

# Ridership Committee

December 20, 2023 | 4:00 – 5:30pm



## Onsite:

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

## Remote:

Please click the link below to join the webinar:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83891311302?pwd=bUpsRk9JU3A2djVhOGZuMUUp5UVROQT09>  
Webinar ID: 838 9131 1302 | Passcode 950935 |  
Phone: (301) 715-8592 | Telephone participants: \*9 to raise hand, \*6 to unmute

## MEETING AGENDA

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER	ACTION or INFORMATION
<b>1. Call Meeting to Order (4:00)</b>	Ed Suslovic, Acting Chair	N/A
<b>2. Public Comment (4:00-4:05)</b> The Metro Board's Ridership Committee welcomes public comment for items not listed on this agenda at this time. For items listed on the agenda, the chair will allow members of the public to comment following staff presentation. There is a <i>three-minute time limit</i> per citizen at each point. (Comments will be paraphrased in the meeting minutes)	Ed Suslovic, Acting Chair	Information
<b>3. Approval of Meeting Minutes (4:05-4:10)</b> Review and approve the minutes from the October 2023 meeting of the Ridership Committee.	Ed Suslovic, Acting Chair	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>4. Ridership and Fare Revenue Update (4:10-4:20)</b> Staff will provide information on ridership, including preliminary data on recent service improvements and the upcoming end of the Fare Deal promotion.	Mike Tremblay, Transit Dev. Director	Information
<b>5. Real-time Passenger Information (4:20-4:40)</b> Staff will provide news on the status of the Southern Maine Transit Tracker and considerations for enhancing real-time information on Metro.	Mike Tremblay, Transit Dev. Director Glenn Fenton, Chief Transp. Officer	Information
<b>6. ARPA Service Improvements and 2024 Plans (4:40-5:10)</b> Staff will provide an update on the status of ARPA-funded service improvements and capital projects.	Mike Tremblay, Transit Dev. Director	Information

<p><b>7. Future Agenda Items (5:10-5:15)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnering with bicycling entities, including Portland’s proposed bicycle sharing program</li> <li>• Route 1 on Munjoy Hill</li> <li>• Adding RTP to the DiriGo partnership</li> <li>• Bus shelters and bus inventory</li> </ul>	Ed Suslovic, Acting Chair	Information
<p><b>8. Upcoming Meetings (5:15-5:20)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance Committee – January 3, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.</li> <li>• Executive Committee – January 10, 2024 at 3:30 p.m.</li> <li>• Ridership Committee – January 17, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.</li> <li>• Board of Directors – January 25, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.</li> </ul>	Ed Suslovic, Acting Chair	Information
<p><b>9. Adjournment (5:20)</b></p>	Ed Suslovic, Acting Chair	N/A

*As of November 9, 2022 Greater Portland Metro is holding meetings of the Board of Directors (and its committees) in hybrid format, both in person at Metro’s offices and via webinar. The remote portions of all meetings are conducted in accordance with the requirements of [Metro’s Remote Participation Policy](#) (adopted August 25, 2022) as well as LD 1772, PL 2022 Ch. 666, and 1 MRSA Chapter 13, Subchapter 1.*

# Ridership Committee

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



**DRAFT**

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## 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



## RIDERSHIP COMMITTEE

## AGENDA ITEM 4

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### **DATE**

December 19, 2023

### **SUBJECT**

Ridership and Fare Revenue Update

### **PURPOSE**

To brief the Committee on ridership and fare revenue trends through November 2023.

### **BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

Ridership on Greater Portland Metro remained strong in November 2023, exceeding 150,000 rides for the fourth consecutive month. This represents a 29% year-over-year increase compared to November 2022, and 87% of November 2019 ridership.

Fare revenue was \$215,585 in November, slightly down from October (\$218,091), reflecting a higher average fare per trip. Monthly fare revenue was as low as \$142,093 from March to September 2023; however, these revenues reflect Fare Deal fare pricing and are offset by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Average fare was \$1.31 in October and \$1.41 in November.

Metro is also tracking the performance of our newest pass programs: Portland Adult Education, Portland General Assistance, and the Roux Institute. The Portland GA pass program has yielded over 10,000 rides per month each month since May, immediately becoming one of our most utilized pass programs. Ridership by Roux Institute students and staff has risen steadily each month since August, when the Husky Line was extended to the Eastern Waterfront. In November, the Roux program exceeded 2,000 trips for the first time. Finally, since launching in October, the Portland Adult Education pass program has yielded 8,400 trips thru November, with over 6,800 trips coming in November alone. These pass programs provide a firm base of ridership and encourages everyday travelers to use transit as their primary mode of transportation.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

None.

**RECOMMENDATION**

This item is for information and discussion only.

**CONTACT**

Mike Tremblay  
Director of Transit Development  
(207) 517-3023  
mtremblay@gpmetro.org

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Ridership Committee Slides

**DATE**

December 19, 2023

**SUBJECT**

SMTT Real Time Information Update

**PURPOSE**

To brief the Committee on changes to the Southern Maine Transit Tracker

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

In 2016, Metro launched a CAD-AVL system, which allows for real-time management of our bus routes. This system includes several features: the ability for dispatchers to know the location of buses in real time; broadcast of this real-time data to third-party apps (Umo, Transit, Moovit, etc.), and feeds our public-facing Southern Maine Transit Tracker system (SMTT). Metro, along with South Portland Bus Service and Casco Bay Lines, had maintained SMTT on a joint server. SMTT allows the public to view real-time maps as well as text a stop code to a phone number to automatically receive estimates on the arrival of the next bus. The texting service has relatively low utilization -- about 330 unique users in October 2023. Metro staff estimates that this represents between 3-6% of passengers in a given day. For some users without smartphones, this may be the best way to receive real-time arrival information. The texting service is costly -- about \$15,000 per year. Since the launch of the system, smartphone adoption has likely increased, as have the number of third-party apps to receive this information.

