

Regional Transportation Program

Contact Information

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Service Summary

Service area: Cumberland County
Type of service: Flex route, demand response, contract service

RTP Transportation Services

General public transportation. RTP provides general public transportation to residents of Cumberland County on a space-available basis. Transportation is available for shopping, hospital visits, the library, or any other purpose as long as the trip takes place in Cumberland County. Rides are arranged by calling RTP at least two days in advance.

Lakes Region Explorer. The Lakes Region Explorer provides service along Route 302 between Bridgton and Portland, 5 days a week. Service begins at 6:00 a.m. in Bridgton and ends at 10:15 pm in Bridgton and includes four round-trips daily Monday through Friday. The Lakes Region Explorer serves Bridgton, Naples, Casco, Raymond, Windham, Westbrook and Portland. The Lake Region Explorer provides free transfer tickets for use on the Metro and South Portland bus systems.

ADA Paratransit. RTP operates the ADA complementary paratransit system parallel with two fixed route services – Greater Portland Transit District (Metro) in Portland, South Portland, Falmouth and Westbrook, and the South Portland Bus Service.

MaineCare. RTP provides transportation for MaineCare covered reimbursement when such rides are arranged through the broker

DHHS sponsored services. RTP provides a number of transportation services for the Maine Department of Health and Human Services including child protective visits upon referral by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and the DHHS low income program.

Child Development Services. RTP provides transportation for children referred through CDS. Transportation is for children, ages 3 – 5 who need early intervention services.

Summary of Service Changes

1. **Lakes Region Explorer.** This is the 5th year that this service has been in operation. There are four rounds trips daily between Bridgton and Portland. Ridership has continued to grow. There were

10,220 boardings in 2018, an increase of 6% over 2017. There are two to three stops in each community, plus flag stops. The early morning run is important for commuters. The bus also serves children going to schools and summer camps, as well as people visiting family and friends.

RTP eliminated Saturday service because ridership levels were too low to justify continued service, but will restart Saturday service in the summer of 2020. RTP is advertising the service in the Bridgton News and the Lakes Region weekly newspaper and, in FY 2018, sent out 10,000 mailings to a large population in the Lakes Region Area. RTP also promotes the service on its web site.

2. **Working relationship with broker.** RTP reports that it has a good working relationship with the MaineCare broker. RTP and Northeast Ambulance are the two biggest providers of MaineCare transportation in the greater Portland area.
3. **Changing nature of ridership.**
 - RTP's MaineCare ridership has been decreasing as more MaineCare clients are moved to Metro or South Portland Bus fixed route services. Resulting in an increase in the number of complimentary ADA riders transported by RTP.
 - Child protection ridership has surged as more referrals are coming from the state. RTP provides approximately CDS trips per weekday
 - In order to provide this CDS service, drivers have to meet a number of criteria, including fingerprinting and not having more than two moving traffic violations or at-fault accidents in the last three years.

Accomplishments

1. **Ridership growth.** Since implementation of the brokerage system, ridership has continued to increase. Over the past five years, there has been an increase in ADA trips for fixed route providers, child protective trips and child development transportation, as well as a steady growth in the Lakes Region Explorer ridership.
2. **Financial stability.** Last year, RTP experienced a small operating surplus and is currently experiencing an operating surplus in FY 2019.
3. **Onboard tablets.** RTP is now using tablets on its buses. They work well as long as they are in range of cell towers, which is about 99% of the time. Tablets can be used to send trips and cancellations to vehicles. The AVL feature documents where the buses traveled. Also, RTP's surveillance equipment provides video and audio documentation of trips which can be used to analyze consumer complaints. A computer chip records two weeks of trip data, and can be removed as needed. RTP's new vehicles will each have four on-board cameras.
4. **ADA contract, lease negotiation.** RTP has completed negotiations with Metro for a three-year ADA contract and five-year lease of building space.

