

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** August 21, 2019  
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## **Town of Yarmouth Votes to Continue METRO BREEZ Service**

(Portland, Maine) – On Thursday, August 15, 2019, the Yarmouth Town Council voted unanimously to continue METRO BREEZ express bus service. With this vote, Yarmouth also formally joins the Greater Portland Transit District METRO Board of Directors, a quasi-municipality comprised of representatives from current member communities of Portland, Westbrook, and Falmouth.

In June 2016, METRO BREEZ was launched as a three-year pilot project, an express bus service route between Portland, Yarmouth, and Freeport. In 2017, service to Brunswick was added, along with route improvements. The BREEZ provides frequent roundtrip express service, Monday through Saturday, between Portland and these three communities to the north. The route is very popular, exceeding ridership expectations by more than 40%.

“The community expressed strong support for the service, citing values ranging from environmental benefits and energy conservation; to easing of traffic and parking congestion and costs; economic development and business support; access and mobility for those who may not drive; and helping seniors with costs of living,” said Yarmouth Town Manager, Nat Tupper. “It was also striking to hear so many positive comments about the sense of community and social connection that BREEZ riders feel.”

Town councils from each community must decide this year whether to continue BREEZ service on a permanent basis and increase their financial commitment to the route. The three-year pilot for the service ends in December 2019. Freeport and Brunswick are expected to make a decision soon on whether to continue BREEZ service and join the METRO Board.

"We're thrilled to have Yarmouth on board, and hope that Freeport and Brunswick will soon follow. The METRO BREEZ express service better connects our communities while also giving commuters, residents, and tourists a more sustainable and healthful way to navigate the region," says METRO Board President and Portland City Councilor Belinda Ray. "We know that continuing to expand and improve public transit in the Greater Portland area is essential. Robust public transit increases access to affordable housing and jobs, improves public health, and encourages economic development. Yarmouth's decision to join METRO moves us one step closer to realizing the comprehensive regional transportation system we need."



Greater Portland METRO has increased its ridership by almost 35% in the last five years, primarily through:

- **System Modernization** which includes streamlined routes, express service, added bus shelters, new technology for 'real time' bus arrival and availability of wi-fi; new buses and branding.
- **Partnerships** with Portland Public Schools, Southern Maine Community College (SMCC); University of Southern Maine (USM), Maine Medical Center, and more planned for 2020.
- **Route expansions** – On August 27, 2018, METRO launched the Husky Line with service between Portland, Westbrook, and Gorham and between USM Portland and Gorham and campuses and the new Route 3 service connecting Portland, Westbrook, and South Portland.
- **Public Awareness** through expanded community outreach, updated branding, and the introduction of improvements and enhancements.

#### What's Next for METRO?

- This fall -- New replacement buses will introduce Automatic Voice Announcements (AVA)
- 2020 -- Introduction of new automated fare payment options.
- 2021 – The Peninsula Loop Reboot will update current METRO routes and create a new option to provide more frequency and better connections for transit riders.

#### For METRO information and updates:

- Website: [GPMETRO.ORG](http://GPMETRO.ORG) (link to [METRO BREEZ/Yarmouth Town Council Presentation](#))
- Phone: 207-774-0351
- Southern Maine Transit Tracker – [SMTTRACKER.COM](http://SMTTRACKER.COM)
- Social media: [Facebook](#); [Twitter](#); [Instagram](#)
- Stop by the METRO Pulse at 21 Elm Street, METRO's downtown transit hub for information, tickets, schedules, and connections. Open Monday-Friday, 7am-7pm; 9am – 4:30pm on Saturday.

With annual ridership of nearly 2 million, METRO is the largest public transit agency in Maine. Greater Portland METRO provides bus service between Brunswick, Falmouth, Freeport, Gorham, Portland, South Portland, Westbrook, and Yarmouth.

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