Recently, Casco Bay Lines dropped off of the SMTT service, and this month, we learned that South Portland Bus Service plans to drop from SMTT as well, once they go under contract with their new CAD-AVL provider at the beginning of 2024.

South Portland's withdrawal from SMTT may impact the reliability and availability of the service for Metro passengers, as the service is hosted on South Portland servers. Additionally, Metro is also planning on switching to a new CAD-AVL provider in mid-late 2024. For these reasons, Metro staff is preparing to sunset the SMTT texting service for our customers on or around January 1, 2024.

Metro staff expects some public feedback against removal of the service; however, we are optimistic that we will be able to assuage concerns given the availability of alternatives. Retaining the service would require up-front and recurring costs to migrate the server to a new, web-based host, continued recurring monthly costs for the service, and reduced utility of the

service given that South Portland buses will no longer be shown in the SMTT feed, all for a relatively short period of time until our new CAD-AVL system launches next summer/fall.

Metro staff has begun to alert the public that the texting service will be taken offline, and point them to alternative resources. At the same time, we have removed the 450+ bus stop signs in the District, and do some additional outreach about how to find real-time information using smartphone apps.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

None.

**RECOMMENDATION**

This item is for information and discussion only.

**CONTACT**

Mike Tremblay  
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(207) 517-3023  
mtremblay@gpmetro.org

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Ridership Committee Slides





## RIDERSHIP COMMITTEE

## AGENDA ITEM 6

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### DATE

December 19, 2023

### SUBJECT

ARPA Project Update and Future Considerations

### PURPOSE

To brief the Committee on the status of projects funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, and related changes to service that is being contemplated.

### BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

About a year ago, Metro was allocated funds through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to implement changes to our service to improve affordability, connectivity, reliability, travel speed, and accessibility. Four major projects identified for this funding are either underway or completed, including the Fare Deal promotion (completed), the Transit Stop Access Project (out to bid in 2024), Transit Signal Priority (first major implementation in winter/spring 2024), and service improvements. The first batch of service improvements was implemented in August 2023, and included extension of the Husky Line to the Eastern Waterfront of Portland, and improved off-peak frequency on the BREEZ and Route 9.

In May or June 2024, Metro plans on making a second major improvement of service: the extension of Route 7 to the Jetport, with related changes to the Route 5. This will improve Metro's service to the Jetport, which is currently inconsistent, to provide consistent, half-hourly service to the Jetport and the nearby Health and Human Services office on weekdays, with consistent hourly service on evenings and weekends. This also allows for the Route 5 to avoid deviating off its primary route between downtown Portland and the Maine Mall, improving travel times for those travelers. In the fall of 2024, Metro plans on implementing microtransit in the Falmouth Foreside area, replacing low-ridership loops on the Route 7 with a more dynamic service that will increase transit access in the area while reducing reliance on an infrequent and inconsistent schedule.

The extension of the Route 7 to the Jetport also establishes a "High Frequency Corridor" from Washington Avenue at Veranda Street through Congress Street in the vicinity of Westgate, with an average peak frequency of every 15 minutes; this improves to every 10 minutes along Congress Street between St. John Street and Washington Avenue. Metro is working on how we can best utilize marketing resources to promote the High Frequency Corridor, in addition to capitalizing on the improved service to the Jetport.

Metro is in preliminary discussions with leadership in Yarmouth and Cumberland about the possibility of extending Route 7 service into Yarmouth via Cumberland along US Route 1. This

extension is envisioned to provide hourly service along this corridor, providing transit access to Cumberland and mostly replacing BREEZ service in Yarmouth. While this extension could potentially come to fruition sometime in 2025, it needs to be considered alongside other Metro priorities.

Finally, staff will provide an update on the status of the Route 1 changes on Munjoy Hill, which were implemented in August 2023. While only three months of data are available since this change was implemented, the change is correlated to a drop in Route 1 ridership, both overall and on Munjoy Hill. Staff will brief the committee on these trends and on next steps.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

None.

**RECOMMENDATION**

This item is for information and discussion only.

**CONTACT**

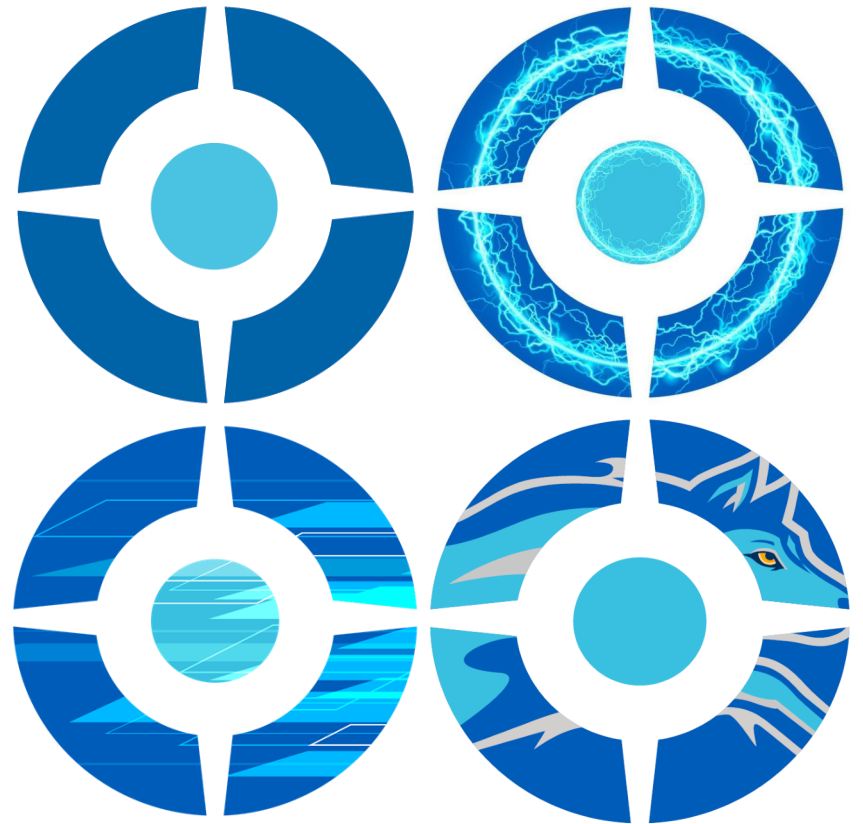
Mike Tremblay  
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(207) 517-3023  
mtremblay@gpmetro.org

