

Tasks 8 and 9 – Recommendations and Implementation Plan

Overview

After further development of the concepts from Task 6, qualitatively assessing them, and then evaluating them through the scenarios modeling activities in Task 7, Stantec presents its recommended implementation strategy for the Regional Transit Development Plan (RTDP).

This report advances the RTDP recommendations with a suggested timeline to guide implementation over the next six years. However, the implementation of some recommendations may vary by agency based on their regulatory environment, availability of resources, and the type of landscape in which they operate.

A. Optimize Service Planning and Delivery

Opportunity 1: Students currently compose a relatively low percentage of the region's ridership, approximately 9-percent at present.

Recommendation 1: Improve transit options for commuting to and from school or college to entice ridership growth including new routes and service improvements.

Implementation Strategy:

1. *Improve service frequency and coverage of routes serving schools (universities and colleges)*
 - Years 1-3
 - i. METRO explores improving frequencies on select routes serving USM (for example, explore improving frequencies on route 4 to 15- or 20-minutes during peak periods to better serve USM). METRO will begin implementing its *Transit West Project*.
 - ii. Following implementation of service changes, evaluate the performance on an ongoing basis through on-board and area-wide surveys, ride-alongs, and passenger counts as resources permit.
 - iii. Analyze and possibly pilot new opportunities for improving school connectivity that may not be quick wins (for example, adding a BREEZ stop at USM).
 - iv. Explore more effective delivery of service on a regional basis to improve travel time and directness of service, for example, restructuring either route 24A or 24B on SPBS to go to USM in Portland.
 - Years 4-6
 - i. Evaluate the success of the pilots and new service implementation, and adjust accordingly.
 - ii. Launch pilots of the more complex initiatives, such as restructuring route 24A or 24B on SPBS to go to USM in Portland if this becomes feasible in the future.
2. *Explore the expansion of U-Pass Program*

- Years 1-3
 - i. METRO implements U-Pass with USM in August 2018. GPCOG and METRO meet with other academic institutions to spur interest in a U-Pass arrangement aligned with improved service to priority schools.
- Years 4-6
 - i. Prepare lessons learned memo from METRO's U-Pass experience for PTC discussion of expanded regional U-Pass program.
 - ii. U-Pass arrangements should be reviewed and calibrated in coordination with improved service delivery to each academic destination involved with the U-Pass.
 - iii. Continue improving the U-Pass arrangements, including pricing, and monitoring the transit market share among students.
 - iv. Identify lessons learned (regarding U-Pass implementation) and how they may be applied to other groups of underserved populations throughout Southern Maine, for example low-income residents living outside of Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook. This will be explored further in Phase 2 of the RTDP (long-range plan), which looks beyond the six-year implementation horizon of Phase 1 to a 2048-time horizon.

Opportunity 2: Aside from transfers occurring in downtown Portland (Monument Square, Elm St. Pulse, and along Congress St.), very few riders are making regional transfers from one service to another.

Recommendation 2: Improve route and operator connectivity at transit hubs.

Implementation Strategy:

3. *Explore opportunities to upgrade transit hub infrastructure, such as through the ongoing Transit Stop Access Program*
 - Years 1-3
 - i. Select priority transit hubs and investigate opportunities to evolve them into terminals. Hubs are sites where multiple services converge, and then are formalized into terminals by constructing facilities and integrating them with transit-oriented developments. Hub to Terminal candidate sites include the Portland Transportation Center (PTC), the Casco Bay Lines (CBL) Terminal, and the Saco Amtrak Station. Resources permitting, the Freeport Amtrak Station, the Mill Creek Transit Hub, the Wells Amtrak Station, and Maine Mall are worth exploring as enhanced or new HUB opportunities as well. Public private partnerships should be encouraged to make these transitions from transit hubs to transit terminals and transit-oriented developments.
 - ii. Investigate and leverage opportunities to upgrade infrastructure and accessibility, improve signage and wayfinding, add passenger amenities, increase transit awareness in the form of schedules and maps and embracing technologies that would enhance the rider experience.

- iii. Continue capital investments at the identified transit hubs, leveraging municipal and state funds and aligning, where appropriate, with local policies. Some potential non-federal funding sources include transit tax increment financing at the local level, bonding and private participation bonds to help raise revenue for capital investments.
- iv. GPCOG to collaborate with municipal planning staff in the writing/development of comprehensive plans, and local land use policy to encourage key hubs to evolve into transit-oriented developments, focusing retail and housing development around transit infrastructure.
- Years 4-6
 - i. Continue capital investments at the identified transit hubs, and continue building the hubs into transit terminals by constructing passenger facilities that can be integrated with transit-oriented developments, such as residential and commercial mixed developments.
 - ii. Evaluate the successes of initial projects, documenting lessons learned.
 - iii. Improve the framework for creating transit hubs and apply it to any hubs not already upgraded, which might include the Freeport Amtrak Station, the Mill Creek Transit Hub, the Wells Amtrak Station, and Maine Mall. These additional transit hubs will be explored further in a subsequent long-range transit plan for the region. (Depending on service growth and expansion, it may be worth exploring opportunities to build out other hubs such as USM Gorham and the Brunswick Amtrak Station. USM Gorham would be a particularly good location for an inland hub that is better able to service communities such as Raymond, Windham, and Standish, but it is contingent on fixed-route connectivity extending inland as far as USM Gorham by this time.)
- 4. *Harmonize schedules at key transfer locations between operators to facilitate transfers and regional travel*
 - Years 1-3
 - i. Evaluate the connectivity of routes and alignment of schedules at the hubs. Identify opportunities for improvement, for example:
 - a. Connecting Shuttlebus-Zoom's Intercity route to the PTC;
 - b. Providing direct METRO connectivity between the PTC and the CBL terminal through the restructuring of route 8 or 1, and considering unique branding for the service such as "Rails to Sails"; and
 - c. Improving the connectivity of Shuttlebus-Zoom and YCCAC at the Saco Amtrak Station.
 - ii. GPCOG to identify candidates to participate in a regional working group of schedulers and planners from the different member agencies who will meet once per month to ensure effective coordination of efforts and discuss and implement opportunities to further improve regional service delivery.
 - iii. Explore the merits of launching additional shuttle express services throughout the region, similar to the BREEZ, the Zoom Turnpike Express, and the Lakes

Region Explorer in areas with unmet need for service or high levels of traffic congestion.

