



Marketing and Communications Committee

August 12, 2026 | 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Onsite:

Greater Portland Transit District
114 Valley Street, Conference Room A | Portland, ME 04102

Remote:

Please click the link below to join the webinar:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86595032479?pwd=osVQcjhTJlma7Y5dY1PiMWaalUv9fk.1>
Passcode: 414334 | Webinar ID: 865 9503 2479
Phone: (646) 931-3860 | Telephone participants: *9 to raise hand, *6 to unmute

MEETING AGENDA

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER	ACTION or INFORMATION
1. Call Meeting to Order (3:30)	Steven Riley, Committee Chair	N/A
2. Public Comment (3:30-3:35) The Marketing and Communications Committee welcomes public comment. For items NOT listed on this agenda, the chair will recognize speakers at this point on the agenda. For items on the agenda, the chair will recognize public comment following the staff presentation. There is a 3-minute time limit per speaker.	Steven Riley, Committee Chair	Information
3. May Meeting Minutes Approval (3:35-3:40) Review and approve minutes from the May 20, 2026 Marketing and Communications Committee meeting.	Steven Riley, Committee Chair	ACTION
4. Scarborough Service Update (3:40-3:50) Staff will provide information about Metro's new Scarborough transit service, including feedback from July's public meeting.	Mike Tremblay, Director of Transit Development	Information
5. Marketing Review and Highlights (4:10-4:20) Staff will provide marketing updates on the launch of Tap to Ride, Metro's fare increase, Westbrook High School partnership, and upcoming events.	Denise Beck Marketing Manager	Information

6. Future Agenda Items (4:20-4:25) Committee members may request future agenda items. • Marketing KPI's • Public image • Open Fare Payment marketing • Scarborough Service Launch marketing • Microtransit marketing • Map and Schedule Overhaul	Steven Riley, Committee Chair	Information
7. Upcoming Meetings (4:25) • Plan/Ops Committee – August 19, 2026 at 10:30 am • Advocacy Committee – Next meeting TBD • Executive Committee – August 26, 2026, at 3:30 pm • Finance Committee – Next meeting TBD • Facilities Committee – Sept. 1, 2026 at 4:00 pm • Market/Coms Committee – Sept. 9, 2026 at 3:30 pm • Board of Directors – October 22, 2026, at 4:00pm	Steven Riley, Committee Chair	Information
8. Adjournment (4:30)	Steven Riley, Committee Chair	ACTION

As of November 9, 2022 Greater Portland Metro is holding meetings of the Board of Directors (and its committees) in hybrid format, both in person at Metro's offices and via webinar. The remote portions of all meetings are conducted in accordance with the requirements of [METRO's Remote Participation Policy](#) (adopted August 25, 2022) as well as LD 1772, PL 2022 Ch. 666, and 1 MRSA Chapter 13, Subchapter 1.



Greater Portland Metro Marketing and Communications Committee

May 20, 2026

DRAFT - Meeting Minutes

Member:	Municipality:	Role:	Status:
Steven Riley	South Portland	Chair	Present
Bill Rixon	Freeport	Committee Member	Present
Ed Suslovic	Portland	Board President	Present
Hope Cahan	Falmouth	Board Member	Present

Staff Present	Identified Members of the Public
Glenn Fenton, Executive Director	
Mike Tremblay, Director of Transit Development	

I. The meeting was called to order by Steven Riley at 3:31 pm

II. Public Comment

No members of the public were present for this item.

III. January Meeting Minutes Approval

The meeting minutes from the January 14, 2026 meeting were moved for approval by Bill Rixon, seconded by Michael Shaughnessy, and approved unanimously.

IV. Staff Report

Mike Tremblay provided an overview of Metro ridership numbers through April 2026, along with an update on marketing and communications activities.

V. Fare Policy Review Update

The committee discussed how the proposed fare policy updates were determined, as well as public feedback received at three separate public meetings in April.

VI. Open Fare Payment Marketing

The committee discussed strategies for marketing Open Fare Payment (Tap to Ride). Steve suggests including “debit cards” in any discussion around eligible fare payment methods, as it may not be clear that debit cards are included.

Ed suggests using Metro’s own buses and shelters as a primary way of marketing Tap to Ride.