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Ridership Committee Slides

# GREATER PORTLAND METRO

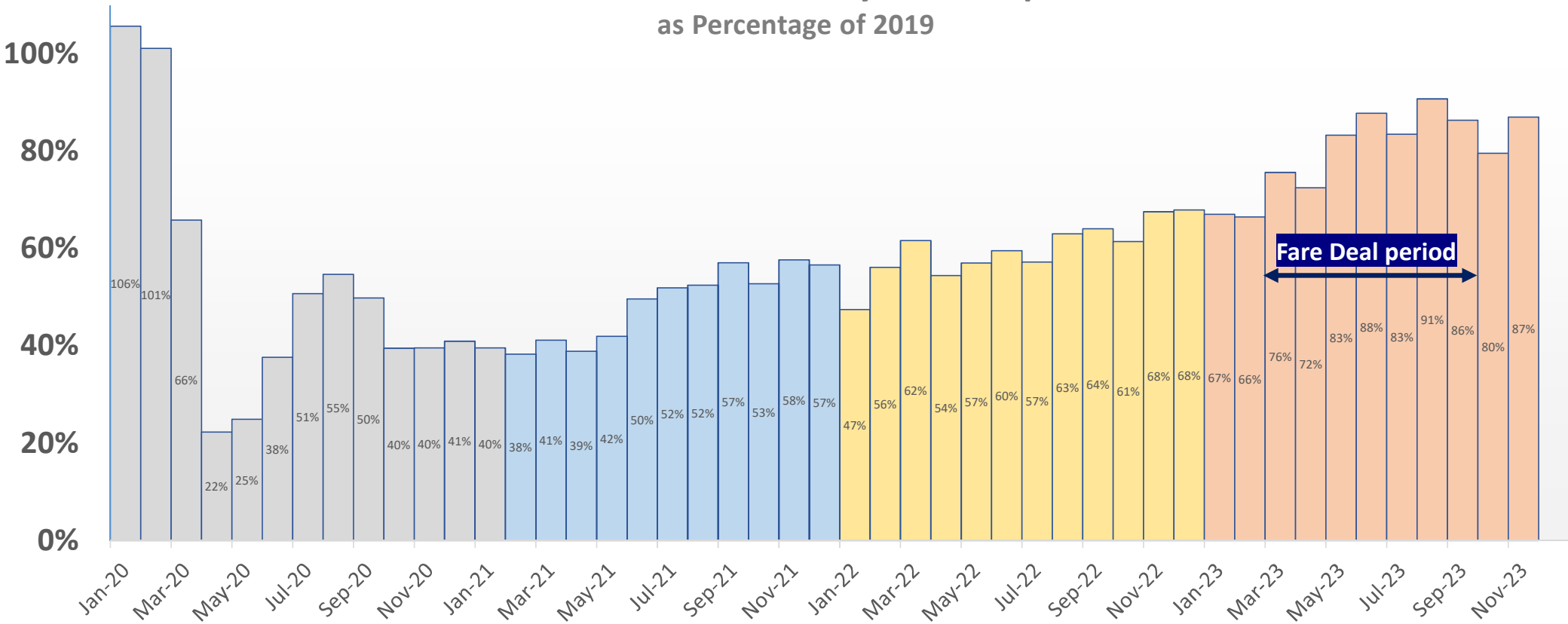
**Board of Directors**  
Ridership Committee  
December 20, 2023