- Years 4-6
 - i. Continue to harmonize schedules and improve timed-transfers.
 - ii. Identify opportunities to share scheduling software and best practices.

Opportunity 3: Effectiveness and efficiency of existing transit services is not optimized.

Recommendation 3: Monitor the performance/productivity of public transit service by adopting and publishing region-wide service standards.

Implementation Strategy:

5. *Develop region-wide service standards adapted to different modes and operating environments of the PTC*
 - Years 1-3
 - i. Adjust and implement the project prioritization framework, as developed and refined by Stantec and GPCOG staff and the PTC. This framework should incentivize each transit operator to adopt service standards.
 - ii. Member agencies to participate in a trial period, submitting funding requests in accordance with the framework.
 - iii. GPCOG to develop region-wide service standards based on the goals, objectives, and performance measures as described in the RTDP, and based on FTA FAST Act and MAP-21 frameworks.
 - iv. Once fully implemented, funding requests for the seven service providers will begin to be evaluated against the prioritization framework. GPCOG to provide support for the operators throughout the funding submission process.
 - v. GPCOG to engage each transit operator individually to discuss and refine how service standards will apply to their agency specifically.
 - vi. Operators to create a culture of accountability within their organizations and manage their operations to the service standards.
 - vii. GPCOG will continue to review and provide guidance on best practices for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of system performance and provide insights to the operators.
 - viii. Operators to expand their 'cultures' of accountability to also include continued goal-setting and achievement of Key Performance Indicators.
 - Years 4-6
 - i. GPCOG to integrate the 'culture' of accountability and goal-setting into its online materials through creating an online dashboard like that of MBTA and other transit agencies. The purpose of the dashboard is to provide transparency to the public, elected officials, board members, and riders on the performance of transit operations.
 - ii. Operators to continue increasing their adoption of the identified service standards, increasing their monitoring and evaluation efforts, and adjust operations accordingly.

- iii. Integrate findings of the regional working group of schedulers and planners into ongoing performance improvement efforts to further improve service from a regional perspective.
6. *Implement performance monitoring software for all PTC members to be reported on a joint website*
- Years 4-6
 - i. Use lessons from the service standards program to develop public-facing metrics.
 - ii. GPCOG to explore opportunities to automate the collection and reconciliation of the data necessary to produce the online dashboard.
 - iii. GPCOG to explore and possibly implement the use of performance monitoring software such as TransTrack.
 - iv. GPCOG to launch online dashboard and integrate it into online regional transit website.

Opportunity 4: Efficiency and effectiveness of existing transit service is not optimized, in low-density, rural areas of the region.

Recommendation 4: Explore the potential for mobility as a service (MAAS) solutions, including microtransit, for low-density, low-productivity areas of the region.

Implementation Strategy:

7. *Study and pilot MAAS and microtransit in suburban and rural areas of the PACTS region*
- Years 1-3
 - i. Undertake ridership modeling studies for the purpose of illustrating the anticipated impact of the rollout of MAAS solutions in select rural communities. Simulations should consider different modes of service delivery such as transportation network companies, car-sharing services, taxi contractors, and a volunteer driver network.
 - ii. Design a MAAS implementation plan using the outcomes of the modeling. Emphasis should be placed on determining how the service will be provided and which area(s) of the region should be selected for the pilot. The area(s) selected may depend, in part, on their proximity to the nearest transit hub.
 - iii. Negotiate contracts or agreements with any third parties that may be needed for MAAS.
 - iv. Pilot MAAS in the highest priority rural areas for transit. The pilot should involve the closest transit hub (CBL Terminal, PTC, Saco Amtrak Station, etc.) which will act as an anchor for MAAS trips, whereby riders are taken to the hub and transfer onto conventional services.
 - Years 4-6
 - i. GPCOG and the participating agencies should refine the MAAS concept based on the success of the pilot.

- ii. Renegotiate, extend or finalize contracts and agreements to help with successful implementation of MAAS in pilot areas.
- iii. Explore opportunities to extend the MAAS implementation to other rural areas within the PACTS region and prepare to pilot these extensions of MAAS.
- iv. Improve marketing efforts of the service ensuring maximum success in the area(s) originally for MAAS implementation.
- v. Refine the performance of existing MAAS efforts, gradually extending the MAAS region outwards, for example from Gorham to Standish, Windham, and eventually Raymond.
- vi. Extend MAAS efforts beyond the PACTS area as appropriate, into Kennebunk and Kennebunkport for example, as well as to other areas serviced by YCCAC including Sanford. This is especially relevant in the event that the Wells Amtrak Station proceeds for development as a transit hub.
- vii. Reflect on opportunities for extended coverage of MAAS across the PACTS region and integration of regionwide MAAS efforts. This can be explored further in the long-term phase 2 of this study.

B. Increase Promotion and Public Awareness

Opportunity 5: Navigating transit regionally is not intuitive from a user perspective.

Recommendation 5: Increase public awareness of regional transit connections and availability.