VII. Future Agenda Items

In addition to discussing ongoing marketing tasks, Ed suggests improving our understanding of marketing KPI's and reporting to this committee, including more marketing of our delivery on key projects, and the fact that Metro is on time, safe, convenient, and easy to pay.

Ed and Hope suggest a renewed focus on improving Metro's image to the general public, and notes that Metro's image is worsened by perceptions of antisocial behavior in Metro's shelters.

- Open Fare Payment marketing
- Scarborough Service Launch marketing
- Microtransit marketing
- Map and Schedule Overhaul

VIII. Upcoming Meetings

- Finance Committee – August 5, 2026 at 3:00 pm (canceled)
- Advocacy Committee – May 21, 2026 at 3:00 pm
- Board of Directors – June 25, 2026 at 4:00pm
- Market/Coms Committee – August 12, 2026 at 3:30 pm
- Executive Committee – May 27, 2026 at 3:30pm

IX. Adjournment:

Steve Riley motioned to adjourn, seconded by Hope Cahan.
The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 pm.



MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM 5

DATE

August 12, 2026

SUBJECT

Review of marketing efforts and results from recent Metro projects and Initiatives

PURPOSE

To provide the Committee examples of marketing and communication for recent Metro projects and initiatives: the launch of **Tap to Ride**, **Fare Policy** update, and **Partnership with Westbrook High School**.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Greater Portland Metro launched several new projects and initiatives over the last few months, including:

- **Tap to Ride**

Greater Portland Metro and Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit (BSOOB Transit) launched the new fare payment method, Tap-to-Ride, on **July 13, 2026**. Tap-to-Ride allows users to pay their fare by tapping a credit card, debit card, or wallet-enabled phone or watch. Tap to Ride is a great new option for visitors and families because it's easy to use and allows users to pay for multiple passengers with the same card.

Metro has engaged with a consultant, Blaze Partners out of Falmouth, to develop creative marketing materials and strategies for deployment of Tap to Ride. Materials include bus and shelter advertising; physical, permanent signage at bus stops; radio advertising, use of "influencers", and more. Some materials have been deployed already, while others will be rolled out in the coming weeks.

- **Fare Policy Update**

In March and April of 2026, Metro staff conducted a peer review, held several public meetings, and gathered additional feedback from riders and stakeholders -- through website updates, surveys, and social media communications --about proposed fare changes. Following extensive outreach and a vote by the Metro Board of Directors, Metro increased fares effective August 1, 2026.

Fare policy update materials were distributed across Metro buses, bus stops, shelters, and facilities such as Pulse and Mill Creek Hub in the weeks leading up to the change.

Proposed, and later final, fare policy changes have been posted on Metro's website since May. We also conducted paid advertising on Facebook and Instagram platforms in the weeks leading up to the fare change. While reaction to the fare change has been mixed, there has been little to suggest we should have done more to expand our reach on this initiative.

- **Westbrook High School Partnership**

On Monday, August 3, the Westbrook City Council approved a program that will give high school students free passes for unlimited bus rides in Greater Portland. The one-year pilot program will begin at the end of August, providing 700 students with free Metro bus passes for the 2026-27 school year.

Metro plans to do direct outreach to WHS students as part of this program, similar to how we've marketed to Portland Public Schools. Additionally, this is likely an opportunity to renew efforts to highlight how Metro is continuing to be a major community asset, providing transit for critical trips and mitigating the need for communities to provide more expensive and administratively cumbersome transportation solutions.

FISCAL IMPACT

- The proposed **fare changes** are projected to generate an additional 6.3% more fare revenue than 2025, with a similar level of ridership. However, the projection falls approximately 5.8% short of the budgeted fare revenue amount in 2026.
- The **Tap to Ride** fare option can result in fare revenue increases of 3-5 % above typical out-of-pocket ridership.
- The partnership with **Westbrook High School** operates on a pay-per-ride model. The City is billed only when a student actually uses their pass. The agreement with Greater Portland Metro will cost the city, at most, \$34,000 a year. The city will pay \$1.13 per ride for up to 30,000 rides each year.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information and discussion only.