# Ridership and Fare Revenue

## Recovery

2020-2023 Monthly Ridership  
as Percentage of 2019

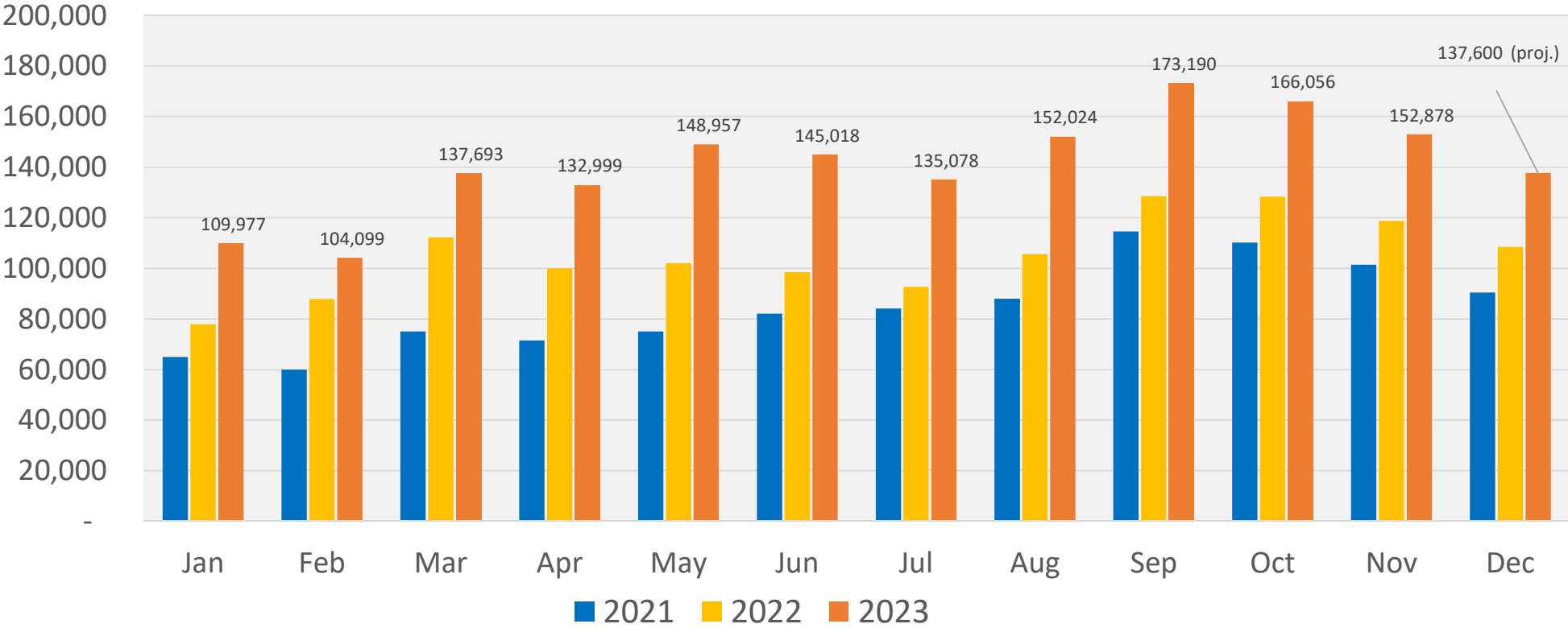


Fare Deal period

# Ridership and Fare Revenue

## Ridership, 2021-2023

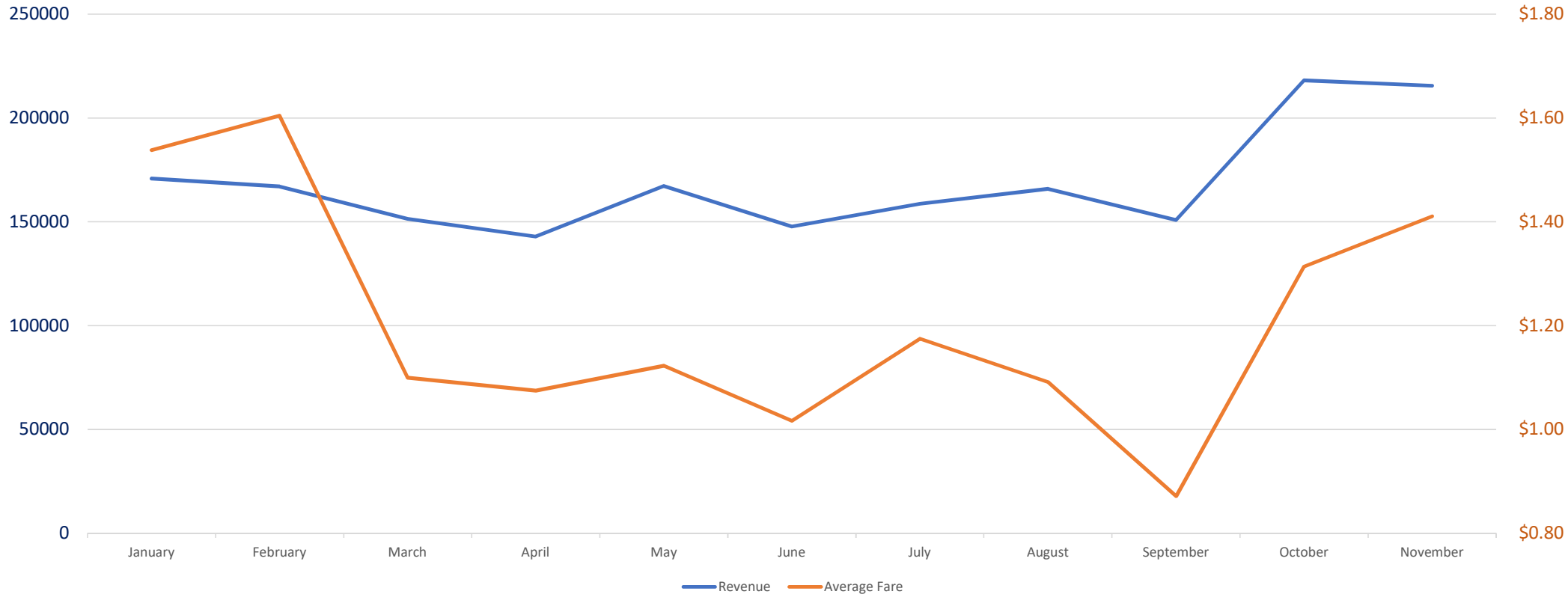
GP Metro Monthly Ridership: 2021-2023



# Ridership and Fare Revenue

## Ridership, 2021-2023

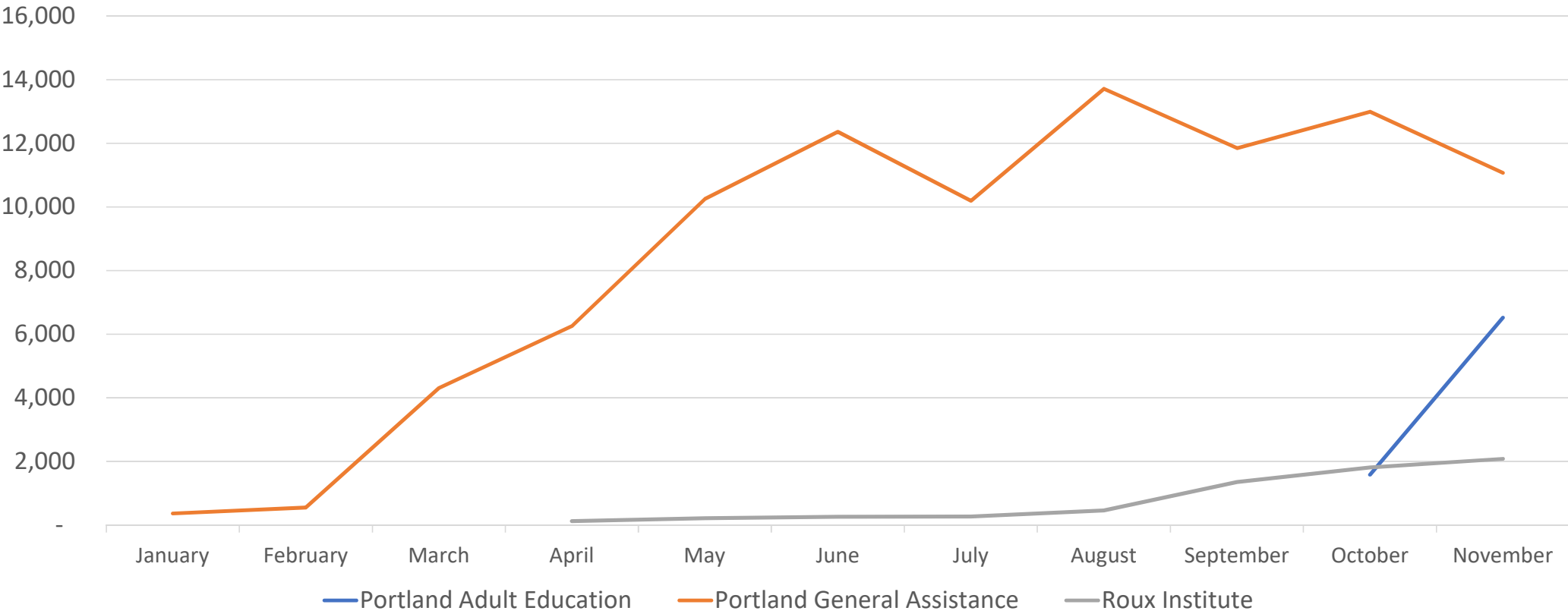
Metro Revenue and Average Fare,  
2023 thru November



