

**Meeting of the Ridership Committee – via Zoom
Draft Minutes of the GP Metro Ridership Committee meeting of
Thursday, March 17, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83957849696?pwd=QnBKcmRZQTM4Q205dCswcmE5cEo0Zz09>

Passcode: 460291 | Webinar ID: 839 5784 9696

Phone: (312) 626-6799 | Telephone participants: *9 to raise hand, *6 to unmute

<p>Committee Members Present: Hope Cahan, Board President - Acting Chair John Thompson Jeff Levine Merrill Barter Andrew Zarro</p> <p>Committee Members Absent: Ed Suslovic, Chair Pious Ali, Vice Chair</p> <p>Non-Committee Board Members present: Bill Rixon</p> <p>Public: Olive Prusakowski</p>	<p>Staff and Others Present: Greg Jordan, Executive Director Glenn Fenton, Chief Transportation Officer Mike Tremblay, Transit Development Director Lauren Shaw, Executive Assistant</p> <p>Community Transportation Leaders Program Kat Violette, GPCOG, CTL Program Project Mgr. Carol Ann Kilroy Rosaline Yvonne Elinga Zemfira aHmadova Sandi Shubert Rustam Ahmadov Bill Higgins Cecile Bitondo Marcel Ntagora Emily</p>
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An attendance role call was taken by Lauren Shaw, Executive Assistant

1. **With a quorum in place, the meeting was called to order at 4:02 p.m. by Hope Cahan, Board President and Acting Chair.**
2. **Public Comment:**
No members of the public were present at this time.
3. **Approval of February 17, 2022 Ridership Committee Meeting Minutes.**
Motion made by John Thompson, seconded by Jeff Levine, to approve the minutes from the February, 2022 Ridership Committee meeting as written. A roll call vote was taken by Lauren Shaw, Executive Assistant. With approval by Andrew Zarro, Bill Rixon, Merrill Barter, Jeff Levine, John Thompson, and Hope Cahan, **the motion passed unanimously by all those present.**
4. **Ridership, Fare Revenue, and Service Update**
February was a very strong month, even though it was a day shorter than January. There was a lull this time last year, with improvement in the summer. Hope to be at 60% of 2019 ridership numbers in March-April. Higher fuel prices may be a driving factor and USM being back in session helped the Husky Line numbers. Ridership on most routes maintained or improved in February.

Fare revenue: The average fare is hovering around \$1.35, with the cash fare being \$1.75. The average fares for TouchPass/UMO and institutions remained the same. As shown on the “Ridership by Fare Program/Type” slide, stored value app/pass rides are the highest, with cash being next. Hope to see more divergence between UMO and cash going forward.

5. Update on Refugee and Low-Income Fare Programs

Metro is working with General Assistance (GA) for those in the refugee program. This will be a pilot program through a one-year FEMA grant for unlimited riding. It would be limited to how it can be used and only available after all other resources are exhausted. It is not available to all GA clients at this time, though discussions are ongoing with GA for a Reduced Fare class for low-income riders. Currently, GA buys the single ride passes at full price and distributes them as needed. An unlimited ride pass would be at a lesser charge. Work is ongoing with regional partners for the refugee pass program, and when all are in agreement, a contract can be created and, hopefully, in place by April 1, 2022.

6. Community Transportation Leaders (CTL)

In 2019, GPCOG staff partnered with [Mobility Liaisons](#) to develop and pilot the Community Transportation Leaders Program (CTL). The training and resulting peer-to-peer community is part of a larger effort by GPCOG and PACTS to advance the inclusion of underrepresented communities – including older adults, people with disabilities, and people of color. The program, which graduated 23 members last year and is on-boarding 12 new members this year, is focused on:

- Supporting community members to gain the knowledge and tools needed for meaningful participation in transportation planning and decision-making.
- Providing a peer-to-peer network to assist participants in acting on the goals they set.
- Enabling decision-makers to hear directly from participants about the transportation needs and experiences of underrepresented communities.
- Acting as a gateway for participation in transportation decision-making

Participants in this program were in attendance at this Ridership Committee meeting to present on the challenges they face using the existing public transportation network in the region. This presentation will be followed by a presentation to PACTS.

Group #1: General Safety of Bus Riders - location of bus stops and limited service in their area is a risk

Carol Ann: The elderly, people with strollers, disabilities, and those with language barriers are at risk. Drivers often don't wait until scheduled departure time to leave. Also, if someone is not in exactly the right spot, the bus often doesn't stop. She lives on the West End. Her doctor's office is not served by the 24A, so she has to take the 24A out to the mall, and then get on the 24B to get to the doctor. The bus only goes by every two hours, which affects her ability to go to church. She also takes 9A/9B to visit her daughter and often gets off the South Portland bus only to see a 9A/9B go sailing by. A year later she could take the 9A to get to work, but the first bus wasn't until 9:00, or she could take an Uber.

