

Maine Department of Transportation
Biennial Operations Plan for Transit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FY 2007 AND FY 2008



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MaineDOT Biennial Operations Plan for Transit Executive Summary

Introduction

Every other year, the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), Office of Passenger Transportation, prepares a Biennial Operations Plan (BOP). The BOP is a document that describes and documents the transit services provided by each of the state's subsidized fixed route and demand response transit systems. It also describes future plans and changes to the systems, and provides opportunities for public comment on the distribution of funds and services provided. The 2007-08 BOP provides an accounting of how public funds were spent during FY 2004 through FY 2006, and how the agency intends to use public funds during FY 2007 and FY 2008. It also documents how the transit providers have met and will continue to meet various federal and state requirements for transit systems. Finally, as discussed in more detail on page 9, the BOP meets the new requirements under the Federal SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users) for the development of locally coordinated plans for transit services.

This report summarizes some of the information contained in the Biennial Operations Plans for each of the state's eight regions. Page eight contains a summary of funding support by provider for FY 2007. Pages 14-33 include a summary of providers receiving federal/state Department of Transportation funding support, as well as one non-subsidized provider, and pages 34-37 contain detailed statistics on each on these providers.

Public Transit in Maine

Public transit plays an important role in the daily lives of Maine citizens by connecting them to jobs, health care services, social services, schools and other destinations. Public transit systems in Maine have evolved over a period of years to serve local needs. In general, these systems are supported by well established partnerships between federal, state and local governments.

The mission of MaineDOT's Office of Passenger Transportation (OPT) is to be "responsible for the development of an efficient, environmentally sensitive, and cost-effective passenger transportation system which encourages the use of alternative modes of transportation to meet the present and future needs of our citizens, business development, and tourism." To fulfill this mission, OPT distributes to 21 rural and small urban transportation systems federal financial support from the Federal Transit Administration (currently about \$4.7 million in non-urbanized area funding and \$4.38 million in urban area funding) as well as state money (currently about \$528,000). Combined federal/state funds can be used to pay for 90% of capital costs (95% for clean-fuel vehicles if funding is available), 90% of administrative costs, and 60% of the operating deficit. MaineDOT's financial support is for the purpose of providing general public transportation and typically accounts for a small portion of each provider's overall budget.

In order to best coordinate services, MaineDOT's policy is to support a statewide system of demand response providers and to support fixed route systems that request support and meet

funding requirements. The 21 transit systems supported by OPT fall into one of three different categories:

Regional transportation systems. There are nine regional transit systems receiving MaineDOT funding support that serve rural areas of the state. Service frequency varies, but most communities are served at least once per week. In general, the systems serve low income, elderly, the disabled, and clientele of the Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies. However, since MaineDOT purchases most of the vehicles, these vehicles are open to the public on scheduled runs, for a fee, on a space-available basis. Demand response transportation is provided by agency vehicles, volunteers, friends and family, and sometimes private taxi services. Currently, the major source of operating funds is MaineCare (Maine’s Medicaid program), but MaineDOT and other agencies and units of government provide some additional funding.

Fixed route transit systems. There are 13 systems that generally operate on a fixed route according to a schedule and may include urban bus systems as well as inter-city services. These systems serve the general public and may be funded in part by fares and passes, local funds and MaineDOT financial support.

Transit systems supporting the tourist industry. Three of the providers receiving MaineDOT financial support also operate services on a seasonal basis.

Regional Transportation Systems

There are nine subsidized regional (rural) transportation providers in Maine and one non-subsidized provider that offer social service and general public, non-emergency transportation through- out a single county or several counties on a “demand response” (door to door) basis. Most of the systems require a one or two day advance reservation, and most offer service to virtually all municipalities in their service areas at least one day a week and sometimes up to five days per week. In general, service is provided between rural areas and service center destinations.



Maine’s system of regional transportation providers evolved as an efficient way for social service agencies to pool their transportation dollars rather than buying their own vehicles and hiring their own drivers. Examples of the types of services offered include transportation to:

- Employment sites - for persons with disabilities;
- Medical appointments - for MaineCare-eligible persons;
- Adult day care;

- Senior citizens' lunch programs;
- Jobs and schools;

as well as:

- Transportation for citizens in the protective custody of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services;
- Transportation for other social service agencies;
- Commuter services; and
- Transportation for the general public.