# Ridership and Fare Revenue

## New(ish) Pass Program Performance

New Metro Pass Program Ridership, 2023



# SMTT Real-time Information

Texting service ending 1/1/2024



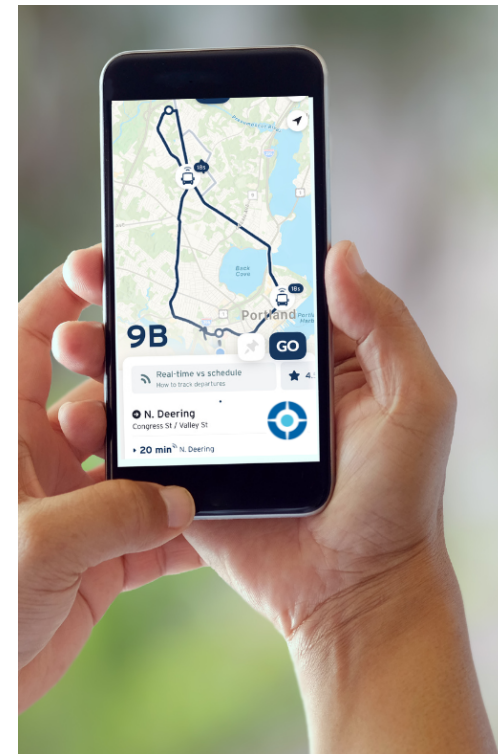
SOUTHERN MAINE  
TRANSIT TRACKER

For Real-Time  
Arrival Information  
VISIT: [SMTRACKER.COM](http://SMTRACKER.COM)  
TEXT: SMTT 1234 TO 41411  
\*messaging and data rates may apply

**STOP ID**  
**1234**

## SMTT Tracker

- Launched 2016 with South Portland and Casco Bay Lines
- Real-time map and texting service
- Casco Bay Lines pulled from feed recently; SPBS to leave in 2024
- Metro is procuring new CAD-AVL service in 2024; SMTT may not be supported
- To avoid unexpected downtime, Metro will end coverage of texting service on January 1
  - SMTT map will still be available
- Point public to 3<sup>rd</sup> party apps
- Investigating real-time signage at bus stops beginning 2024/2025



It's easy to  
find your way on

GREATER PORTLAND  
**metro**

Plan your trip and  
track your bus  
with these mobile apps:



**DiriGO**  
Powered by **umo**

Available On  
**metro**  
**Transit**  
App  
South Portland  
BUS SERVICE

The DiriGo Pass mobile app can be used to plan your trip, track your bus, and pay your fare on Greater Portland Metro, BSOOB Transit, and South Portland Bus service.

[DiriGoPass.org](http://DiriGoPass.org) | 833-272-7270



# Ridership Committee

## ARPA Project Update

### Fare Reduction – Complete

### ADA Bus Stop Improvements – In progress

- 23 stops in 2024
- 27 stops in 2025

### Transit Signal Priority - In progress

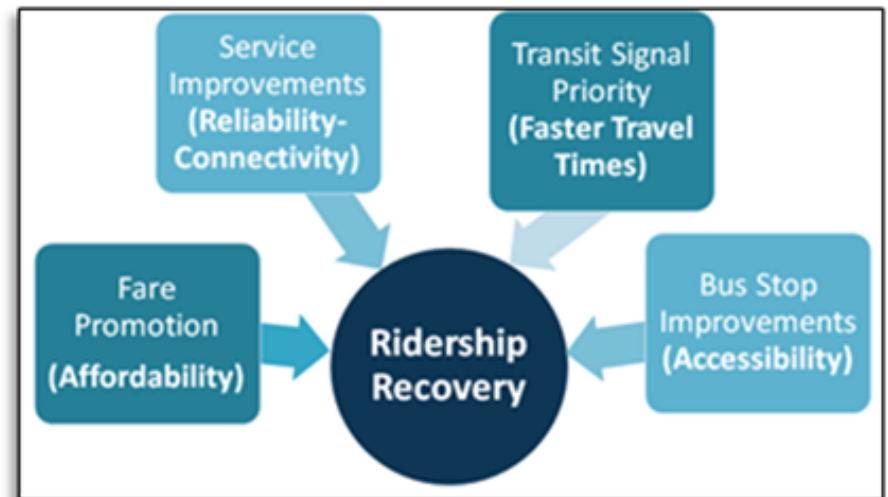
- Phase 1 (2024): Forest, Washington, key spots on Brighton, Congress
- Phase 2: Additional locations on Brighton, Congress, William Clark