Yvonne: Stops often aren't cleared of snow and riders have to climb over snow banks to board. Also, limited service hours, late at night and early in the morning, affects the safety of riders.

Rosaline: One time she took a bus to the mall and then to Walmart, without the knowledge that no other bus was scheduled to pick up at Walmart until the next day. She knew no one in area and her phone was out of minutes.

Group #2: Transportation Barriers for

Sandi Shubert: spoke about not being informed of a route change.

Rustam Ahmadov: Barriers – how far have to walk to bus stop..... : Inconsistent stopping at the West Falmouth Hannaford. Long walk to get to another stop. Add additional routes to Cape Elizabeth and Gray, more real-time information.

Bill Higgins: There was more access in the past connecting outlying areas to in-town Portland.

Zemfira Ahmadova: Thank you. Hope Metro can help with.

Group #3: Language Barrier

Cecile Bitondo and Emily spoke together (translated by Marcel Ntagora): When we arrived in Maine our major transportation mode is public transportation. With the language barrier, it is hard for us to understand and navigate the transportation system. Lack of access to transportation information is one of the major barriers that prevent this group from moving around in the Greater Portland area. Not because public transportation is new to us, but because we don't have enough information about how this system works. Lack of accessibility to transportation information – sometimes not available at all and other times it is only in English. When newcomers catch buses, not having enough information or signs to know where the next stop is, makes it hard to navigate the system. This is important to us because it impacts us very negatively; we have no other transportation; we don't own vehicles. As Maine residents, we would like to get around, and it is more affordable. Language is the biggest barrier. We cannot ignore the many efforts you have deployed to make sure the transportation system works for everyone. Thank you for those efforts, but we are here to represent many other immigrants to talk about those challenges.

Suggested solutions: create signals on the buses that tell riders the bus is going to take off or stop; increase information on buses to tell people that seats are reserved for handicapped persons; if possible, train bus operators how to work with people from different backgrounds and how to pay more attention to passengers.

Kat Violette said the presentation materials are being worked on and will be shared with all organizations that CTL has presented to. The Committee thanked all CTL members for their time and first-hand insight, which gave good information about areas that need attention and changes needed going forward.

7. Title VI Program - 2022 Update

Many of the items discussed in Item 6 are part of Metro's Title VI program. The version in the meeting packet is 95% complete, pending any comments by the Committee. The Committee is asked to scroll through the document to see what has changed and determine what more they would like to see change. Wording in red are items that may change before the final document. Comments from this Committee are requested by Monday, March 21, so they can be included in next week's board packet.

A sparsely attended public meeting, via Zoom, was held March 8, 2022. Kat Violette was also present. The presentation and slides from that meeting are posted on Metro's website, www.gpmetro.org . Previous versions included the full list of languages spoken at Portland Public Schools; this version includes the top ten. The top five languages have at least 284 students who speak each, which affirms Metro is doing the right thing in translating items into those particular languages. Going forward, anytime there is more than a minor service change, we will reach out to CTL to disseminate that information.

Surveys are also going out to all staff to ask what they feel would be helpful to them, i.e., tools, to better serve our riders with a language barrier.

John Thompson moved, seconded by Jeff Levine, to recommend that this Title VI program, with possible revisions, be brought to the full Board for review and approval at its March 24, 2022 meeting. A roll call vote was taken by Lauren Shaw, Executive Assistant. With approval by Andrew Zarro, Bill Rixon, Merrill Barter, Jeff Levine, John Thompson, and Hope Cahan, **the motion passed unanimously by all those present.**

8. Future Agenda Items - add CTL presentation follow-up, Update on DARPA proposals(?) Defense Advance Research Projects Agency?

- PACTS Projects: Transit Tomorrow/Transit Together/Rapid Transit Study (Ongoing)
- Performance Metrics/Benchmarks (2022)
- Bus Stop Improvement Project (2022)
- Metro & Regional Transit Marketing (2022)
- Rock Row Transit Service Development (2022)
- Metro Strategic Plan (2022)
- Proposed UNE Medical Center (2022)
- Transit Ridership & Traffic Data (April, 2022)
- Partnering with bicycling entities, including Portland's proposed bicycle sharing program

9. Upcoming Meetings

- Board of Directors – March 24, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.
- Finance Committee – April 6, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.
- Executive Committee – April 13, 2022 at 3:30 p.m.
- Ridership Committee – April 21, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. - scheduled - Pious Ali, Acting Chair

10. Adjournment

Merrill Barter moved, seconded by John Thompson, to adjourn. A roll call vote was taken by Lauren Shaw, Executive Assistant With approval by Andrew Zarro, Bill Rixon, Merrill Barter, Jeff Levine, John Thompson, and Hope Cahan, **the motion passed unanimously by all those present, and the meeting adjourned at 5:19 p.m.**