

Ridership Committee

June 14, 2023 | 4:00 – 5:30pm



Onsite:

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

Remote:

Please click the link below to join the webinar:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83891311302?pwd=bUpsRk9JU3A2djVhOGZuMUU5UVROQT09>
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
1. Call Meeting to Order (4:00)	Hope Cahan, Chair	N/A
2. Public Comment (4:00-4:05) 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)	Hope Cahan, Chair	Information
3. Approval of Meeting Minutes (4:05-4:10) Review and approve the minutes from the February and March 2023 meetings of the Ridership Committee.	Hope Cahan, Chair	ACTION
4. Transit Together and ARPA Implementation Update (4:10-4:30) Staff will provide information on the public outreach and implementation status of the Transit Together project and ARPA-funded service improvements	Mike Tremblay, Transit Dev. Director	ACTION
5. Ridership Update (4:30-4:45) Staff will provide information on ridership and fare revenue trends for calendar year 2022 and January 2023.	Mike Tremblay, Transit Dev. Director	Information
6. Performance Metrics Update (4:45-5:15) Staff will provide an update on key performance metrics, including a first-year update on the performance of Metro's Battery Electric Buses (BEB's).	Mike Tremblay, Transit Dev. Director Glen Fenton, Chief Transp. Officer	Information

7. Future Agenda Items (5:15-5:20) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rock Row Transit Service Development (2022) • Proposed UNE Medical Center (2022) • Partnering with bicycling entities, including Portland’s proposed bicycle sharing program 	Hope Cahan, Chair	Information
8. Upcoming Meetings (5:20-5:25) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors – June 22, 2023 • Finance Committee – T.B.D. • Executive Committee – T.B.D. • Ridership Committee – August 16, 2023 	Hope Cahan, Chair	Information
9. Adjournment (5:30)	Hope Cahan, 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 Meeting – via Zoom
Draft Minutes of the GP Metro Ridership Committee meeting of
Tuesday, February 14 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom and in person

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81257398178?pwd=d0ZUNUNEYzNWSFpuZzNvaW1lOHNsUT09>

Webinar ID: 812 5739 8178 | Passcode 705524 |

Phone: (646) 558-8656 | Telephone participants: *9 to raise hand, *6 to unmute

<p>Committee Members Present: Ed Suslovic Bill Rixon Prosper Lohomboli Andrew Zarro</p> <p>Committee Members Not present Pious Ali Merrill Barter Hope Cahan Jeff Levine John Thompson, Jr.</p> <p>Non-Committee Board Members present: NONE</p>	<p>Staff and Others Present: Mike Tremblay, Transit Development Director Glenn Fenton, Chief Transportation Officer Denise Beck, Marketing Manager</p> <p>Public: No members of the public were present.</p>
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1. With no quorum in place, the meeting started as a Workshop at 4:02 pm.

With the Committee Chair, Hope Cahan, not present and a Vice Chair not elected until later in the meeting, the workshop was called to order by staff, starting with information Agenda Item #5.

Agenda # 5 -- Item Ridership, Fare Revenue, and Service Update

Staff reviewed ridership and fare revenue data through January 2023.

- January ridership looks good, tracking at almost 70% of 2019
- Amtrak and CBL back to pre-pandemic ridership; South Portland is at 75%
- Reduced fare ridership has rebounded to 2019; choice riders are lagging behind
- Above 60% is doing better than system at whole; Route 5 better than average; BREEZ doing well. Husky Line not where it was. High School ridership is not at 2019 levels.
- Different fare system in 2019 so not an exact comparison

Ed Suslovic asked why Route 5 is doing so well. Staff replied that DHHS ridership is the likely reason, adding that a future route change for Route 1 would add service to DHHS. Ed also asked what METRO needs to change to meet a new dynamic. Staff said a recently conducted passenger survey will include new information. The survey will also be part of the Strategic Plan planning, which is starting soon. Prosper Lohomboli asked about schedule consistency. Staff noted that Route 8 ends early and route end times are not consistent.

1. **Andrew Zarro joined the meeting, via zoom. With a quorum in place, the meeting was called to order at 4:15 PM.**

2. **Public Comment:** No members of the public were present.

3. **Election of Vice-Chair**

Ed S nominated Andrew Zarro as vice chair. Andrew accepted the role. All attendees support the nomination. Andrew decided to assume his duties at a future meeting, allowing staff to continue leading the meeting.

4. **Approval November 2022 Committee Meeting Minutes.**

Motion made to accept the minutes of the November 16, 2022 meeting

Ed moved to accept the minutes; Andrew seconded.

No discussion. Minutes were approved unanimously by all present.