### Service improvements:

August 2023: Husky Line Extension; improved headways to Route 9 and BREEZ – Complete

May 2024: Route 7 headway improvement and route modification; Route 5 route modification – In Progress

Fall 2024: Introduce microtransit pilot project – In Progress

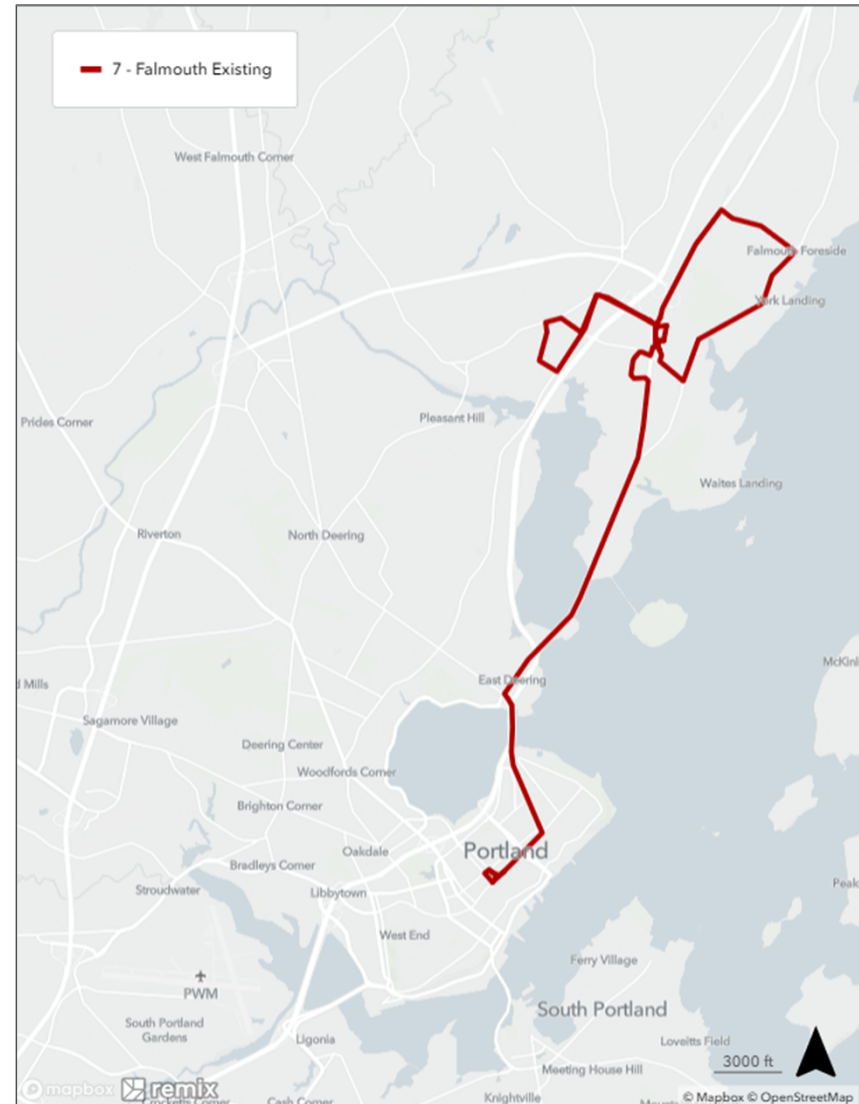


# Ridership Committee

ARPA Funded  
Service  
Improvements

## EXISTING ROUTE 7

- Falmouth-Portland
- US Route 1; Washington/Congress
- 60 minute headways Mon-Sun.
- Hours: 6:30am-7:30pm (Mon-Sat);  
8:30-4:30pm (Sun).
- Destinations:
  - Falmouth Village
  - Ocean View Community
  - Town Landing and Falmouth Foreside
  - Martin's Point Healthcare
  - Downtown Portland



# Ridership Committee

## ARPA Funded Service Improvements

### ROUTE 7 IMPROVEMENTS

- Falmouth-Portland
- US Route 1; Washington/Congress
- 30 minute headways Mon-Fri; 60 minute headways Sat-Sun.
- Hours: 6:00am-10:00pm (Mon-Sat); 8:00am-7:00pm (Sun).
- Route Adjustments:
  - Remove Oceanview, Foreside loops
  - Extend to Jetport
- Revised Destinations:
  - Falmouth Village
  - Martin's Point Healthcare
  - Downtown Portland
  - Maine Medical Center
  - Walking distance to PTC
  - Westgate
  - Jetport