CONTACT

Denise Beck
Marketing Manager
dbeck@gpmetro.org
207-517-3027

Addendum A: Fare Policy

Public Participation Plan for Fare Policy Change
Fare Policy Change – Marketing and Outreach

Addendum B: Tap to Ride

Marketing Plan, media clips

Addendum C: Westbrook High School Partnership

Press Release, media clips



Fare Policy Review

April – June 2026

Proposed Fare Changes
Public Participation Plan

Denise Beck
Marketing Manager

July 2026

Rev 7.27.26



Summary of Fare Proposal Process Review, Public Comment

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Background / Analysis

In 2020, Metro, along with its partner transit agencies, undertook an overhaul of the fare structure for the region's bus service. This overhaul included an increase to the base fare as well as the launching of a new card/app based fare capping system that replaced legacy paper passes.

Prior to the fare increase in 2020, Metro had not changed fares in 11 years. This meant that a 33% increase in fares was required as Metro's fare recovery ratio had shrunk significantly. In order to prevent another large increase in fares, it is imperative that Metro and its partners assess fares at regular intervals (at minimum every 5 years).

Historical Base Fares (1975 – 2025)

Year Range	Local Base Fare
1975 – 1978	\$0.30 – \$0.40
1981 – 1984	\$0.50 – \$0.60
1985 – 1990	\$0.75 – \$0.80
1991 – 1993	\$0.90
1994 – 2004	\$1.00
2005 – 2009	\$1.25
2010 – 2019	\$1.50
2020 – 2025	\$2.00

In January 2026, Metro awarded a contract to Four Nines Technologies to provide expert fare policy analysis and recommendations. The primary goal of Four Nines' work is to optimize fare revenue and ridership through data-driven recommendations.



Peer Review Summary

Prepared by: Four Nines Technologies, February 2026

Purpose

This peer review compared Greater Portland Metro and Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit (BSOOB Transit) to similar U.S. transit systems to guide updates to the **DiriGo Pass regional fare policy**, focusing on revenue sustainability, equity, simplicity, and modernization (including open payments).

System Performance

- **Strong financial performance**
 - Farebox recovery: **18% (above peer avg. 14%)**
 - High fare revenue per rider

Fare Structure

- Base fare: **\$2.00** (common among peers)
- **Free transfers (90 min, electronic only)** – aligns with many peers
- Standard products: Single ride, daily & monthly caps
- **Express routes**: Higher fares
- **Movement toward**: Simplified fare structures, open fare payment, fewer cash transactions & partnership programs

Equity & Discounts

- GPM aligns with peers:
 - 50% discounts for **youth, seniors, veterans, and riders with disabilities**
 - No current income-based fare program (rare, but growing); Metro is planning to implement trial program

Institutional Programs

- Common across peers:
 - **University partnerships** (very common)
 - **Employer-sponsored transit benefits** (less common)
Metro participates in both (e.g., free rides for students, MaineHealth employees)



Microtransit (On-Demand Service)

- GPM is **well-aligned with best practices**:
 - Fare: **\$2.00 (low end of peer range)**
 - Same fares and passes as fixed-route
 - Free transfers between services
- Peer variation:
 - Some charge higher fares; some offer free service

Fare Technology

- GPM meets current best practices:
 - Smart card and mobile app – DiriGo Pass
 - Limited onboard cash use
- **Next step**:
 - Implement **open payments** (tap-to-pay with bank cards)

Key Strengths

- Above-average **financial performance**
- **Modern fare system** with capping and mobile payments
- Strong **integration of microtransit**
- Alignment with industry-standard fare products and discounts

Opportunities

- Introduce **low-income fare programs**
- Expand **open payment options**
- Continue simplifying fares and improving transfer flexibility

Summary

GPM is **performing well and keeping pace with industry standards**, with clear opportunities to improve equity and payment convenience as part of its next phase of fare modernization.



Fare Proposal

Recommendations

- The 2026 peer review indicates that Metro's current fare structure is fundamentally sound and aligns with best practices for similar agencies.
- While Metro is already at the top of the peer market for single-ride pricing, a modest fare increase could be proposed to balance the share of expenses borne by riders with those subsidized by local municipalities.
- Unlike the comprehensive overhaul of 2020, these 2026 recommendations focus on incremental adjustments designed to maintain revenue sustainability while protecting transit-dependent riders.