Implementation Strategy:

8. *Create a new regional transit website to host all transit-related information and trip planning across modes, operators, and municipalities*
 - Years 1-2
 - i. GPCOG to prepare an information and infographics request for the member agencies, allowing time for them to provide inputs. Inputs include route and schedule information, in reproducible formats.
 - ii. GPCOG to begin process of developing a joint-marketing committee with all transit operators.
 - iii. GPCOG to create a new Transit Guide supported by other amenities to act as a joint regional trip planner across Southern Maine. The Transit Guide should be primarily online with information on the site downloadable as a PDF for distribution to colleges, social service agencies, schools, libraries, public offices, and tourist information centers.
 - iv. GPCOG to ensure the Transit Guide's formatting is a consistent, comprehensive representation of all transportation services provided in the region, highlighting key destinations, transfer points, and fare payment information.
 - v. GPCOG to support transit operators with new joint marketing materials to raise awareness of transit in Southern Maine.

- Years 3-4
 - i. The Transit Guide is launched and published online by GPCOG on an appropriate landing page which will also include links to the service providers' websites. The landing page may draw on best practices from San Francisco MTC and/or the Montreal Transit Guide.
 - ii. Support the launch of the Transit Guide with strong marketing efforts, but marketing efforts must go beyond just promoting the new Transit Guide.
 - iii. GPCOG to evaluate the successes and failures of the SMTT app and begin developing an improved regional trip planning app that includes inputs for all service providers.
 - iv. Implement strategies that encourage the transit operators to collaboratively market their services to decrease their marketing efforts and help reduce costs.
 - v. GPCOG to seek opportunities to streamline the process of acquiring data from the transit operators in the updating of the Transit Guide. Opportunities might include automation and/or giving the service providers a login, allowing them to update their information real-time.
 - vi. Third party to begin designing improvements to the trip planning app.
- Years 5-6
 - i. Streamline the process of updating the Transit Guide's data.
 - ii. Beta test the improved trip planning app and work out any kinks in preparation for the full launch.
 - iii. Full launch of the improved trip planning app.
 - iv. Continue to solicit feedback from users and make improvements to the app and to the online materials as needed.
 - v. Request additional inputs from service providers for integration and inclusion into the online Transit Guide and performance monitoring dashboard.

Opportunity 6: Transit throughout Southern Maine is not unified from the users' perspectives. There is a general lack of awareness of the services provided by rubber-tired regional providers. This creates barriers to use and weakens the public image of transit. Transit is not perceived as being "cool" in Southern Maine but rather a choice of last resort.

Recommendation 6: Investigate and adopt branding strategies for a consistent user experience. Raise the profile of transit in the region and generate interest with high-exposure and impactful marketing.

Implementation Strategy:

9. *Move towards a unified brand*

- Years 1-2
 - i. Hire a marketing agency/consultant to develop a marketing plan and strategy which would include a branding hierarchy review. The study should

be unique in its specificity to regional branding and marketing, but should incorporate relevant findings from previous studies including the Branding and Marketing Implementation Plan (2013). The marketing plan and strategy would explore which brand attributes to exploit and those which should be redeveloped to better speak to Southern Maine's potential riders and lure them to transit.

- ii. Establish an action plan to move regional branding and marketing forward. The regional brand might evolve as an umbrella brand (or “branded-house” as it is known in the marketing industry) with sub-brands as is the case with San Diego's Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) brand and sub-brands related to its rail, trolley, bus, and paratransit assets.
 - iii. Focus on quick wins such as incremental improvements to harmonize marketing efforts and content delivery across the service providers. As an example, the use of graphics standards can require all produced materials to be consistent in format using similar typefaces/fonts and colors at a minimum.
 - iv. Reposition existing brands as appropriate to help ensure consistent messaging with the themes and elements of the online Transit Guide.
 - v. Undertake design work for a new regional brand and develop an implementation plan to roll out the new brand across Southern Maine. This regional brand might apply to some or all of the transit operators dependent on the marketing agency's recommendations from its branding hierarchy review and go-forward strategy.
- Years 3-4
 - i. Calibrate existing brands and ensure these adjustments are reflected in the online Transit Guide prior to its launch.
 - ii. If appropriate, procure materials and begin gradual implementation of the regional brand starting with the bus and paratransit operators. Implementation is expected to be comprehensive and include modernized logos, design standards, and vibrant wayfinding signage, to name a few examples.
 - iii. New branding must be supported with a robust and properly funded marketing effort, with the services of a marketing agency/consultant procured to guide the efforts and produce content.
 - iv. Given its relatively low-cost, embrace social media as the primary mode for communication regarding regional transit services. Mediums could include Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat and would be used as tools to raise awareness of regional transit services. As an example, Instagram might be used to raise awareness of destinations and events that can be reached on transit.
 - v. GPCOG should gather user and public feedback on the branding and adjust the messaging as needed while keeping the logo(s) and design standards the same.

- vi. GPCOG to conduct market research to determine if the new brand has developed brand equity. That equity is determined by public familiarity with the brand and the use of transit in the region as measured by ridership.
- Years 5-6
 - i. Continue to gather user feedback on the branding and pivot the messaging and communications strategy as needed and seek additional efficiencies to coordinate regional marketing efforts and to minimize ongoing costs.
 - ii. GPCOG to prepare a report of progress on achieving a consistent user experience.

Opportunity 7: Customer perceptions of safety and security are compromised by the prevalence of homeless persons around some transit stops, particularly in Downtown Portland. This situation may alienate current customers, discourage prospective customers, and tarnish the image of transit in Southern Maine as a desirable alternative travel mode.

Recommendation 7: Participate and coordinate with ongoing efforts by local municipalities, the Portland Police Department, Downtown Portland and social services organizations to address the prevailing homelessness situation in the region and as-is specific to transit with targeted programs.

