I specifically chose that place because it's a place where you can live and still be in the country but get into the city on the bus. My neighbors started asking me what I was doing taking public transportation. I started telling them and soon I was helping my neighbors learn how to use transit. I have one neighbor who gave up her car. Another kept her car but uses the METRO most of the time. I have helped them overcome their concerns about safety.

I'm Emily, and I live in Portland. My concern is that people will have a hard time adjusting to the new electronic fare system. I think it will be especially hard for the elders and for people who aren't comfortable with technology. Right now, a lot of people are confused and worried about how it's going to work.

#### **PROPOSED SOLUTION OR IDEA:**

Cheryl: I've realized that many people are not going to use transit unless they have another person helping them to figure it out. Older adults and people with disabilities need one-on-one

support. You have to work with them to help them be comfortable. I will keep helping my neighbors and next year **I'll be working with GPCOG to develop a regional travel training program. I would like to see PACTS support efforts like this to support seniors in using transit.**

Emily: **I suggest that the bus agencies create videos to help explain how to use the new smart cards and app.** The videos could be played on public access TV and displayed on screens in public places. I think people will need visual cues and reminders at bus stops and on the bus. For example, there could be a sign that says "Do you have your Smartcard today?" I'm going to be a tester for the electronic fare system and I am excited to teach other people how to use the new system.

Thank you for listening to our concerns and ideas.



# ADDITIONAL CTL PARTICIPANT CONCERNS & IDEAS

**NAME:** Bukuru Mutima

**ISSUE/BARRIER:** Infrequency of South Portland's Bus 24A & 24B

**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:** Many people, especially immigrants, want to move to South Portland because of lower housing costs. Unfortunately, for those who make the choice to live in SoPo for its affordability, the trade-off is a transportation barrier, because bus service is not frequent enough to provide timely and efficient connections to Portland's downtown and other important destinations.

**NAME:** Karen Perry

**ISSUE/BARRIER:** There is a lack of compassionate understanding among bus operators of the issues and needs of elders and people with disabilities who use the bus (e.g., not always enforcing rules around able-bodied riders moving to other seating for people in wheelchairs; securing wheelchairs in place before moving; putting the ramp down for each person boarding; etc.).

**SOLUTION:** Offer a training for bus operators that is delivered by people with disabilities (me and my fellow Mobility Liaisons would love to help!) and involves first-hand stories and context that illustrate the reasons why better, more consistent, more inclusive practices are needed.

**NAME:** Jayne Chandler

**ISSUE/BARRIER:** There is no public transportation in Gray/New Gloucester that connects to Portland and Windham.

**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:** Right now, seniors who are still active (like me), people with disabilities, families, and anyone who doesn't own a car, are isolated and need transportation to work, study, connect with others, and/or shop. We need options that are safe, affordable, reliable, connected, and time-efficient.