Future Priorities

1. **Identify a property with a building that RTP can use or on which RTP can build its own facility.** Metro is expanding and needs some of the space occupied by RTP. As a result, RTP leases land across the street which accommodates parking for nine vehicles. RTP is looking at Westbrook for a new location, to include covered parking, a maintenance facility, employee and visitor parking and office space.
2. **Drivers.** Increase the number of paid drivers and volunteers.
3. **Legislation.** Monitor legislation that could impact transit.
4. **Funding sources.** Continue to monitor and take advantage of funding resources that would benefit ridership.
5. **Rural service.** Provide more transportation in rural areas.
6. **Health insurance.** Explore strategies for dealing with the mandate to provide health insurance when employment reaches over 49 employees. Currently, RTP's employment level is 46, but RTP cannot afford to provide health insurance for all of its part-time employees.
7. **Vehicles.** Apply for 5310 funds to replace vehicles past their useful life and expand services.

Plans and Studies

RTP has undertaken rider surveys for the Lakes Region bus service as well as DHHS services. RTP also has been involved in an intensive study for a new facility in conjunction with the Board of Directors which has met with an architect and is pursuing construction funding from the USDA and a commercial bank.

Ridership

RTP's ridership figures for the period FY 2014 through FY 2018 are shown in the table below.

| RTP | | | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Flex Route and Demand Response Trips | | | | | |
| | FY 2014 | FY 2015 | FY 2016 | FY 2017 | FY 2018 |
| General Public | 3,481 | 3,852 | 3,316 | 3,621 | 3,754 |
| Broker (MaineCare) | 103,471 | 73,259 | 66,248 | 56,943 | 46,927 |
| DHHS Child Welfare | 3,250 | 3,607 | 3,966 | 7,321 | 7,848 |
| DHHS Low Income | 13,693 | 16,689 | 23,826 | 21,445 | 25,029 |
| ADA | 7,425 | 5,673 | 11,337 | 22,817 | 23,704 |
| Child Development | 4,688 | 3,835 | 1,807 | 6,032 | 15,614 |
| Lakes Region Explorer | 4,238 | 5,966 | 8,693 | 9,597 | 10,220 |
| Other | 93 | 42 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 140,339 | 112,923 | 119,197 | 127,776 | 133,096 |

Fares

| | |
|---|--|
| Fare | General public transportation \$2.50 each way for trips in same town or neighboring town; \$5.00 each way for trips between non-adjointing towns ADA \$2.50 per one-way trip Lakes Region one-way \$3; seniors, disabled, students \$2 MaineCare, DHHS riders no fare |
| Exact Fare Required? | Lakes Region Explorer, general public Yes |
| Electronic Fare? | No |
| Senior/disabled Half fare available? | n/a (see fare above) |
| Senior/disabled half fare pass required? | n/a |
| Other discounts? | Lakes Region Explorer discounted fare with transfer from Metro or South Portland \$1.50; children 5 and under free with paying adult |
| Multi-ride prepayment? | Lakes Region Explorer 10 ride pass \$25 |
| Monthly pass prepayment? | Lakes Region Explorer \$50 |
| Passes available from: | Lakes Region Explorer - on the bus, or at RTP office |

Buses/Facilities

RTP is in need of a new facility, in large part because Metro is growing and will need more of the employee parking, garage and office space that it now leases to RTP. RTP is currently planning for a new facility and is in the process of securing funding from the USDA. RTP expects that a site for the new facility may be located in Westbrook.

RTP is also in need of new buses. Many of RTP's 28 buses are past their useful life, but are safe. Two mechanics perform about 95% of the preventive maintenance on RTP's buses. RTP has a wash bay for cleaning buses. Approximately half the fleet is stored indoors. RTP has also leased a nearby plot of land on which to store buses. RTP now has 28 buses but needs to increase the fleet to 32 or 33 buses to meet service demands.

At 9/30/2018, the agency has a capital reserve of \$419,498 which is sufficient to purchase nine small (8 & 2) vehicles, five 12+2 vans and one 24+2 bus to replace the existing Lakes Region Explorer Bus. The long-term goal is to have a balanced fleet, half of which would consist of larger (12 & 2) vehicles, and half of which would consist of smaller vehicles. The smaller vehicles maneuver better in the cities, especially in winter, and are more economical to operate.