Fare Adjustments

- **Base Fare:**
Raise the base fare from \$2.00 to \$2.25 for full-fare riders (a 12.5% increase)
- **Reduced Fare:**
Increase the reduced fare from \$1.00 to \$1.10 for eligible riders (a 10% increase) to protect those most impacted by cost changes. Note that the reduced fare is required to be no more than 50% of the base fare.

Fare Caps

- **Monthly Fare Cap (Full Fare):**
Increase the monthly cap to \$65 (currently \$60).
- **Daily Fare Cap (Full Fare):**
Increase increasing the daily cap to \$6.50 (currently \$6.00).

To safeguard vulnerable populations, staff suggest keeping the Reduced Fare caps at their current levels: \$3.00 (Daily) and \$30.00 (Monthly).





Proposed changes would take effect:

August 1, 2026

Current & Proposed Fare Prices

DiriGo Pass Smartcard & Mobile App	Current LOCAL	Proposed LOCAL		Current BREEZ Express	Current ZOOM Express	Proposed BREEZ and ZOOM (Express)
Single Ride (90 min. pass)	\$ 2.00	\$ 2.25		\$ 4.00	\$ 5.00	\$4.50
Full Fare	\$ 1.00	\$ 1.10		\$ 2.00	\$ 2.50	\$2.25
Reduced Fare*						
Daily Fare Cap	\$ 6.00	\$ 6.50		\$12.00	\$15.00	\$13.00
Full Fare	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00		\$ 6.00	\$ 7.50	\$ 6.00
Reduced Fare*						
Monthly Fare Cap	\$60.00	\$65.00		\$120.00	\$150.00	\$130.00
Full Fare	\$30.00	\$30.00		\$ 60.00	\$ 75.00	\$ 30.00
Reduced Fare*						
Cash Fares Exact Change	Current LOCAL	Proposed LOCAL		Current BREEZ Express	Current ZOOM Express	Proposed BREEZ and ZOOM (Express)
Single Ride	\$ 2.00	\$ 2.25		\$ 4.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 4.50
Full Fare	\$ 1.00	\$ 1.10		\$ 2.00	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25
Reduced Fare*						
Ten Ride Pass: Ten Ride DiriGo Passes will be discontinued. Passbacks (using a single account) will be accepted for multiple riders. Reduced fare, if applicable, would apply to the first tap only.						
Coming Soon: 'Tap to Pay' using credit cards. Info at gpmetro.org/fare-policy						

Local Routes:

Metro Routes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9A, 9B, 21, 24A, 24B, and Husky Line

BSOBB Transit Routes: 50, 51, 52, 53, 60, 71

Express Routes: Metro BREEZ | Zoom Express - 70

All rides using the DiriGo Pass allow for free transfer within 90 mins.

REV 3.31.26

* Reduced Fare

Persons with Disabilities, Veterans, Seniors (65+), Youth (6-18), and Medicare card holders.

w/Valid ID or Application



Public Participation Plan – Policy and Procedures

Policy Summary

Metro established Policies and Procedures for Soliciting and Considering Public Comment on Fare Increases and Major Service reductions. The policy defines thresholds for major service reductions/fare changes and outlines a process for soliciting, receiving, and considering public comments to ensure that Greater Portland Metro implements a “broad, inclusive, equitable, and accessible decision-making process.”

This public participation plan is implemented when changes to service or fare meet or exceed certain thresholds. The fare pricing recommendations meet these criteria.

Public Meetings

GREATER PORTLAND metro

We're asking for feedback about possible bus fare changes.

نحن نطلب ملاحظاتكم حول التغييرات المحتملة في أجرة الحافلة.

Nous demandons des avis sur d'éventuelles modifications des tarifs de bus.

Estamos a pedir a sua opinião sobre possíveis alterações no preço dos bilhetes de autocarro.

Estamos solicitando comentarios sobre posibles cambios en la tarifa del autobús.

Waxaan weydiisaneynaa jawaab celin ku saabsan suurtagalnimada isbeddelka khidmada basaska.