5. **Item was presented at the beginning of the Workshop.**

6. **Transit Together – ARPA update**

Staff presented information on the status of Transit Together, including recommendations from Nelson/Nygaard and next steps:

- Transit Together study approved in 2023
 - Continue collaboration, regional standard for stops and signage
 - Mike summarized recommended changes:
 - Route 1: Extend along Congress St. to Portland Jetport via PTC (excluding TP and Hutchins Dr.)
 - Route 2: Extend to Ocean Gateway; elimination of hourly patterns serving Prides Corner.
 - Route 4: Extend to Ocean Gateway; simplification of service patterns in Westbrook.
 - Route 5: Travel on Congress St, instead of Park Ave; run express to Maine Mall.
 - Route 7: Extend to TP, via Mercy; Eliminate loops in Falmouth and implement micro transit.
 - Route 8: Added service to Commercial St.; East Bayside; & Park Ave; new bi-directional service. Street; East Bayside; Park n Ride—would require removing parking spaces to add bus stops.
 - Husky Line: Extend to Ocean Gateway, will provide a better connection to USM Law School
 - Routes 7, 9 BREEZ: Improved headways.
- Public meetings will be held to inform and gather feedback on recommended changes.**
- ARPA secured in Spring 2022; split letter signed in Dec 2022
 - Fare Deal (50% off fares) promotion starts March 1 – September 30, 2023
 - Transit Signal Priority and Transit Stop Access are expected to begin in spring/summer 2023.

Ed Suslovic asked if DHHS or the Jetport has more riders. Staff replied that DHHS has more; but, METRO doesn't currently serve the Jetport appropriately; and, better service could improve ridership. Ed suggested that METRO improve communications at the PTC so riders know they can get a bus at Congress Street. Staff said installing a shelter could help that connection. Ed asked if Route 8 changes would be a problem and receive negative comments, similar to those previously received about the Peninsula Route Reboot project. Staff replied that these recommended service changes would still reach those destinations (discussed previously) in a more logical way. Ed said the service changes would take place after the fare promo campaign ends, which would provide a better indication on ridership improvements.

7. **Roux Institute Update**

Staff discussed service plans for the future Roux institute. The campus would have limited parking and their staff has asked METRO for options. Recommendations include either extending the Route 5 or deviating Route 7. Andrew Zarro said this the Roux Institute is in his District, and he's been very involved. He agrees that METRO is a significant partner for the Institute and for the neighbors. Robust transportation is important to them. He asked about overlap with MDOT. Staff said staff has been meeting with MDOT, the Roux Institute, and other stakeholders about the site.

Ed Suslovic said that he hoped that METRO would work with the Roux Institute with a program similar to the Rock Row Partnership and provide passes to not only Roux students and staff; but, include neighborhood access.

8. Route 8 in the West End

METRO route 8 had switched service to Cushman Street back in the fall because of the Andrew Square project, and residents are strongly opposed to the change. Staff looking at reverting to old route (Pine/Emery) or using Clark/Spring Street. Staff plans to make a decision in March 2023. A public meeting about the service, held in January at Reiche School, was attended by about a dozen residents from Cushman St.

9. METRO Strategic Plan Update

The goal of the Strategic Plan Process is to plan for the next five years. Staff will be looking at trends in transit, present the passenger survey, and invite stakeholders to the meeting, which is planned for March 23. Ed said he hoped we would spend time on confronting the needs of the new environments.

10. PACTS Call for Projects Update and Recommendations

METRO requested \$1.064M in federal 5307 program funding for two projects: Transit Signal Priority on Congress Street, Washington and Brighton Aves, and additional funding for a Transit Stop Access Project. Staff asked for Ridership Committee recommendation for full board endorsement. Ed recommended the request, it was endorsed by Andrew Zarro, approved unanimously by all present, and will go to Board for approval.

11. Future Agenda Items

- Rock Row Transit Service Development
- Proposed UNE Medical Center
- Partnering with bicycling entities, including Portland's proposed bicycle sharing program
- Report on Electric Bus performance after a year of service (suggested by staff)

12. Upcoming Meetings

- Board of Directors – Thursday, February 23 at 4pm
- Finance Committee – Might be cancelled?
- Executive Committee -Wednesday, March 8 at 3:30 pm
- Ridership Committee – Meeting TBD
Discussion with Mike, Hope and Andrew for best day/dates going forward for Ridership Committee meeting

13. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at Feb 14 at 5:21 by universal acclimation.