Implementation Strategy:

10. Collaborate with all PTC members, and external stakeholders to reduce the issue of homelessness on transit

- Years 1-2
 - i. PTC to coordinate with efforts to address and reduce homelessness, such as the efforts led by Thrive2027.
 - ii. GPCOG to reach out to NGOs, social service organizations, local municipalities, the Portland Police, Downtown Portland and other public entities to coordinate with a regional approach to addressing broader issue of homelessness and its specific effects on transit.
 - iii. GPCOG to prepare a package of resources for each of the transit operators for guidance in addressing issues of homelessness at transit stops.
 - iv. Operators to explore options including increasing enforcement, extra cleaning crews, and leveraging outreach services and resources.
- Years 3-4
 - i. Implement the strategies developed in previous years 1 and 2 to address homelessness in Southern Maine. These plans might include:
 - a. Extra cleaning crews
 - b. Partnering with homeless shelters to provide staff at transit hubs
 - c. Having security or police staff act as “mentors”
 - d. Providing free transit to individuals to attend workshops or reach shelters
 - ii. Establish stronger relationships, or contract with local police departments to assist in enforcement efforts.

- iii. Continue strengthening relationships with NGOs, social service organizations, local municipalities, and other public entities. Efforts should be collaborative among stakeholders, and operators, and coordinated by GPCOG.
- Years 5 -6
 - i. Continue implementing the strategies developed in previous years to address homelessness.

Opportunity 8: Transit stops are not prominent and often blend into their natural environments because of their color schemes. In other areas, they are non-existent along some alignments particularly where “flag-stopping” is prevalent.

Recommendation 8: Improve the awareness and visibility of transit throughout the region with multiple approaches and use fixed infrastructure as a marketing tool. Investigate opportunities to make signage at transit stops “pop” to catch the attention of potential riders with vibrant colors and interesting designs.

Implementation Strategy:

11. Use different approaches to increase the awareness of transit

- Years 1-2
 - i. GPCOG to undertake an assessment of transit awareness across Southern Maine, PACTS communities, and additional communities serviced by YCCAC, CBL, and NNEPRA (Wells Amtrak Downeaster Station).
 - ii. GPCOG to prepare a focused report for each operator on strengths and weaknesses related to transit awareness, along with a prioritized list of action items focused on raising awareness of transit. At the top of the list of priorities should be installing bus stop signs along fixed and “flag stop” routes where no stops are indicated, as is the case for Shuttlebus-Zoom and YCCAC.
 - iii. Begin implementation of prioritized recommendations.
 - iv. Initially, “word of mouth” should be the principal strategy for improving awareness and use of the region’s transit services. The procurement of new marketing materials should purposefully dovetail implementation of the regional brand to ensure investment is not haphazardly spent on signage and displays that will become obsolete shortly.
- Years 3-4
 - i. Begin developing new materials and visuals in line with the findings from the branding review.
 - ii. Invest in quick, low cost strategies to improve transit awareness such as social media, gorilla marketing and other grass-route approaches.
 - iii. Install bus stop signs along Shuttlebus-Zoom and YCCAC route alignments.
 - iv. Shift focus to improving awareness of regional transit connectivity by encouraging each operator to market connections to neighboring routes, services, and operations.
 - v. Collaborate with local tourism groups, like the Biddeford+Saco Chamber of Commerce and Visit Portland, to improve marketing and awareness of transit

for tourism purposes. This strategy can also leverage transit use coupled with special pricing for events, etc.

- Years 5-6
 - i. Shift focus to other aspects of transit awareness such as wayfinding signage.
 - ii. Begin investment in items such as real-time arrival boards and displays which can also double as a source for additional advertising revenue.
 - iii. Evaluate and adjust transfer locations. One example may be the bus stop location at the CBL terminal which is currently located relatively far from the ferry docks, these opportunities should be carried out alongside the wayfinding signage improvements.
 - iv. GPCOG to leverage the improved awareness and transit branding throughout the region as a case study to earn additional public support for a dedicated and sustainable local source of funding for transit.

C. Improve Regional Integration

Opportunity 9: Limited operational efficiency of regional transit due to the fragmentation of operations and the limited cohesiveness of efforts.

Recommendation 9: Explore the potential for improving the integration of transit.

Implementation Strategy:

12. *Begin gradual approach to improve regionalization based on best practices focused on improving the user experience*

- Years 1-2
 - i. Explore “quick wins” to achieve increased integration and alignment among regional transit operations including:
 - a. Developing improved schedules and connectivity in coordination with the hubs identified (CBL terminal, PTC, and Saco Amtrak Station), and in coordination with other aspects of Year 1’s Service Planning and Delivery concept implementation, such as improving service to the schools and colleges.
 - b. Achieve increases to efficiency/service productivity and farebox recovery through regional coordination and collaboration to help decrease future reliance on federal funding. An example of this might include exploring the ability to increase coordination of marketing, scheduling, and/or procurement efforts across multiple operators.
 - ii. GPCOG to coordinate discussions between the operators with respect to possible opportunities to use common scheduling software, which would help coordinate scheduling, paving the way for seamless inter-agency transfer points.

- iii. Forward the concept of “Family of Services”. Under a Family of Services delivery model for paratransit, all modes of transit are utilized for trip delivery, not just door-to-door services, and predicated on an individual’s level of ability, not disability.
GPCOG can draw on case studies and lessons learned in other jurisdictions with respect to implementing family of services service delivery models, such as Stantec’s client York Region Transit or Houston Metro that introduced a paratransit feeder service in January 2017. These efforts must be supported by a robust Travel Training program. Stantec recommends a peer-to-peer travel training approach with respect to Family of Services. By leveraging both fixed-route and paratransit resources, RTP and YCCAC may be able to mitigate some of the negative impacts of ‘dumping’ from MaineCare.
- Years 3-6
 - i. Operators to adopt common scheduling software.
 - ii. Pilot the family of services starting with Greater Portland METRO and RTP. The performance of the pilot should be evaluated and a plan should be developed for full implementation of family of services.
 - iii. Plan pilots for implementing family of services elsewhere in Southern Maine, using operators such as SPBS, Shuttlebus-Zoom, and YCCAC as deemed appropriate.
 - iv. Set goal of 2- to 5-percent trip diversion onto conventional transit using the Family of Services model, from existing paratransit and social service programs. This target should be ratcheted up in subsequent years as individuals become more comfortable with traveling in this manner.
 - v. GPCOG to perform a service quality audit of the operators to ensure consistency in service quality across agencies and throughout the Southern Maine service area. The service quality audit should evaluate the extent to which the service delivered is consistent with the regional branding and messaging.
 - vi. GPCOG in coordination with the agencies to assess the connectivity at transfer points and identify opportunities to further deliver seamless service across the region. This evaluation may continue to build the case for greater inter-agency collaboration. For example, it may be deemed appropriate for SPBS to operate service in Portland to the PTC.
 - vii. Fully implement Family of Services between METRO and RTP alongside travel training initiatives.
 - viii. Pilot family of services elsewhere in Southern Maine, and include additional operators such as Shuttlebus-Zoom, SPBS, and YCCAC.
 - ix. Explore opportunities to fully leverage the common scheduling software and make full use of the integration efficiencies that may be achieved.

