



Greater Portland Council of Governments
Greater Portland METRO
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METRO pauses efforts to revamp bus routes on Portland peninsula

PORTLAND, ME, April 1, 2021 — Greater Portland METRO is pausing efforts to revamp bus service on the Portland peninsula so it can further study and integrate any changes into a region-wide bus system redesign effort that begins next month.

“Transit networks function best when they are planned and operated in a comprehensive and integrated manner,” said Greater Portland METRO Executive Director Greg Jordan. “We’ve heard many of our riders living on the peninsula tell us how important it is to maintain door-to-door services for people with mobility challenges. To best meet those needs and build a better overall transit system that attracts new riders, we know we’ll achieve better outcomes if we opt for a regional approach.”

Beginning in May, METRO will work with the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) and other transit agencies on a study that will include a region-wide network design to improve the rider experience and bolster the viability of transit as a transportation option.

The study, called *Transit Together*, will evaluate all the bus routes provided by METRO, South Portland Bus Service, Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach Transit, the Regional Transportation Program, and the York County Community Action Agency. The study seeks to recommend route changes that improve ridership, accessibility, equity and efficiency. It will also examine opportunities for increased efficiencies in the administrative and organizational functions of the region's transit agencies.

The study will also examine potential areas where bus agencies can effectively introduce new microtransit services, which provide on-demand mobility for riders in low-density or low-ridership areas and address the need for door-to-door service.

The study is an outcome of the recently adopted Transit Tomorrow plan, which offers a long-range vision for transit in the region.

Chris Chop, Transportation Director at GPCOG, applauded METRO’s decision to hold off on making route changes and allow the region-wide study to take a fresh look at how to improve public transit on the Portland peninsula in connection with evaluating the entire regional bus network. The study will have an inclusive public engagement process and build off outreach work previously done by Greater Portland METRO, Chop said.

“The study will allow for more analysis and more public input,” he said. “The end result will be better service for both current riders and new riders.”



In 2019, Greater Portland METRO began evaluating potential changes to bus routes on the peninsula, with the goal of creating a bi-directional circulator route that would meet the needs of current riders while adding other key destinations to attract new riders. METRO proposed adjusting several other METRO bus routes to improve service in growing areas of the peninsula.

METRO released its first set of route change proposals last December and received extensive feedback through numerous public and stakeholder meetings and a survey. Some current riders expressed concern that the proposed circulator route would affect older adults and people with disabilities by adding walking distance in several areas of the peninsula.

METRO is sensitive to these concerns and planned to make adjustments before finalizing the proposed routes this spring. Route changes would have gone into effect in late 2022. The bus agency will now incorporate those next steps into the *Transit Together* study, which is expected to be completed in late 2022.