

**Board of Directors – Remote Meeting**

**Minutes of the Greater Portland Transit District’s Board of Directors Meeting on**

**March 24, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom**

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84293032580?pwd=YUc3S2pjRXlvU3VEbnZlWVJjaFFkQT09>

Passcode: 643498 | Webinar ID: 842 9303 2580

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

<p><b>Board Members Present:</b>                  Hope Cahan, Board President                  Mike Foley, Vice President                  Paul Bradbury                  Pious Ali                  John Thompson                  Merrill Barter                  Nat Tupper- Secretary                  Jeff Levine                  Ryan Leighton                  Ashley Rand                  Bill Rixon                  Paul Bradbury</p> <p><b>Board Members Absent:</b>                  Andrew Zarro                  Ed Suslovic</p>	<p><b>Staff and Others Present:</b>                  Greg Jordan, Executive Director                  Glenn Fenton, Chief Transportation Officer                  Shelly Brooks, Finance Director                  Danielle Nemeth, Human Resources Director                  Mike Tremblay, Transit Development Director                  Lauren Shaw, Executive Assistant                  Chris Chop, GPCOG                  Ericka Amador, GPCOG                  Erin Courtney, MTA, Public Outreach &amp; Legislative Liaison                  Peter Mills, Executive Director, MTA                  Paul Godfrey, HNTB</p> <p><b>Public:</b>                  Barry Salter                  Catherine Culley                  John Clark                  Paul Godfrey                  Craig Bramley                  Winston Lumpkins, IV                  Cashel Stewart                  Eamonn Dundon                  Lucas Bloom                  Angela King                  Derek Pelletier, Portland</p>
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**Attendance roll call was taken by Lauren Shaw, Executive Assistant.**

- 1. With a quorum in place, the meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m. by Hope Cahan, Board President.**
- 2. Public Comment**  
 No members of the public chose to speak at this time.
- 3. Meeting Minutes from February 24, 2022**  
 John Thompson moved, seconded by Pious Ali, to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2022 Board of Directors meeting as presented. A roll call vote was taken by Lauren Shaw, Executive Assistant. With approval by Mike Foley, Paul Bradbury, Nat Tupper, Ryan Leighton, Ashley Rand, Bill Rixon, Pious Ali, Jeff Levine, John Thompson, Merrill Barter, and Hope Cahan, **the motion passed unanimously by all those present.**

#### 4. **Executive Director's Report**

- Will be temporarily reducing service on the Breez and Route 1 due to staffing shortages (a large number of Bus Operators out on leave). During this time, the fare on the Breez will be reduced to \$2 regular fare/\$1 reduced fare to increase ridership while reductions are in effect.
- Electric Buses – Still expect delivery by April and will announce a launch event soon thereafter.
- Received \$1.9 m in grant funding to purchase eleven 35' diesel buses in the next year. Some will be used for the Breez route with Breez branding redesigned to match Metro's new look.
- PACTS - a balance of funding was agreed upon, including open funding for CBL and NNEPRA due to anticipated long-term fare revenue losses. In a close vote, all of Metro's projects were approved. Other transit agencies want to retain more funding for long-term needs.

#### 5. **Title VI Program Updated 2022**

Mike Tremblay reviewed the background of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and summarized the 2022 Metro Title VI program updates (Item 5 – Attachment A), as required every three years by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). This update must be approved by the Board of Directors prior to the April 30, 2022 submission due date. The full requirements of this submission were discussed in Metro's January 2022 Ridership Committee meeting, a draft presented to the Ridership Committee in February 2022, and recommended for approval by the Ridership Committee on March 17, 2022. A public information meeting was held on March 8, 2022, which was recorded and has been posted on Metro's website.

John Thompson moved, seconded by Jeff Levine, to approve Metro's proposed 2022 Title VI Program, as corrected to ensure all acronyms are clearly defined and the document is reviewed for typographical errors before submission. A roll call vote was taken by Lauren Shaw, Executive Assistant. With approval by Mike Foley, Paul Bradbury, Nat Tupper, Ryan Leighton, Ashley Rand, Bill Rixon, Pious Ali, Jeff Levine, John Thompson, Merrill Barter, and Hope Cahan, **the motion passed unanimously by all those present.**

#### 6. **GPCOG/PACTS Presentation on Current Transit Studies (slides in Board packet)**

GPCOG houses the Federally-designated Metropolitan Plan Organization (MPO), PACTS, that coordinates transportation planning and investment decisions with the state, municipalities, and public transportation partners. PACTS role in regional transit funding is to allocate funding, plan for the future, and implement plans.