Opportunity 10: The process of paying fares is inconvenient, particularly when transferring from one service provider to another.

Recommendation 10: Explore the adoption of a unified electronic fare management solution.

Implementation Strategy:

13. *Use a gradual approach to adopt a new electronic fare management solution that is scalable*

- Years 1-2
 - i. METRO will be exploring electronic fare management systems (EFMS) on its own in late 2018 – early 2019; GPCOG to collaborate with PTC to develop a plan to create a regionwide unified fare payment strategy.
 - ii. Options for an EFMS to be assessed include:
 - a. A unified smart card for all bus operators, demand response, and ferry operators
 - b. An open system (mobile and credit card payment application) for all bus operators, demand response, and ferry operators
 - c. Mobile payments
 - iii. The development of EcoPass and U-Pass Programs should proceed without the benefit of the EFMS. The development of the EFMS is longer term requiring an assessment of individual operator needs and equity analysis. METRO is currently in discussions with USM to launch a U-Pass in August 2018.
 - iv. GPCOG to initiate the development of the EFMS as seamless fare payment is key to the success of the recommendations of this plan and the concept of regional provision of transit.
 - v. GPCOG to identify the key players who will be responsible for executing the outcomes of the fare study. Action items should be associated with transit service providers to ensure that GPCOG and its partnering agencies are positioned to hit the ground running upon completion of the fare study.
- Years 3-4
 - i. Implement the EFMS and other fare initiatives explored in previous years 1 and 2, such as EcoPasses.
 - ii. Support the fare initiatives with a strong marketing campaign to encourage early adoption of the initiatives among current riders and lure new riders to transit by breaking down fare payment as a barrier to transit use.
 - iii. Revisit the idea of fare integration with the Amtrak Downeaster, as it is not currently feasible for the Amtrak Downeaster to participate in fare integration initiatives. The Downeaster service will continue to grow only limited by track and signal limitations. If those challenges can be overcome, ridership may grow even more rapidly justifying Amtrak Downeaster participation in the EFMS.
 - iv. Review organizational structures and responsibilities to ensure that GPCOG and the member agencies are well-positioned to benefit from the new data collection and analysis capabilities that are permitted by the new fare initiatives.

- v. Encourage quick adoption of electronic fare management solution by transitioning away from printed fare media. Plan for obsolescence of printed fare media within 1-2 years.
- vi. Consider cross-training existing fare management staff in other areas, such that if they are lesser burdened with fare printing and collection exercises, they may contribute to a successful operation in other areas.
- vii. Undertake initial evaluations of successes in ridership and fare adoption thus far and adjust the continued implementation strategy of the fare initiatives accordingly.
- Years 5-6
 - i. Assess the feasibility of implementing time-of-day pricing and low-income passes within the new fare technologies.

D. Expand Funding Sources

Opportunity 11: Limited transparency and communication of the anticipated benefits associated with capital projects and a corresponding lack of clarity of value for money of the investment.

Recommendation 11: Allocate funds according to a rigorous and competitive funding scheme.

Implementation Strategy:

(Discussed above under “Monitor the performance/productivity of public transit service by adopting and publishing region-wide service standards”.)

Opportunity 12: Federal funding for transit has an uncertain future and is outside of the control of GPCOG and the transit operators in Southern Maine.

Recommendation 12: Explore non-fare revenue sources to decrease reliance on federal funding.

Implementation Strategy:

14. Leverage different ways to increase revenue for transit across the region

- Years 1-2
 - i. GPCOG to request from each of the service providers a report outlining a detailed breakdown of their revenue streams. Reports should be in the format of a breakdown of revenues in table format (quantitative), accompanied by supporting narrative (qualitative).
 - ii. GPCOG to evaluate these reports to understand the strengths and limitations of the operators' current revenue structures.
 - iii. GPCOG to investigate the merits of, and underlying legislation related to, implementing fare parity among similar operators such as the five bus and paratransit operators.
 - iv. GPCOG to provide feedback to each of the operators on their revenue model and breakdown.

- v. Implement the “quick wins” of new revenue sources, including ramping up transit marketing efforts and participating in special event promotions, for example special one-off transit services during street festivals or to/from sports events such as Maine Red Claws games.
- Years 3-4
 - i. Focus on implementing cost control and cost management measures. This might include selling or leasing unused properties or assets, and exploring additional joint procurement opportunities, while cutting other unnecessary O&M expenses.
 - ii. Review operator schedules and improve the efficiency of scheduling where possible such as to minimize the amount paid in overtime wages. New opportunities may arise as a result of the updates made under the Service Planning & Delivery concepts.
 - iii. Evaluate completed ancillary revenue projects on an ongoing basis to determine whether the projects have been successful in generating additional revenue. Tweak implementation as needed.
 - iv. Focus on finding new revenue sources, including collaborative charter service deployment on behalf of other organizations or other levels of government, or a percentage of food, drink, and retail revenue for cafes and other shops that may open at the transit hubs.
- Years 5-6
 - i. Explore the increased revenues acquired from employer transit benefit programs such as annual EcoPasses, in coordination with the updates and upgrades made to the regional fare payment system(s).
 - ii. As appropriate, explore the possibilities of fare structure harmonization. While it may not make sense for the Downeaster and CBL to charge the same fares as the bus and paratransit operators, there could be opportunities for harmonization among the rubber-tired services.
 - iii. Develop public private partnerships (P3s) by educating developers and the private sector of their financial benefits. P3s can be a conduit to developing long lasting relationships with the private sector for the provision of service, the development and use of advanced technologies, and for the building of infrastructure – especially transit-oriented development projects at the transit hubs.