Regional Providers. Maine's regional transportation providers include:

Region 1: Aroostook Regional Transportation System, Inc. (ARTS) – serves Aroostook County, the Danforth area in Washington County and Patten in Penobscot County;

Region 2: Washington Hancock Community Agency – serves Hancock and Washington Counties;

Region 3: The Lynx (Penquis Community Action Program) – serves Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties;

Region 4: Kennebec Valley Community Action Program – serves Kennebec and Somerset Counties, as well as Burnham, Troy and Unity in Waldo County;

Region 5: Coastal Trans, Inc. – serves Knox, Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties, as well as Brunswick and Harpswell in Cumberland County, and Waldo Community Action Partners which serves Waldo County;

Region 6: Regional Transportation Program – serves Cumberland County;

Region 7: Western Maine Transportation Services – serves Oxford, Franklin and Androscoggin Counties (Community Concepts, Inc. serves the same area); and

Region 8: York County Community Action Program – serves York County as well as nine towns in southern Oxford County (Porter, Hiram, Brownfield, Denmark, Sweden, Fryeburg, Lovell, Stow and Stoneham).

Forms of Transit. Transportation is provided by a number of means including:

- **Buses and vans.** Agency buses and vans are accessible to those with disabilities. Vans and buses are generally used to transport large numbers of people, or when a wheelchair lift is needed;

- **Volunteer drivers.** Volunteers use their own vehicles on a cost reimbursement basis. Generally, volunteers are used whenever possible to reduce costs, particularly where an individual in a remote location needs to travel a great distance for medical treatment;
- **Friends and family.** Friends and family members can be reimbursed under the MaineCare program for transporting income eligible people to medical appointments. Most regional providers administer the reimbursement program for MaineCare;
- **Fixed route transit.** A number of providers issue tickets or passes to eligible clients who have access to a fixed route system; and
- **Taxicabs.** Taxis are infrequently used, but in an urban setting are sometimes a cheaper alternative than a van or bus.

Fixed Route Transit Systems

The Office of Passenger Transportation provides partial financial support to 13 transit systems that offer year-round fixed route transit service. These systems operate according to a fixed schedule and a fare system. There are several different types of fixed route systems:



- **Urban and rural systems** can serve an entire county, several municipalities or a single community. For example, Downeast Transportation, Inc., serves Hancock County. BAT Community Connector serves Bangor, Brewer, Old Town, Orono, Veazie, Hampen and the University of Maine. ShuttleBus serves Biddeford, Saco and Old Orchard Beach, and *citylink* serves Lewiston and Auburn. CityBus serves the City of Bath.
- **Intercity systems** operate between two communities and serve a number of communities along the way. Examples include the Cyr Bus route between Bangor and Limestone, West's Calais to Bangor route, and the ShuttleBus route between Biddeford and Portland.
- **A ferry system**, the Casco Bay Island Transit District, serves six islands in Casco Bay including four within the City of Portland (Peaks, Little Diamond, Great Diamond and Cliff) as well as the Town of Long Island and the Town of Chebeague Island.

Fixed Route Systems. Fixed route transit systems supported by MaineDOT include:

Region 2:

1. Downeast Transportation Inc. operates throughout Hancock County;
2. The Passamaquoddy Tribal Government at Pleasant Point operates an Eastport to Calais run;
3. The Passamaquoddy Tribal Government at Indian Township operates a run between Indian Township and Calais;
4. West's Transportation serves Washington County and operates an inter-city run between Calais and Bangor.

Region 3:

5. BAT Community Connector, owned by the City of Bangor serves Bangor, Brewer, Orono, Old Town, Veazie, Hampden and the University of Maine at Orono;
6. John T. Cyr & Sons Inc., operates an inter-city run between Bangor and Limestone.

Region 4:

7. KV Transit (Kennebec Valley Community Action Program) – serves Waterville and Fairfield (five days per week), as well as Augusta, Gardiner, Hallowell and Farmingdale (five days per week).

