

**Meeting of the Ridership Committee – via ZOOM  
February 18, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.  
Meeting Minutes**

**ZOOM:** Attendee Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86513660231?pwd=N3BraXBLSlVjQmsyUXNrMmNLTzZzZz09>

By phone: +1-646-558-8656 Webinar ID: 865 1366 0231 Passcode: 524650

<b>Committee Members Present:</b>	<b>Staff:</b>	<b>Others:</b>
Ed Suslovic, Chair	Greg Jordan	Bill Rixon
Jeff Levine	Danielle Nemeth	
Hope Cahan	Denise Beck	
John Thompson	Lauren Shaw	
Merrill Barter		
Pious Ali		

**1. With a quorum in place, the meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. by Ed Suslovic, Chairman.**

**2. Public comment**

No members of the public were present.

**3. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Motion made by John Thompson, seconded by Hope Cahan, to approve the minutes from the November 19, 2020, Ridership Committee Meeting as written. A roll call vote was taken by Ed Suslovic, Chair. With approval by John Thompson, Merrill Barter, Pious Ali, Jeff Levine, Hope Cahan, Ryan Leighton, and Ed Suslovic, the **motion passed unanimously by all members present.**

**4. Selection of Chair and Vice-Chair Roles**

Hope Cahan moved, seconded by John Thompson, to nominate Ed Suslovic as Committee Chair and Pious Ali as Vice-Chair for Board year 2021. A roll call vote was taken by Ed Suslovic, Chair. With approval by John Thompson, Merrill Barter, Pious Ali, Jeff Levine, Hope Cahan, Ryan Leighton, and Ed Suslovic, the **motion passed unanimously by all members present.**

**5. Transit Together (listed as a second Item #4 on the agenda)**

Transit Together, which evolved out of Transit Tomorrow, is a PACTS/GPCOG region-wide 12-18-month study funded by the CARES Act. It is a bus and paratransit redesign effort to make transit easier and create frequent connections. It includes a micro-transit study, an on-demand platform, to optimize mobility in our area in a cost-effective and more convenient way where full bus service is not feasible. The RFP for a consultant was released this month with selection expected in March.

Once vaccination sites are planned, Metro should promote those along public transportation routes. The Board should formally communicate with appropriate public health officials the need for sites served by public transportation. Greg will try to start a dialogue on these topics and report back to the committee.

## **6. Regional Transit Marketing (4A)**

Meetings began in fall 2020. This is a communications campaign, funded by CARES Act, to market the eight transit providers in Southern Maine with an ultimate goal to bring ridership back to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022. GPCOG is coordinating with the transit agencies, Key messages:

- Southern Maine has a robust network of public transit systems – buses, trains, and ferries – that offer excellent service and value.
- The network has been safely serving thousands of customers, even during the pandemic.

Phase 1 (February-May): Market research and planning, introduction of Transit Together, and building awareness (primarily through low-cost social media). A new website, [transittogether.org](http://transittogether.org), is being developed, and all agencies have been asked to review it, with hopes to launch shortly. Phase 2 (June-August): Recovering ridership and building awareness of Transit Together.

## **7. Update on DiriGo TouchPass Fare System (Item 5)**

Ridership is still down about 60% as compared to pre-pandemic levels. Average fare estimates for \$1.40 and we are at \$1.39. Believe this is partly due to more people taking advantage of our Reduced Fare program. Generally, the numbers are moving along expected lines. RTP wants to join the system.

TouchPass will be rebranded to UMO (fall/late 2021), but will remain DiriGo since Delerrok combined with the company Cubic. Metro is working with Cubic on how DiriGo will be integrated with UMO, and asking them to cover much of the cost of the rebrand. We have made it clear we will not move forward until Cubic has met a number of conditions. Cubic is also integrated with MOOVIT, so trip planning, real-time arrival, and the fare payment system will be in a single location for riders to access.

## **8. Proposed Peninsula Bus Service Redesign (Item 6)**

Greg reviewed this project, aimed at faster, simpler, more direct routing on the peninsula. Many current riders, especially on Route 8, do not want to see changes. Still receiving feedback. Expect to have final recommended route changes in April with funding strategies and needs, including bus stop improvements. Changes will launch late 2022. Trying hard to maintain 100 State St. access, at least in one direction, and decrease walking distance at Hannaford. A municipal workshop will be explored.

## **9. Proposed Breez South Plan**

Greg reviewed and gave updates on this plan for 1-95 Turnpike Congestion Mitigation Proposal giving higher speed transit alternatives for Route 1/I-95 Corridor, created in March 2020 and revised November 2020. Breez South proposes to connect Biddeford/Saco area to Portland with a connection in OOB, but not detouring into OOB. It will connect with Breez North, but how this will be done has yet to be determined. An aggressive timeframe would see a launch in summer/late 2022, but anticipate it will be as well received and used as Breez North.

## **10. Future Agenda Items:**

- Potential Partnership with MTA & Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach Transit
- Evaluation of Summer Cooling Centers
- Metro 2025 Strategic Plan
- USM Proposed Portland Campus Addition
- Proposed UNE Medical Center
- Downeaster – Opportunity for cross-marketing with NNEPRA – Electronic Fare System

**11. Upcoming Meetings**

Board of Directors – February 25, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.  
Finance Committee – March 3, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.  
Exec. Committee – March 10, 2021 at 3:30 p.m.  
Ridership Committee – March 18, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

**12. Adjournment**

John Thompson moved to adjourn, seconded by Jeff Levine. A roll call vote was taken by Ed Suslovic, Chair. With approval by John Thompson, Merrill Barter, Jeff Levine, Hope Cahan, Ryan Leighton, and Ed Suslovic, the **motion passed unanimously by all members present and the meeting adjourned at 5:36 p.m.**