It is recommended that the transit providers and GPCOG set the stage in the preceding years to help build up the appetite for P3s among municipalities. While P3s should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and would not be useful for the shorter-term projects described above in this recommendations memo, they can be useful for long-term (RTDP Phase 2) developments and larger-scale transit projects and related infrastructure improvements for which multiple public agencies might have a stake.

Opportunity 13: Federal funding for transit has an uncertain future and is outside of the control of GPCOG and the transit operators in Southern Maine.

Recommendation 13: Explore how other regions/MPOs have implemented a local tax or funding source for transit funding.

Implementation Strategy:

15. Begin groundwork to advocate for more local transportation funding

- Year 1
 - i. Assess the feasibility of establishing a local tax aimed at funding transportation in the region, and transit more specifically. This would include working with state lawmakers to advocate for a dedicated tax.
 - ii. Examine the possibility of state funding through MaineDOT matches for 5303 grants.
 - iii. Explore other opportunities for local funding sources including increased parking fees based on demand and time-of-day pricing, land value capture tools, such as special assessment districts or tax incremental financing (TIFs).
 - iv. Implement these funding sources once approved by council and other levels of government as appropriate.
- Years 2-6
 - i. Conduct an annual review of transit revenue structures for each operator, allowing for an evaluation of the impact of the new funding sources as they are implemented, as well as the impact of the implementation of additional ancillary revenue initiatives such as increased transit advertising.
 - ii. Develop a contingency plan in the event FTA funding slows down or stops entirely, to ensure that Southern Maine's transit services are not forced to shut down because of insolvency.

Summary

The recommendations and implementation strategies described in this section set forth Stantec's suggested programmatic approach to improving transit throughout Southern Maine over the next 6 years. This plan should be refined as needed by the PTC, and exist as a living document that the PTC can continue to revise as agency needs and available resources change.

The plan is ambitious with regards to the number of service concepts; however, Stantec believes it is realistic and achievable with the dedicated and concerted efforts of GPCOG, MaineDOT and Southern Maine's seven transit agencies working together to bring it to fruition.

For easy reference, the major recommendations and their implementation strategies are summarized in the table below. For space and readability considerations, not all strategies are reproduced below.

Recommendation Strategy	Year 1 – 2018	Year 2 – 2019	Year 3 – 2020	Year 4 – 2021	Year 5 – 2022	Year 6 – 2023
Optimize Service Planning and Delivery						
Improve service frequency and coverage of routes serving schools	<p>Improve frequencies on service to schools, like METRO route 4</p> <p>Evaluate performance of service changes through surveys, ride-alongs, and passenger counts</p> <p>Evaluate other more complex opportunities such as BREEZ restructuring</p> <p>Pilot more complex opportunities</p> <p>Explore more effective service on a regional basis such as restructuring route 24A or B to travel to USM in Portland</p>			<p>Adjust the piloted opportunities and implement fully as appropriate</p> <p>Launch pilots of the more complex initiatives, such as restructuring route 24A or 24B on SPBS to go to USM in Portland if this becomes feasible in the future</p>		
Explore the expansion of U-Pass program	<p>METRO implements U-Pass with USM in August 2018. GPCOG and METRO meet with other academic institutions to spur interest in a U-Pass arrangement aligned with improved service to priority schools.</p>			<p>Prepare lessons learned memo from METRO's U-Pass experience for PTC discussion of expanded regional U-Pass program.</p> <p>U-Pass arrangements should be reviewed and calibrated in coordination with improved service delivery to each academic destination involved with the U-Pass.</p> <p>Continue improving the U-Pass arrangements, including pricing, and monitoring the transit market share among students.</p> <p>Identify lessons learned and how they may be applied to other groups of underserved populations throughout Southern Maine, for example low-income residents living outside of Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook.</p>		
Explore opportunities to upgrade transit hub infrastructure, such as through the ongoing Transit Stop Access Program	<p>Select priority transit hubs and investigate opportunities to evolve them into terminal by upgrading infrastructure and passenger amenities (CBL, PTC, Saco Amtrak)</p> <p>Investigate and leverage opportunities to upgrade infrastructure and accessibility, improve signage and wayfinding, and add passenger amenities</p> <p>Continue capital investments at the identified transit hubs, leveraging municipal and state funds and aligning, where appropriate, with local policies</p> <p>Collaborate with municipal planning staff in the writing/development of comprehensive plans, and local land use policy to harmonize land</p>			<p>Continue capital investments at the identified transit hubs, and continue building the hubs into transit terminals by constructing passenger facilities that can be integrated with transit-oriented developments</p> <p>Evaluate the successes of initial projects, documenting lessons learned</p> <p>Improve the framework for creating transit hubs and apply it to any hubs not already upgraded, which might include the Freeport Amtrak Station, the Mill Creek Transit Hub, the Wells Amtrak Station, and Maine Mall</p>		