Region 5:

8. CityBus is owned by and serves the City of Bath.

Region 6:

9. The Greater Portland Transit District (METRO) is owned by the City of Portland and serves Portland, Westbrook, and the Maine Mall area of South Portland;
10. The South Portland Bus Service is owned by the City of South Portland and serves South Portland, Portland, and Scarborough;
11. The Casco Bay Island Transit District ferry service operates between Peaks, Little Diamond, Great Diamond and Cliff Islands, the Town of Long Island, the Town of Chebeague Island and the City of Portland.

Region 7:

12. *citylink* is owned by the Lewiston-Auburn Transit District and serves the cities of Lewiston and Auburn.

Region 8:

13. ShuttleBus is owned by the Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach Transit Committee and serves Biddeford, Saco and Old Orchard Beach. ShuttleBus also operates an intercity service between Biddeford and Portland, and a ZOOM Turnpike Express between Saco and Portland.

Other Systems. In addition, some regional transportation providers operate smaller, less frequent, or more specialized fixed route or semi-fixed route systems. Examples include:

- THE LYNX (Penquis Community Action Program) – shuttle services in Millinocket (three days/week), and Newport (two days/week);
- Coastal Trans, Inc. – BIW commuter shuttle between Gardiner and Bath (five days/week);
- Waldo Community Action Partners – Belfast Shopper (three days/week);
- Regional Transportation Program, Inc. – Senior Shopper’s Express for 26 senior citizen apartment complexes in the greater Portland area (weekly);
- Western Maine Transportation Services – Lisbon Connection commuter run between Lisbon and Lewiston (five days/week); and the Norway/Paris Shuttle (five days/week);
- York County Community Action Program – fixed route deviation service between Springvale and Sanford (five days/week);
- Ferry services – the Maine State Ferry Service and the Isle Au Haut Stonington Dock Co. and Ferry Service.

Transit Systems Supporting the Tourist Industry

Tourism is one of Maine’s emerging markets. MaineDOT partially funds several transit systems that support the tourist industry. The first is the Island Explorer, a fixed route, seven day per week seasonal service on Mount Desert Island which is operated by Downeast Transportation, Inc. The second is the Mountain Explorer, a fixed route, seasonal run between Bethel and Newry/Sunday River Ski Resort which is operated seven days per week by Western Maine Transportation between Thanksgiving and Easter. The third service is the Shoreline Explorer – a bus and trolley public/private partnership network serving six towns with seasonal and year-round service operated by the York County Community Action Corporation.

Federal Transit Programs

The Federal Transit Administration provides partial funding to support transit through several programs administered by the Office of Passenger Transportation. These include:

- **FTA Section 5307 Program** – provides funding for public transit systems that operate in small urban areas (50,000-200,000 population). The Section 5307 program provides federal and state financial assistance for operating and capital expenses.
- **FTA Section 5309 Program** – provides federal and state matching capital assistance for public transit systems. This program helps fund larger capital projects such as vehicle purchases.
- **FTA Section 5310 Program** – provides federal capital assistance to private, non-profit organizations that provide specialized transportation for elderly and disabled persons.
- **FTA Section 5311 Program** – provides funding for rural public transit systems that operate in areas with populations of less than 50,000. This program provides federal and state financial assistance for operating, capital and administrative expenses associated with public transit services.
 - The FTA 5311 (f) Program provides funding for intercity bus service within rural and small urban service areas. This program provides federal operating and capital assistance to public transit operators.
 - The FTA 5311 (b) Rural Transportation Program provides federal funds to non-urbanized and small urban area transit providers for training and technical assistance.
- **FTA Section 5316 Program (Job Access and Reverse Commute)** – provides funding for local programs that offer job access and reverse commute services to low income individuals who may live in the city core and work in suburban locations.
- **FTA Section 5317 Program (New Freedom Program)** – provides funding to address the transportation needs of persons with disabilities that go beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Transit Investments

The following page contains a summary of Federal and State transit investments. In any one year, capital assistance is provided to some, but not all of the providers, because not all providers spend money for capital purchases.

The figures shown on page 8 may differ from the budget estimates prepared by each provider beginning on page 14. Funding under the 5316 and 5317 programs has not yet been awarded and is therefore not reflected in the table.