Connect 2045, the federally-required Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) across the PACTS region, is updated every 4-5 years. The plan studies: where we are now; where are we going; and how do we get there. Information comes from public engagement, previous plans, state goals, and federal requirements. Timeline: launch (summer 2021), create vision (summer/fall 2021), identify strategies (winter/spring 2022), and plan adoption (summer/fall 2022). Transit Together is part of this plan, paid for with CARES Act funding, but it also aligns with the plan for Administrative Efficiencies and Regional Network Design, which looks at how we can come together and save money as a group (7 transit providers in our region), and how we can leverage federal funding. Visit [Transittogether.org](https://Transittogether.org). In preparation to study Rapid Transit, GPCOG has spoken to many transit agencies around the country to see what their journeys have been like.

**Public comment:** Lucas Bloom shared his appreciation for the presentation.

## 7. **Gorham Connector Project MTA (Maine Turnpike Authority) and MeDOT**

**Peter Mills, MTA** reviewed the background of the Gorham Connector (in packet), studies of which extend back to the 1980s. In 2008, these studies culminated in the construction of the Gorham bypass, connecting Route 25 west of Gorham to Route 114 south of Gorham. The purpose of the Gorham bypass was to improve east-west traffic congestion on Route 25 through Gorham Village and to reduce downtown through-traffic in Gorham Village. Although the bypass was successful in taking some of the east-west traffic out of downtown, the bypass did not reduce excessive commuter traffic on Routes 114 and 22 in South Gorham and North Scarborough.

The communities of Gorham, Scarborough, South Portland, and Westbrook signed a joint resolution in 2007 requesting that the MTA conduct a study to assess the feasibility of a new Turnpike connector that would link the Gorham Bypass with the Maine Turnpike. This resulted in a resolution by the 123rd Maine State Legislature in 2007 (LD 1720) directing the MTA and MeDOT to study highway connections between western Cumberland County and the Maine Turnpike, with a goal of decreasing congestion on area state and local roads. The [Gorham East-West Corridor Study](#), completed in 2012, complied with Maine's Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA) by requiring a full evaluation of all reasonable transportation alternatives and found three things were needed to maximize transportation efficiency in the region:

- a significant increase in transit ridership and bus routes
- a concerted effort by municipalities to create pockets of housing and commercial density that could cost-effectively use transit, and
- an increase in road capacity. Greater Portland's role as southern Maine's economic driver, as well as the area's proximity to Boston, indicated that the region would continue to experience strong growth in the future.

The Husky Line launched in 2018, just north of the study area, connecting the USM campuses and reaching out to the Hamlet. A bus route on County Road is not currently an option because of the extreme congestion during commuter hours. Also, larger, multi-unit developments are going up in the area, rather than single-family homes and the possible development of a 4-lane road (limited highway) from the west of Portland to Exit 45, to relieve the traffic on many routes and roads, is being studied, as well as transit options. There is pressure on housing to develop multi-family units and those utilizing this housing are very reliant on automobiles. The congestion problem needs to be addressed, or solved, first, and then transit planning can be brought in to mitigate this congestion. South Portland, Westbrook, Scarborough, and Gorham are party of this study.

The route being proposed would go through the old Gorham Country Club to the western edge of the Smiling Hill Farm property, and north of Running Hill Road (a highway would be more appropriate next to Eco Maine (landfill) than housing). MTA has spent \$140m re-doing Exit 45. Traffic should be on the interstate – not on smaller roads. They are working closely with the towns and Metro on this project. The highway is a device to be used to enable land-planning on a larger scale. Results of the traffic and revenue study determined that the Gorham Connector was financially feasible over a 30-year bond period. The project cost is approximately \$217 million with an initial toll rate of \$1.50.