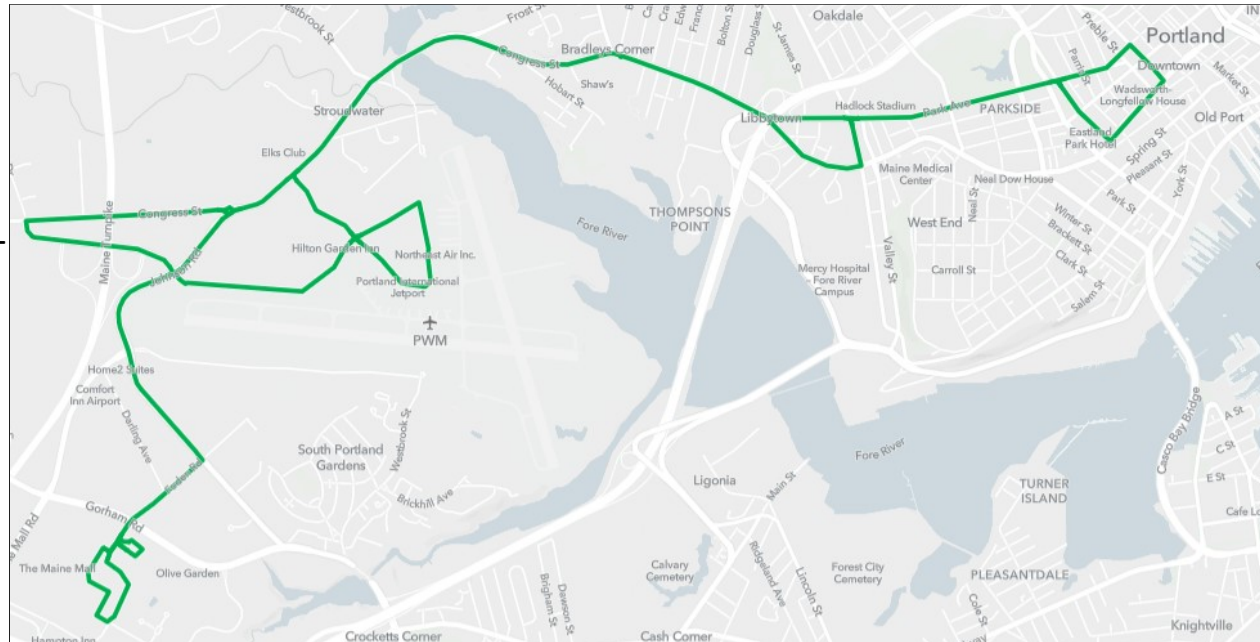


# Ridership Committee

## ARPA Funded Service Improvements

### EXISTING ROUTE 5

- Portland-South Portland
- Congress-Outer Congress
- 30 minute headways Mon-Sat.
- Hours: 6:00am-10:30pm (Mon-Sat); 8:30-4:30pm (Sun).
- Travel time ~25-35 min
- Destinations:
  - Downtown Portland
  - Hadlock Field/IRIS Network
  - Westgate
  - Intermittent trips to Jetport/Hutchins Dr.
  - Maine Mall

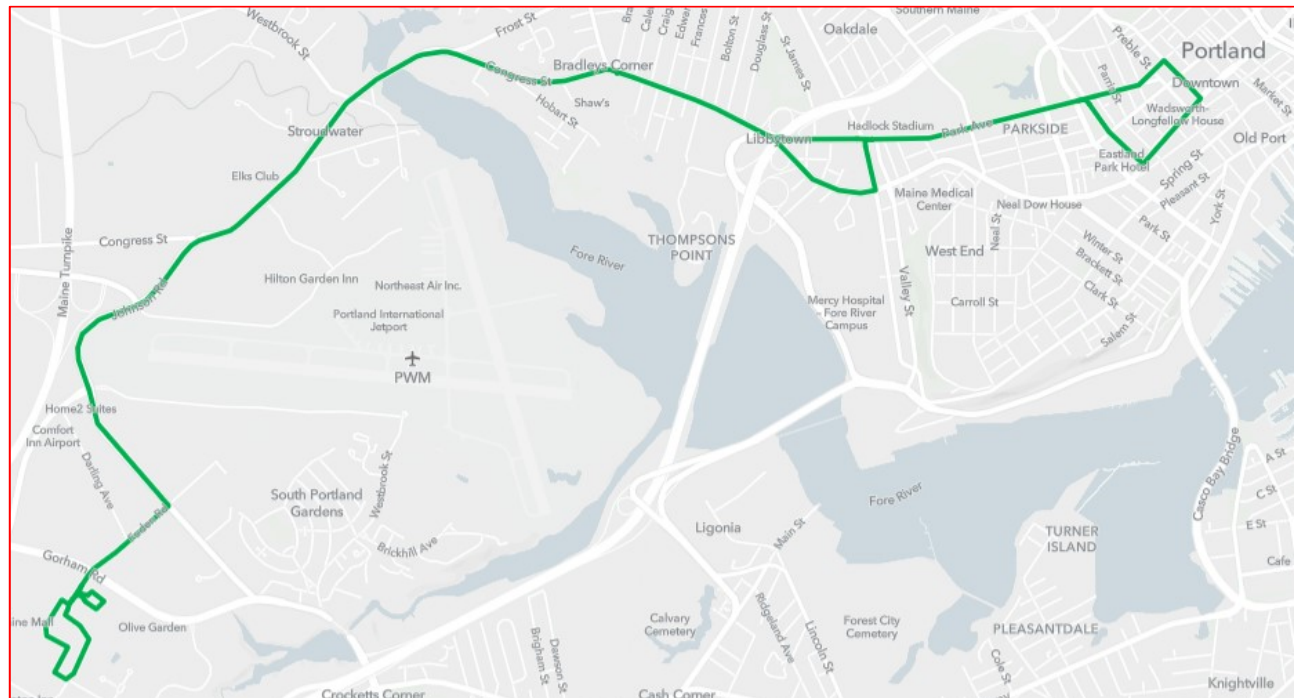


# Ridership Committee

## ARPA Funded Service Improvements

### ROUTE 5 IMPROVEMENTS

- Portland-South Portland
- Congress-Outer Congress
- 30 minute headways Mon-Sat.
- Hours: 6:00am-10:30pm (Mon-Sat); 8:30-4:30pm (Sun).
- **Travel time ~25 min**
- Destinations:
  - Downtown Portland
  - Hadlock Field/IRIS Network
  - Westgate
  - ~~Jetport/Hutchins Dr.~~
  - Maine Mall