Ridership Committee

March 30, 2023 | 10:30am-12:00pm



DRAFT

Draft Minutes of the GPMETRO Ridership Committee Meeting of Thursday, March 30 at 10:30 am via Zoom and in person

Onsite:

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

Remote: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85271681358?pwd=S2lFMm1zeXdDT3pFTVBZaTcyMVVYz09>

Committee Members Present: Hope Cahan Ed Suslovic Andrew Zarrow	Non-Committee Board Members present: John Thompson Jeff Levine (10:38am)
Committee Members Not present Pious Ali Merrill Barter Prosper Lohomboli Bill Rixon	Staff and Others Present: Greg Jordan, Executive Director Mike Tremblay, Transit Development Director Denise Beck, Marketing Manager
	Public: No members of the public were present.

1 With no quorum, Hope Cahan called the meeting to order as a workshop at 10:34 am.

2. Public Comment – No members of the public were present.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes No quorum - Minutes from February 2023 could not be approved.

4. Ridership Update

Mike Tremblay provided information on ridership in 2023 to date, noting that March 2023 is on track to have best month, with ridership of 136,000, since the pandemic.

5. Rider and Nonrider Survey Summary

Mike presented select slides from the [rider survey](#), noting that 97% of riders are satisfied with METRO service, safety and cleanliness rated high. On-time performance, hours of operation, and service coverage area were noted as items to improve.

Hope asked if we know if the population of the non-English speaking populations was on par with the 7.8% (non-English speakers) represented in the survey. Mike said the information is likely available in the Title VI Report and could look into it.

John Thompson said the survey provides fantastic information and asked how we would use this information to communicate these results to the public. Greg said there would be another survey after our fare and service improvements, which along with this information, be helpful for the agency to improve and when requesting additional funding. Greg said the information will be also be helpful in setting priorities and improve our numbers of non-riders, noting that we can use this information to promote ourselves as a badge of honor.

Ed Suslovic asked about on-time performance satisfaction in the survey as compared to actual. Greg said METRO's on-time performance isn't bad; but, it's not outstanding. Especially in the summer with construction, adding that we are working on a concept around more seasonally based scheduling. Mike added that the labor shortage had impacted some service. **Ed** said we need to be careful how we slice/dice the info. For example, satisfaction around fare costs would be different between regular riders and non-riders. Greg said that was Ed right on the cost of fares, adding that we should continue to pursue a low-income pass program and we need to be sophisticated in how we approach the numbers. Mike also noted, regarding fares, that 30-40% of riders have a pass program and don't pay themselves (which would affect their answer around fares).

Andrew Zarrow asked how communities can move the needle on increased frequency. Greg said that talking about these results and improving service will build a foundation to make requests for funding. **Jeff Levine** asked about a breakout of data for occasional riders. **Ed** asked if other agencies have passenger surveys. Hope said more surveys would provide more info to ask the state and municipalities for funding.

Mike presented the non-rider survey, which was mailed and also conducted online -- 97% responses said that METRO service was valuable to the community. Some of the takeaways on why people don't take transit: they prefer to drive, the bus takes too long, and it doesn't go where they want to go. The survey shows that people ride transit if it works better for them. Mike said if we don't see movement on the fare deal, it wouldn't be unexpected because the general feeling is that fare free is great but most would trade for better frequency.

6. Transit Together Implementation and Public Outreach Plan

Mike provided information on the status of the Transit Together project, including the current recommendations from Nelson\Nygaard and next steps, in the context of ARPA funding that was unlocked late in 2022. He said that the goal is to implement these changes, as many as possible, effective August 27, 2023. Staff will present information and gather feedback from the public at the May meetings. Communications about public meetings will be pushed out on buses and through other networks. Hope asked the dates of meetings be sent to Board members. The launch date will also be dependent on operator availability.

He added that the RFP for microtransit will go out soon and Falmouth will not run without the loops until the microtransit is ready. Greg said we won't name a date for the microtransit launch until we have operators for the service. August service plans will be decided by the June board meeting, after public comments from meetings have been reviewed. Lacking a quorum, Mike asked for general consensus from the group. Ed supports the plan; but, given the previous concerns from the residents/riders from the West Ed asked that a meeting be held for them. Hopefully the changes will be positive for them. The committee present supported the plan to move forward for the public meetings.

7. Future Agenda Items

- Rock Row Transit Service Development
- Proposed UNE Medical Center
- Partnering with bicycling entities, including Portland's proposed bicycle sharing program (**Andrew** said an update on the bike program might be available through the City of Portland.)

8. Upcoming Meetings

- Board of Directors – April 27, 2023 – **Strategic Planning Workshop, please attend!**
- Finance Committee – May 3, 2023
- Executive Committee – April 12, 2023
- Ridership Committee – May 17, 2023

9. Adjournment – Workshop ended at 11:37 am