Recommendation Strategy	Year 1 – 2018	Year 2 – 2019	Year 3 – 2020	Year 4 – 2021	Year 5 – 2022	Year 6 – 2023
	use-transport development					
Harmonize schedules at key transfer locations between operators to facilitate transfers and regional travel	Evaluate the connectivity of routes and alignment of schedules at the hubs to identify opportunities for improvement					Continue to harmonize schedules and improve timed-transfers Identify opportunities to share scheduling software and best practices
	Identify candidates to participate in a regional working group of schedulers and planners to harmonize scheduling at transfer locations					
	Explore the merits of launching additional shuttle express services throughout the region					
Develop region-wide service standards adapted to different modes and operating environments of the PTC	Adjust and implement the project prioritization framework					Create an online dashboard to track performance and integrate 'culture' of accountability and goal-setting
	GPCOG and PTC to develop region-wide service standards based on the goals, objectives, and performance measures as described in the RTDP, and based on FTA FAST Act and MAP-21 frameworks					Operators to continue increasing their adoption of the identified service standards, increasing their monitoring and evaluation efforts, and adjust operations accordingly
	GPCOG to engage each transit operators individually to discuss how service standards will apply to their agency specifically					Integrate findings of the regional working group of schedulers and planners into ongoing performance improvement efforts
	Operators to create a culture of accountability within their organizations and manage their operations to the service standards					
	GPCOG will continue to review and provide guidance on best practices for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of system performance					
Implement performance monitoring software for all PTC members to be reported on a joint website	<i>No actions required—this strategy requires inputs from the above strategy</i>			Use lessons from the service standards program to develop public-facing metrics		
				GPCOG to explore opportunities to automate the collection and reconciliation of the data necessary to produce the online dashboard		
				GPCOG to explore and possibly implement the use of performance monitoring software such as TransTrack		
				GPCOG to launch online dashboard and integrate it into online regional transit website		
Study and pilot MAAS and microtransit in suburban and rural areas of the PACTS region	Undertake ridership modeling studies for the purpose of illustrating the anticipated impact of the rollout of MAAS solutions in the rural communities					GPCOG and the participating agencies should refine the MAAS concept based on the success of the pilot Renegotiate, extend or finalize contracts and agreements to help with successful implementation of MAAS in pilot areas
	Design a MAAS implementation plan using the outcomes of the modeling					Explore opportunities to extend the MAAS implementation to other rural areas within the PACTS region

Recommendation Strategy	Year 1 – 2018	Year 2 – 2019	Year 3 – 2020	Year 4 – 2021	Year 5 – 2022	Year 6 – 2023
	<p>Negotiate contracts or agreements with any third parties that may be needed for MAAS</p> <p>Pilot MAAS in the highest priority rural areas for transit. The pilot should involve the closest transit hub (CBL Terminal, PTC, Saco Amtrak Station, etc.) which will act as an anchor for MAAS trips.</p>			<p>Improve marketing efforts of the service ensuring maximum success in the area(s) originally for MAAS implementation</p> <p>Refine the performance of existing MAAS efforts, gradually extending the MAAS region outwards, for example from Gorham to Standish, Windham, and eventually Raymond</p> <p>Reflect on opportunities for full coverage of MAAS across the PACTS region and integration of regionwide MAAS efforts</p>		
Increase Promotion and Public Awareness						
<p>Create a new regional transit website to place all transit-related information and trip planning across modes, providers, and towns</p>	<p>GPCOG to prepare information and infographics request for agencies</p> <p>GPCOG to begin process of developing a joint-marketing committee with all transit operators</p> <p>Create new regional Transit Guide and ensure the Transit Guide's formatting is a consistent, comprehensive representation of all transportation services provided in the region</p> <p>GPCOG to support transit operators with new joint marketing materials to raise awareness of transit in Southern Maine</p>		<p>Launch and publish online the Transit Guide on an appropriate landing page which will also include links to the service providers' websites</p> <p>Support the launch of the Transit Guide with strong marketing efforts, but marketing efforts must go beyond just promoting the new Transit Guide</p> <p>GPCOG to evaluate the successes and failures of the SMTT app and begin developing an improved regional trip planning app that includes inputs for all service providers</p> <p>Implement strategies that encourage the transit operators to collaboratively market their services to decrease their marketing efforts and help reduce costs</p> <p>Third party to begin designing improvements to the trip planning app</p>		<p>Streamline process of updating Transit Guide</p> <p>Launch a beta test of the improved trip planning app and work out any kinks</p> <p>Full launch of improved trip planning app</p> <p>Continue to solicit user feedback</p> <p>Request additional inputs from service providers for integration and inclusion into the online Transit Guide and performance monitoring dashboard</p>	
<p>Move towards a unified brand</p>	<p>Hire a marketing agency/consultant to develop a marketing plan and strategy which would include a branding hierarchy review</p> <p>Establish an action plan to move regional branding and marketing forward</p>		<p>Calibrate existing brands and ensure these adjustments are reflected in the online Transit Guide prior to its launch</p> <p>If appropriate, procure materials and begin gradual implementation of the regional brand starting with the bus and paratransit</p>		<p>Continue to gather user feedback on the branding and pivot the messaging and communications strategy as needed</p> <p>GPCOG to prepare a report of progress on achieving a consistent user experience</p>	