# Ridership Committee

ARPA Funded  
Service  
Improvements

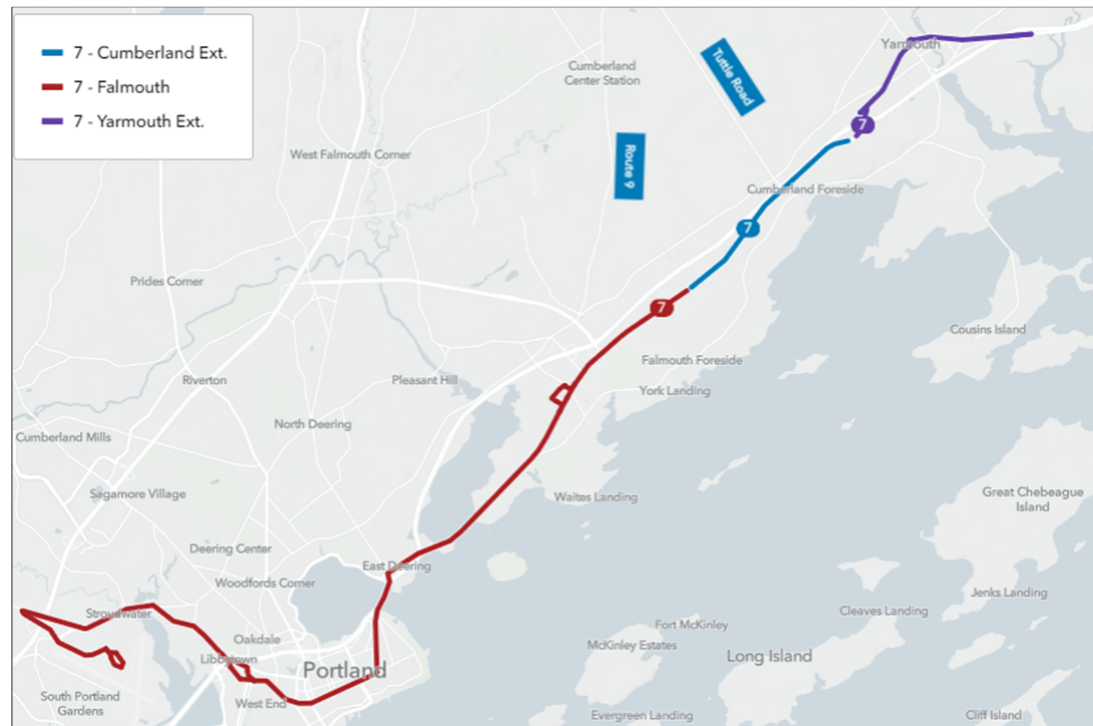


## CONGRESS STREET HIGH FREQUENCY CORRIDOR

# Ridership Committee

## Exploration of Route 7 Extension to Cumberland-Yarmouth

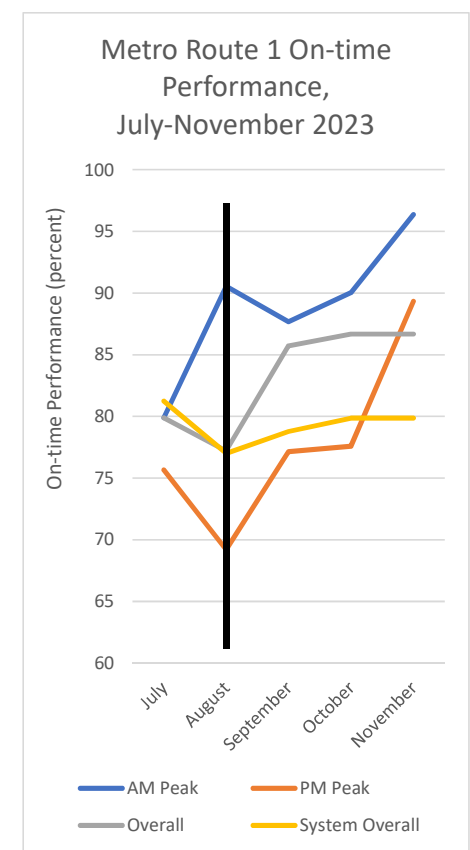
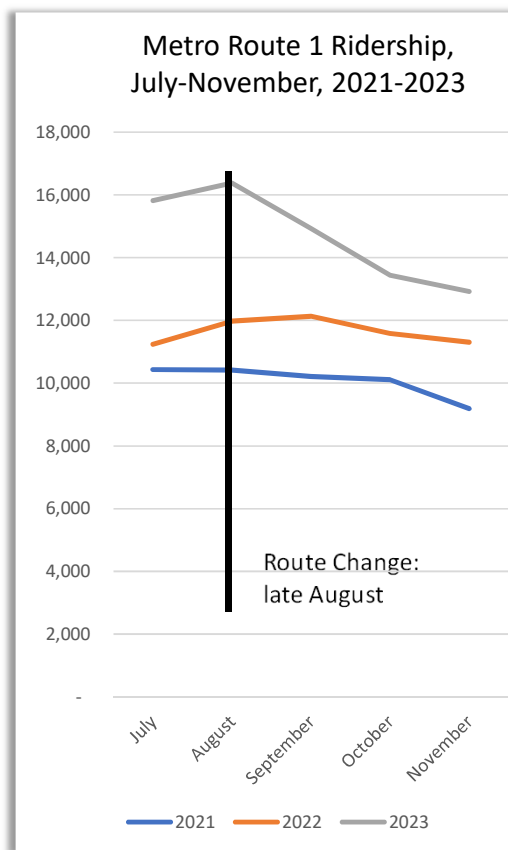
- **Extend Route 7 to Cumberland-Yarmouth**
- **Potential Benefits**
  - Improves regional inter-city/town transit connectivity
  - Brings service to Cumberland while Route 1 development is in early stages.
  - Improves service to Yarmouth
  - Allows Breez to bypass most of Yarmouth and shorten travel times for thru riders.
- **Additional planning and decision-points**
  - Project to be evaluated and sequenced in relation to other service development and funding priorities.
  - Committee and Board approval
  - Town Council approvals
  - Seek start-up federal funding



# Ridership Committee

## Route 1 in Munjoy Hill

- **Route 1 relocated from Atlantic St. to Congress St. in Munjoy Hill beginning August 2023**
  - Added travel time, low ridership
  - Operational difficulties
- **No recorded complaints since implementation**
- **On-time performance improved slightly**
- **Ridership Observations (Oct. vs. Mar. 2023)**
  - Route 1 ridership down -5.5% (was +14.0% in 2022)
    - Fare Deal may have helped March 2023 ridership)
  - Munjoy Hill ridership down 24%
- **Month-over-month ridership is down in Fall 2023**
  - Typically steady with modest decreases in October





# Ridership Committee

## Route 1 in Munjoy Hill – Boardings, March vs. October 2023

March 2023



October 2023