**Paul Godfrey, HNTB** – These four towns and the legislature have taken the findings from the 2012 study and used them towards an Alternative Analysis, which identifies a new Gorham Connector as the preferred solution. The new connection will reduce vehicle emission, create synergy with transit, bicycle and pedestrian modes, and reduce peak hour traffic on roads not designed to handle it. The Public Engagement Process began in fall 2021. An Advisory Committee, Technical Working Groups, and public meetings will begin later in 2022. MTA and HNTB would like Metro to participate in the Advisory and Technical Working groups. Currently:

- USACE will determine if a new roadway can be permitted
- No final decisions have been made on the location of a new connector
- Communities, stakeholders, and the public will be engaged, as described above
- MTA has begun the process of identifying and purchasing property as is possible to preserve a corridor should a new Gorham connector move forward

**Public comment:**

**Derek Pelletier:** How does this prevent it from happening again in the future? Are there examples to show that this has solved problems in the long-term?

**Craig Bramley, Portland:** Metro is in an awkward position; whether the project goes forward is not up to Metro. This is a distraction from transit and what should be accomplished in the area. This has been discussed for 25 years. Building highways impacts our footprint – giving more vehicle easy access to Portland will affect Portland. He is an opponent of the project.

**Winston Lumpkins, Berlin, ME:** Urged the board not to support the Gorham Connector as it would only relieve traffic for a few years and will bring more traffic to Portland and Gorham. Traffic can only be reduced by people using transit rather than cars. If people can get somewhere faster by transit than by car, they will use it. Use available technology to make transit a faster option. MTA is not a viable, sustainable option.

**Angela King:** Agrees that Chris Chop’s presentation is the future. It is not just the cars, but the roads they drive on, that affects the environment. Focus on the future and climate, which is GPCOG’s rapid transit study.

**John Clark, Valley St., Portland:** Opposes the connector. Urges Metro not to support it. It is the opposite of GPCOG’s work. There is not ample consideration about the congestion it will create on the Portland end of the corridor. Demand will increase with a more useable route, affecting Portland’s bicycle and pedestrian population.

Consider the impact to Portland. Are there alternative modes that have been studied recently in that area?

- Alternative modes are being worked on and will be shared when complete.
- Maine has a sensible transportation policy act, put in place around the initial thoughts of the MTA widening. The 2012 study determined that no one thing will solve the problem and that is why all three options are being looked at.

How does the Gorham Connector project interrelate with the rapid transit study going forward?

- **Paul Godfrey:** The opportunity here is how these two projects can work together.
- Can the Gorham Connector be an option for the GPCOG study to improve transit to the area? **Chris Chop:** hopes that rapid transit would alleviate the need for a new connector road, but that won't be determined until the study is complete. When the 2012 MTA study was done, rapid transit was in its infancy. Reevaluate rapid transit in that area and determine whether it will be enough to alleviate the congestion. If the two projects don't work together, could it actually reduce transit ridership?

**Mike Foley:** Metro has no say in this project, but the projects need to work together. Westbrook is the most impacted community with traffic congestion and will significantly benefit if the connector is built, but is also a strong transit and rapid transit supporter.

**Paul Bradbury:** If this project moves forward, it increases the opportunity for more housing development.

With COVID, Maine has seen a population influx from states whose residents have higher purchasing power than Maine residents, driving up home/housing prices and forcing much of the population to look for housing west of Portland, where it has typically been cheaper to live.

**Peter Mills:** The connector is a 5.5 mile road from the rotary in Gorham to Exit 45. They are working with the Army Corps of Engineers on the Environmental Impact (EA) statement and open discussions are being held with many organizations. When MTA is satisfied with the alignment and layout of this proposal, it will be opened up to public engagement, which will run through the summer. There is still have a lot of work to do, but early outreach to organizations that may be involved or related to this project has been undertaken.

## 8. Future Agenda Items – None added at this time

- Comprehensive Review of Board Policies (2022)
- Cost-Revenue Allocation Policies-Procedures (2022)
- Metro Strategic Planning Effort (2022-2023)

## 9. Upcoming meetings

- Board of Directors – April 28, 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.

## 10. Adjournment

John Thompson moved, seconded by Jeff Levine, to adjourn. A roll call vote was taken by Lauren Shaw, Executive Assistant. With approval by Paul Bradbury, Ashley Rand, Pious Ali, Jeff Levine, John Thompson, Merrill Barter, and Hope Cahan, **the motion passed unanimously by all those present and the meeting adjourned at 6:48 p.m.**