

# Ridership Committee

October 18, 2023 | 4:00pm -5:30pm



**DRAFT**

## Draft Minutes of the Metro Ridership Committee Meeting Wednesday, October 18, 2023 from 4:00-5:30 PM

### Onsite:

Greater Portland Transit District, 114 Valley Street, Conference Room A | Portland, ME 04102

<b>Committee Members Present:</b> Hope Cahan (Chair) Ed Suslovic Merrill Barter Bill Rixon	<b>Non-Committee Board Members present:</b> None
<b>Committee Members Not present</b> Pious Ali Prosper Lohomboli Andrew Zarro	<b>Staff and Others Present:</b> Greg Jordan, Executive Director, Metro Mike Tremblay, Transit Development Director, Metro Denise Beck, Marketing Manager, Metro Chris Chop, Greater Portland Council of Governments
	<b>Members of Public:</b> Eamonn Dundon, Portland Regional Chamber

### 1. Call Meeting to Order

Hope Cahan called the Ridership Committee meeting to order at 4:02pm

### 2. Public Comment – None

**3. Approval of Meeting Minutes** - Ed Suslovic motioned to accept minutes. Seconded by Hope, approved unanimously as amended regarding Bill Rixon’s attendance at the Sept. meeting.

### 4. Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Study

Chris Chop of GPCOG updated the group on the Rapid Transit Study, noting that this BRT service would be more frequent and have more stops and amenities than existing service. Greg Jordan said that there are still things to work out, particularly regarding transit stop priority access on the route. He added, that If Metro is the project sponsor, the Board and communities would need to support the project. For planning and funding, we would need endorsements before we apply. Hope asked about the local match. Chris said he would expect 30% needed for local match, which would need to be non-federal funding.

Ed asked why this corridor was identified (and not another) and if the Maine Turnpike Authority could be a funding source. Chris answered that the corridor was decided based on a density of jobs, people, and activity centers and said the MTA could provide funding for local match. Ed. S offered a motion to recommend Alternative 1, Motion was seconded by Bill Rixon.

Prior to a vote, Greg added that there is still discussion that Alternative 3 may work in Portland and include Forest Ave; they see more development there. That route would eliminate Maine Med. He said it’s ok to go ahead and recommend Alternative 1, but to be aware that there are other discussions. Ed said we should include MMC and USM since they are our partners. Hope took a roll call of votes. Vote was unanimous to recommend Alternative 1.

## **5. Ridership and Fare Revenue Update**

Mike Tremblay presented a ridership and fare revenue update, noting that ridership was up in Sept., with an 86% recovery rate compared to 2019, adding that as of Oct. 4, Metro reached last year's ridership peak. He said Metro had a good summer and spring and that coincided with the Fare Deal campaign.

## **6. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Update**

Greg presented the information about the CIP that will be presented at the October Board meeting. Merrill asked about the cost of replacement buses – diesel vs. electric. Greg answered that the cost is app. \$550,000 for diesel and \$900,000+ for an electric bus. Merrill said, we should research the actual improvements of electric over diesel, adding that we should be thoroughly educated before we spend more money on the electric buses. Mike said we're working with a national organization about the environmental impacts on electric vs. diesel buses. Bill asked why electric buses are \$400,000 more than diesel. Greg answered that the battery systems, sourcing of materials, and complexity of those systems increase the overall costs. Adding that there's only a handful vendors for electric buses. The electric buses Metro purchased were custom built. Greg said that hopefully as the industry adopts these, electric buses will more streamlined. He said he is surprised the costs haven't gone down more. Bill said removing diesel buses from roads would be a healthier alternative

## **7. ARPA Service / Projects Update**

Mike provided a brief update on ARPA funded service improvements and capital projects. Bill said he was grateful that two trips were added to the BREEZ, as part of those service improvements. It's made a huge difference. He's heard positive things from people in Freeport.

## **8. Consideration of 2024 Service Changes**

Mike presented information on possible service changes, for 2024, related to underperforming route segments and budget capacity. Greg said we are returning to our cost allocation plan for 2024, adding that Westbrook and the BREEZ communities are facing increases in costs. Microtransit could be a much lower cost and might be a piece of Westbrook in addition to Falmouth. Hope asked that he also research if there are any costs changes to paratransit.

## **9. Future Agenda Items**

- Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Study
- Partnering with bicycling entities, including Portland's proposed bicycle sharing program
- Bus shelters and bus inventory
- Microtransit and Route 7 improvements

Ed asked to add other transportation entities, such as Portland Trails, to future agenda items, and update on the partnership with the Roux Institute. Greg said we do have a proposal to them about extending the route. Hope asked for utilization from current partners -- including marketing, ridership, etc.

## **10. Upcoming Meetings**

- Board of Directors – October 26, 2023
- Finance Committee – November 1, 2023
- Executive Committee – November 8, 2023
- Ridership Committee – November 15, 2023

## **11. Adjournment**

Ed S. motioned to adjourn. Bill Rixon seconded. Unanimous vote for adjournment at 4:42PM