Recommendation Strategy	Year 1 – 2018	Year 2 – 2019	Year 3 – 2020	Year 4 – 2021	Year 5 – 2022	Year 6 – 2023
	<p>Focus on quick wins such as incremental improvements to harmonize marketing efforts and content delivery across the service providers</p> <p>Undertake design work for a new regional brand and develop an implementation plan to roll out the new brand across Southern Maine</p>		<p>operators</p> <p>Given its relatively low-cost, embrace social media as the primary mode for communication regarding regional transit services</p> <p>Gather user and public feedback on the branding and adjust the messaging as needed while keeping the logo(s) and design standards the same</p> <p>GPCOG to conduct market research to determine if the new brand has developed brand equity</p>			
<p>Collaborate with all PTC members, and external stakeholders to reduce the issue of homelessness on transit</p>	<p>PTC to coordinate with efforts to address and reduce homelessness, such as the efforts led by Thrive2027</p> <p>Reach out to NGOs, social services organizations, local municipalities, and other public entities to create a regional approach to homeless and transit</p> <p>GPCOG to prepare a resource package for operators to take steps to address homelessness at transit stops</p> <p>Operators to explore options including increasing enforcement, extra cleaning crews, and leveraging outreach services and resources</p>		<p>Implement the strategies developed in Year 2 to address homelessness in Southern Maine</p> <p>Establish stronger relationships, or contract with local police departments to assist in enforcement efforts</p> <p>Continue strengthening relationships with NGOs, social service organizations, local municipalities, and other public entities</p>		<p>Continue implementing the strategies developed in previous years to address homelessness</p>	
<p>Use different approaches to increase the awareness of transit</p>	<p>Assess visibility of transit across Southern Maine</p> <p>Operators to take measures to increase transit awareness through word of mouth</p> <p>Begin implementation of prioritized recommendations</p>		<p>Begin developing new materials and visuals in line with the findings from the branding review</p> <p>Invest in quick, low cost strategies to improve transit awareness</p> <p>Improve the awareness of regional transit connectivity</p> <p>Collaborate with town tourism groups to</p>		<p>Shift focus to other aspects of transit awareness such as wayfinding signage</p> <p>Begin investment in items such as real-time arrival boards and displays which can also double as a source for additional advertising revenue</p> <p>Evaluate and adjust transfer locations</p>	

Recommendation Strategy	Year 1 – 2018	Year 2 – 2019	Year 3 – 2020	Year 4 – 2021	Year 5 – 2022	Year 6 – 2023
			improve marketing and awareness of transit for tourism purposes		Leverage the improved awareness and transit branding throughout the region as a case study to earn additional public support for a dedicated and sustainable local source of funding for transit	
Improve Regional Integration						
Begin gradual approach to improve regionalization based on best practices focused on improving the user experience	<p>Explore quick wins such as improved scheduling at the hubs</p> <p>Improve general collaboration</p> <p>Discuss opportunities for common scheduling software</p> <p>Review lessons learned elsewhere regarding Family of Services implementation to leverage fixed-route and paratransit resources for trip delivery of ADA trips</p>		<p>Implement common scheduling software</p> <p>Implement Family of Services pilot and develop full implementation plan</p> <p>GPCOG to audit service quality regionwide</p> <p>Re-evaluate connectivity at transfer points and seek additional inter-jurisdictional opportunities</p> <p>Fully implement Family of Services and pilot it elsewhere in Southern Maine</p> <p>Implement additional regional integration opportunities</p> <p>GPCOG to provide a guide for improving the monitoring and evaluation of regional transit performance</p>			
Use a gradual approach to adopt a new electronic fare management solution that is scalable	<p>GPCOG to collaborate with PTC to develop a plan to create a regionwide unified fare payment strategy</p> <p>The development of EcoPass and U-Pass Programs should proceed without the benefit of the EFMS</p> <p>GPCOG to initiate the development of the EFMS as seamless fare payment is key to the success of the recommendations of this plan and the concept of regional provision of transit</p> <p>Identify key players in executing the outcomes of the fare study and clarify roles and responsibilities</p>		<p>Implement the EFMS and other fare initiatives explored in previous years</p> <p>Support the fare initiatives with a strong marketing campaign to encourage early adoption</p> <p>Revisit the idea of fare integration with the Amtrak Downeaster</p> <p>Review organizational structures and responsibilities to ensure that GPCOG and the member agencies are well-positioned to benefit from the new data collection and analysis capabilities</p> <p>Encourage quick adoption of electronic fare management solution by transitioning away from printed fare media</p> <p>Cross-train fare collection staff</p>		<p>Assess the feasibility of implementing time-of-day pricing and low-income passes within the new fare technologies</p>	

Recommendation Strategy	Year 1 – 2018	Year 2 – 2019	Year 3 – 2020	Year 4 – 2021	Year 5 – 2022	Year 6 – 2023
			Undertake initial evaluations of successes in ridership and fare adoption thus far and adjust as needed			
Expand Funding Sources						
Allocate funds according to a rigorous and competitive funding scheme	Implement prioritization framework, learning phase for operators Service providers begin applying for funding in accordance with framework			Evaluate projects completed against benefits modeled Adjust prioritization framework if needed		
Leverage different ways to increase revenue for transit across the region	GPCOG to request revenue breakdowns from operators and evaluate revenue structures Investigate the merits of regional fare parity Provide feedback to operators on revenue structures Carry out quick wins, such as ramping up transit advertising and participating in event promotion		Focus on implementing cost control and cost management measures Review operator schedules and improve the efficiency of scheduling where possible such as to minimize the amount paid in overtime wages Evaluate completed ancillary revenue projects on an ongoing basis to determine whether the projects have been successful in generating additional revenue Focus on finding new revenue sources, including collaborative charter service deployment on behalf of other organizations or other levels of government		Explore the increased revenues acquired from employer transit benefit programs such as annual EcoPasses As appropriate, explore the possibilities of fare structure harmonization Develop public private partnerships (P3s) by educating developers and the private sector of their financial benefits	
Begin groundwork to advocate for more local transportation funding	Assess the feasibility of establishing a local tax aimed at funding transportation in the region, and transit more specifically Examine the possibility of state funding through MaineDOT matches for 5303 grants Explore other opportunities for local funding sources including increased parking fees based on demand and time-of-day pricing, land value capture tools, such as TIFs Implement funding sources based on approval, as appropriate		Conduct an annual review of transit revenue structures for each operator, allowing for an evaluation of the impact of the new funding sources as they are implemented Develop a contingency plan in the event FTA funding slows down or stops entirely			