STATE/FEDERAL 2007 TRANSIT INVESTMENTS

Region/Provider	FY 2007 Budget	FY 2007 Federal/State Operating Assistance						Capital Assistance Section 5310
		Rural 5311	Urban 5307	Intercity	State	Total	% of Budget	
1. ARTS	\$2,172,591	\$283,820	0	0	\$31,965	\$315,794	15%	\$68,743
2. WHCA	\$2,407,232	\$82,493	0	0	\$9,908	\$92,401	4%	\$64,323
2. DTI	\$1,649,820	\$283,170	0	0	\$15,482	\$298,652	18%	0
2. West's	\$369,521	\$37,177	0	\$39,000	\$5,574	\$81,751	22%	0
3. Penquis CAP	\$4,434,273	\$235,870	0	0	\$35,361	\$271,231	6%	\$87,546
3. BAT (Bangor)	\$1,663,790	0	\$613,623	0	\$37,020	\$650,643	39%	0
3. Cyr Bus	\$317,000	0	0	\$30,000	0	\$30,000	9%	0
4. KVCAP	\$4,757,393	\$325,981	0	0	\$41,075	\$367,056	8%	\$82,268
5. Coastal Trans	\$1,545,221	\$164,653	0	0	\$15,285	\$179,938	12%	\$41,206
5. WCAP	\$1,431,215	\$107,932	0	0	\$14,218	\$122,150	9%	\$27,471
5. Bath	\$90,892	\$40,307	0	0	\$6,043	\$46,350	51%	0
6. RTP	\$4,404,922	\$141,908	\$196,851	0	\$32,943	\$229,794	5%	\$73,477
6. Metro (Portland)	\$5,326,800	0	\$1,569,719	0	\$60,586	\$1,630,305	31%	0
6. South Portland	\$1,060,533	0	\$187,477	0	\$9,127	\$196,604	19%	0
6. CBITD	\$4,713,600	\$180,250	\$464,408	0	\$53,594	\$698,255	15%	0
7. WMTS	\$3,195,867	\$462,850	0	0	\$39,758	\$502,608	16%	\$94,077
7. LATC	\$910,918	0	\$522,428*	0	\$55,847	\$578,275	63%	0*
8. YCCAC	\$5,268,041	\$823,929	\$81,419	0	\$33,355	\$938,703	18%	\$70,657
8. ShuttleBus	\$1,112,805	\$141,750	\$178,371	\$59,800	\$19,868	\$399,789	36%	0
TOTAL	\$46,832,434	\$3,312,090	\$3,814,296	\$128,800	\$517,009	\$7,630,299		\$609,768

* LATC is receiving \$340,114 in capital assistance under the 5307 program.

Development of the Locally Coordinated Plan

Solicitation of Input/Formation of Regional Plan Advisory Committees. The Biennial Operations Plan meets the new requirements under the Federal SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users) for the development of Locally Coordinated Plans for transit services. The locally coordinated plan must be one that:

- Identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes;
- Provides strategies for meeting those local needs; and
- Prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation.

MaineDOT and the Designated Coordinated Regional Provider (Regional Provider) in each of the State's eight regions went to great lengths to solicit widespread input in the development of this locally coordinated plan. The response from social service agencies, providers of various services and the general public was excellent.

MaineDOT and the Regional Provider in each region developed an extensive mailing list of social service agencies, providers of services and the general public. MaineDOT then sent a letter on behalf of MaineDOT and the Regional Provider to everyone on the list, inviting them to participate in a series of discussions about transit services, needs, resources and opportunities. The letter stated that the discussion groups would be called the Regional Plan Advisory Committee (RPAC).

The letter explained that the purpose of the RPAC would be to:

- Gather meaningful public input into the planning process for transit in Maine;
- Identify opportunities to share transit services;
- List suggested improvements to the transit system;
- Present information to enhance access to the transit system in the State; and
- Gather public feedback on the MaineDOT Biennial Operations Plan.

In order to ensure maximum participation, the invitation stressed that the first forum would be primarily for receiving public input. Moreover, the Regional Provider would provide a ride to the forums free of charge to anyone needing one.