Agency Volunteers

RTP has 18 volunteer drivers. Recruiting new drivers is challenging because other agencies including Community Concepts, Inc., and Logisticare are also recruiting volunteers. RTP uses volunteers to provide some trips. RTP works to transport more than one client per vehicle whenever possible.

Volunteer-Based Transportation Groups

RTP does not have any contact with outside, volunteer-based transportation groups. However, RTP provides some veterans transportation, as well as rides for the Maine Cancer Foundation.

Coordination/Outreach/Partnerships/Unmet Needs

RTP works collaboratively with a number of groups and municipalities in the delivery of transportation services. For example:

- RTP transports people to the Morrison Center in Scarborough, an agency that provides a wide array of services for people with disabilities and serious diseases.
- RTP works with the Westbrook Fire Department on first aid and CPR training for agency staff.
- RTP has developed a number of partnerships in the Lakes Region to provide free advertising, and free transportation to the Blues Festival in Naples.
- RTP works with all of the communities receiving services from the Lakes Region Explorer including Bridgton, Naples, Casco, Raymond, Windham, Westbrook and Portland.

Innovations/Creative Approaches

RTP has installed tablets on its Lakes Region buses. The tablets are used so that RTP's dispatch team can see where the bus is during its route. RTP also subscribes to a texting service which allows the driver and RTP management to send out texts (to people who have signed up to receive texts) when the bus is going to be late due to traffic, road conditions, etc. It also allows RTP to communicate when the bus service has been cancelled due to severe weather.

Major Challenges

1. **Signatures.** Getting health provider and rider signatures for Logisticare.
2. **New building.** New space for an office, vehicle maintenance and vehicle storage.
3. **Driver recruitment.** Recruiting paid and volunteer drivers is an ongoing challenge, in part because of the low unemployment rate in the Greater Portland area, and the fact that other agencies are also recruiting paid agency drivers and volunteers. It costs about \$600 to train an agency driver and \$300 to train a volunteer, including complete background checks. Agency drivers are required to also pass physicals, and drug testing. It is not uncommon for a new volunteer to stop volunteering after working for several weeks.

Public Participation Summary

1. **General public outreach.** Since FY 2012, RTP has endeavored to keep the general public aware of its services through its website, facebook, printed schedules and informational pieces. RTP participated in MaineDOT sponsored public forums for Cumberland County to provide a first-hand presentation of its para transit and public transit services.
2. **Lakes Region service outreach.** Since 2013, RTP has been operating a flex-route public service between Bridgton and Portland. Throughout this period, RTP staff, consultants and volunteers with Opportunity Alliance, MaineDOT, GPCOG, Bridgton Transit Association, Community Transportation Association of America and other entities and individuals have made public presentations to several town councils and public meetings to inform the public about the Explorer and to gain helpful feedback. The Explorer has appeared in numerous local newspaper articles and ads since its inception. RTP has further increased public awareness to the rural communities of the region by providing free transportation for the annual Blues Festival in Naples and appearing in holiday parades with the Explorer.
3. **Surveys.** At least once per year, consultants with GPCOG send out a detailed survey to obtain feedback from the riders regarding the quality of our service, current and future schedules and other issues of concern.
4. **Transit workshop.** RTP attended and participated in the Region 6 Transit Workshop on October 27, 2016, at the City of Portland Library.
5. **RTP agency outreach.** RTP's Transportation Supervisor and/or Lead Operations Associate go to informational fairs, elderly & disabled complexes or other locations as requested to explain RTP's services and help people understand how to qualify for services. In 2017/2018, some of the places that RTP went to assist with public outreach include:
 - 75 State Street, Portland (elderly housing development)
 - 66 State Street, Portland (Catholic Charities)
 - 28 Foden Road, South Portland (Strive)
 - 1145 Brighton Ave, Portland (elderly & disabled housing complex)
 - Sagamore Village (Portland Housing) – This was a community services fair with providers other than just transportation present.