Invitations, with background materials enclosed, were sent to one or more representatives of health and medical centers, public and private agencies dealing with one or more segments of the disabled population, Native American populations, state agencies, hospitals, nursing home and home health care agencies, planning agencies and interested citizens.

First RPAC Meeting. The first RPAC meeting in each region was held during the fall of 2006. The meeting included:

- Welcome and introduction
- A review of federal and state initiatives including:
 - The Olmstead decision
 - Maine's Olmstead Response Plan on Transportation
 - United We Ride Initiatives including the Framework for Action

- The Governor's Executive Order
- Maine's Coordinating Council and Action Plan
- Maine' Regional Transportation System
- A Summary of services of the various providers, including existing coordination efforts
- An around-the-table summary of issues, concerns and opportunities. This was the major focus of the meeting; MaineDOT staff and consultants used flip charts to record all comments
- A review of next steps in the coordination process

Second RPAC Meeting. MaineDOT sent a second invitation letter to everyone on the initial mailing list, as well as anyone who attended the first RPAC meeting but was not on the initial mailing list. The letter explained that the purpose of the meeting would be to review the summary of comments from the first meeting, to formulate responses to the issues/problems using a matrix of suggested actions, and to rate the importance of the issues/problems. Again, in order to assure maximum attendance, the invitation stated that the Regional Provider would provide a ride to the forum free of charge to anyone needing one.

The second RPAC meeting in each region was held during the early part of 2007. The meeting included:

- A review of the comments document;
- A review of, and changes to, the action matrix; and
- A rating by the RPAC of the importance of each of the issues/problems identified at the first RPAC forum.

The table that begins on the next page provides a summary of the top transit issues identified in each of the State's eight regions.

Issue	R a n k i n g s					Ranking of Major Issues by Region (1 is most important; 2 is second-most important, etc.)
	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	
Enhanced accessibility for visually impaired			3			
Emergency evacuation plans			4			
Public Information	4	1	1		2	
Community Education						
Regional provider staff education	6		6			
More training for substitute drivers						
Provider Education						

Issue	Ranking					Ranking of Major Issues by Region (1 is most important; 2 is second-most important, etc.)
	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	
Get the public excited about transit					10	
Information about riding the buses						
Information about senior services						
Schedule changes						
Addition al Services for:						
Coordinated system						
Dialysis coordination						
Dialysis patients						

Issue	Ranking					Ranking of Major Issues by Region (1 is most important; 2 is second-most important, etc.)
	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	
Near-poor		3		3		
More than one day/week service						
More service and connections					2	
More fixed routes						
Fixed income population					5	
Extended hours of operation						9
Evenings						
Employment transportation						7
Education/Skills classes	8					

Issue	Ranking					Ranking of Major Issues by Region (1 is most important; 2 is second-most important, etc.)
	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	
Visually impaired						
Those who can pay	6					
Those who are temporarily incapacitated		8				
The disabled		11				
Special needs (the disabled, youth, seniors)				1		
Rides for more than medical and shopping					4	
Out-of-region medical specialist	7					
Non-MaineCare dialysis patients		10		7		
Nights and weekends						3

Issue	Ranking of Major Issues by Region (1 is most important; 2 is second-most important, etc.)	R a n k i n g				
		R e g i	R e g i	R e g i	R e g i	R
Weekends					8	
Service Improvements						
Appearance of buses						
Assistance getting on and off the bus						
Better communication about rides						
Better communication – dispatchers/drivers						
Better, more affordable volunteer services						
Elimination of stranded rider issue						

Issue	Ranking					Ranking of Major Issues by Region (1 is most important; 2 is second-most important, etc.)
	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	
Coordination between providers		7				
Coordination with medical community	1					
Coordination and Planning						
Timeline – more on-time service						
Services for children					5	
Resolve liability issue for volunteers						
Inefficient routes				10		
Emergency planning						

Issue	Ranking					Ranking of Major Issues by Region (1 is most important; 2 is second-most important, etc.)
	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	
Greater flexibility	9					6
Consistency			10			
Advance scheduling		5				
Provider Policy Barriers						
Study the market		9				
Road infrastructure planning			8			
Increase coordinated coordination			9			
Emergency planning					8	