Presentation and Public Input
Fare Policy Update

Join Us
Attend a Public Meeting

Thursday, April 9
3:30 pm - 5:30 pm
Portland Public Library,
5 Monument Square, Rines Auditorium

Saturday, April 11
11:00 am - 1:00 pm
Westbrook Community Center,
426 Bridge St., Elm Room

Tuesday, April 14
6:00 pm - 7:00 pm | **Virtual meeting**

Translators available on request.
For information, survey, translations, additional meeting dates, and meeting links:
gpmetro.org/fare-policy

Greater Portland Metro held three public meetings to present information and receive feedback on recommended fare changes:

- **April 9, 2026 - Portland**
- **April 11, 2026 - Westbrook**
- **April 14, 2026 - Virtual**

In-person meetings were held at the Portland Public Library and Westbrook Community Center, both accessible by Metro routes.

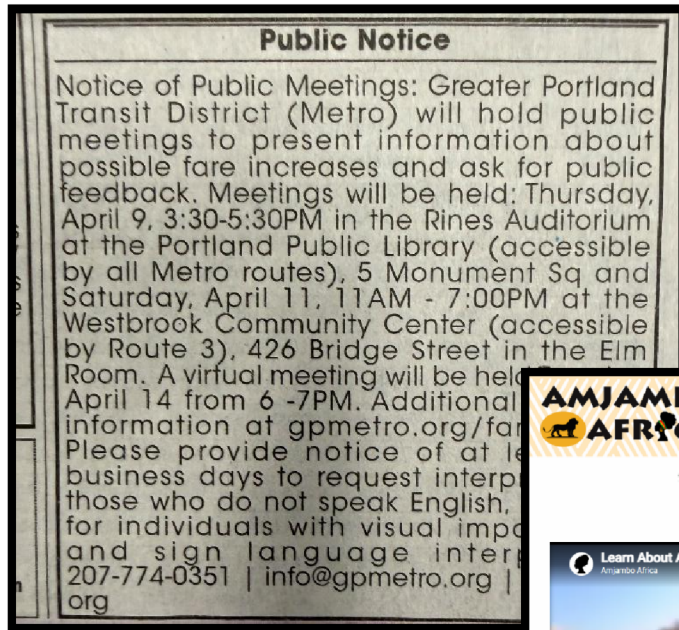
An additional meeting conducted by staff from Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Transit (BSSOB Transit) in April 2026.

The public also had additional opportunities to contact staff about fare pricing proposals through email – info@gpmetro.org; phone – 207-774-0351; Metro’s website dedicated page: gpmetro.org/fare-policy; and regularly scheduled board and committee meetings.

An online survey was created for feedback and available from April 1 – May 20, 2026 on Metro’s website. Information about the survey was communicated through social media and at public meetings.



Public Notices and Communication Procedures:



A Public Notice was published in the **Maine Sunday Telegram** on March 15, 2026 and on the **MPA Maine Notices website**.

A print (March) and online ad (March and April), with link to dedicated page with translation available, communicating the public meetings was published in **AmJambo Africa**, Maine's free newspaper for and about New Mainers from Africa.



"Rider alerts" and signage were posted inside all buses, in bus shelters, at locations where public meetings were held, and at the South Portland Transit Hub and Elm Street Hub (Pulse).





For immediate release

Contact:

Mike Tremblay, Director of Transit Development, Greater Portland Metro
mtremblay@gometro.org | 207-517-3023

**Greater Portland Metro and BSOOB Transit
to hold public meetings proposing bus fare changes**

Greater Portland, ME – [Greater Portland Metro](#) and [Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit \(BSOOB\)](#), are holding three in-person and one virtual public meeting to propose fare changes. The proposed changes, if approved, are planned to become effective on August 1, 2026.

Proposed changes to the fare policy are aimed at balancing the demand for additional revenue to cover rising expenses with riders' need for affordable transportation options. The proposed changes aim to build revenue in a responsible way that limits the negative impact on riders.

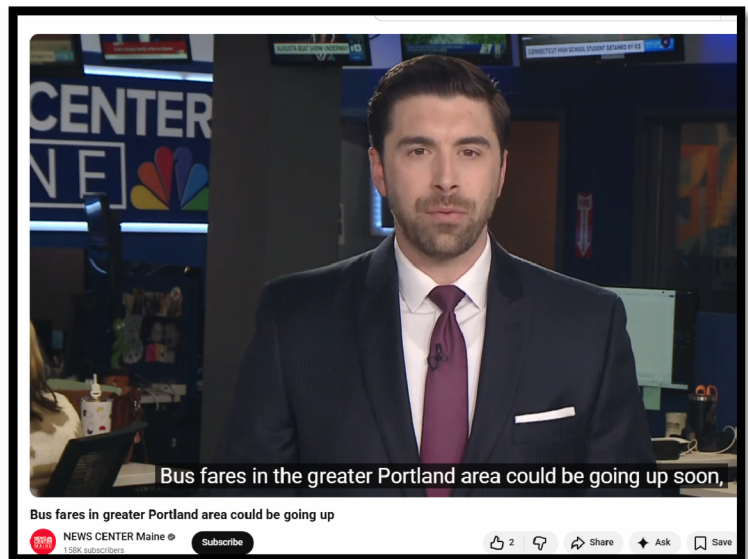
Fare proposals include these fare increases:

- Increase base fare to \$2.25 (currently \$2.00)
- Increase reduced fare to \$1.10 (currently \$1.00)
- Increase Metro BREEZ fares to \$4.50 (currently \$4.00); Reduced fare increase to \$2.25 from \$2.00

Information about the public meetings was distributed **via e-mail blast** February 4, 2026 to more than 500 subscribers. A follow up **press release** was sent to media and stakeholders a week prior to public meetings.

Media Coverage:

- Portland Press Herald (2.10.26)
- WMTW – TV (4.9.26)
- Newcenter (4.10.26)
- WGME (4.9.26)
- Maine Public Radio (MPR)



Public Meetings – Comments Summaries:

- Public Meetings:
 - April 9, 2026, Portland Public Library, 21 people
 - April 11, 2026, Westbrook Community Center, six people
 - April 14, 2026, via Zoom (one person)
- [Survey](#): Available online and on paper April 1 through May 20, 2026

Common Questions & Concerns

The dialogue at these meetings centered on how the new technology works, personal safety, and route availability.

- Fare Capping and Daily Costs: Users wanted to know exactly how many rides were needed to trigger a "free" trip and if tapping a credit card or phone would automatically cap their spending.
- A recurring concern was the presence of "hard folks" at stops, the lack of security personnel, and the physical condition/closure of the Pulse transit hub during cold weather.
- Safety: Multiple respondents urged Metro to use the increased revenue to improve safety and physical conditions at the Pulse and stops.
- Route Logistics: Riders asked about the logic behind the 90-minute transfer window, why the Breez no longer stops in Falmouth, and if buses could run later into the evening for those attending shows or working late shifts.
- Technology and Accessibility: Questions were raised about how to transition to a senior fare upon turning 65, the difference between using a Dirigo card versus "tap-to-pay," and whether the "pass back" feature allows paying for a companion.
- Funding and Value: Participants questioned if the 25-cent increase was sufficient given inflation and if the total revenue increase was worth the change.
- Cash Payment Barriers: One rider pointed out that a \$2.20 or \$2.25 fare is harder to pay in cash than a flat \$2.00, potentially leading to vulnerable people being turned away if they lack 25 cents in loose change.
- The elimination of the 10-ride pass was also criticized by "variable" riders who do not ride enough to hit fare caps but relied on the 10% discount to manage costs.
- Tap-to-Pay Enthusiasm: Several riders expressed strong support for the introduction of "tap-to-pay," noting it could remove the "stigma" of riding the bus and make the system more accessible for locals and visitors who currently find the app or cash systems confusing. Some users were disappointed that tap-to-pay might not include free transfers, arguing this adds unnecessary complication and friction for new riders.
- Reliability Issues: Several riders felt it was "unfortunate" or a "bad look" to raise fares while service remains inconsistent, citing late buses and "no-shows."



- **Route Priorities:** Feedback included requests to improve the frequency of the Route 24 A/B (which one user called "virtually unusable" on weekends) and general service in South Portland.
- **Transit vs. Cars:** One detailed comment argued that increasing bus fares without increasing the cost of parking sends a message that public transit is a lower priority than private vehicles.
- **Support for Drivers:** Despite concerns over the policy, some riders took the time to express their appreciation for the drivers and Metro staff
- **Fare Capping and Daily Use:** For daily riders, the third ride of the day includes a small discount, while the fourth ride is free.
- **Tap-to-Pay vs. Dirigo Cards:** While "tap-to-pay" is being introduced, it will not initially support fare capping or discounts; users must pay full fare. Metro staff recommend the Dirigo card or Umo app for regular riders to access discounts and payment caps.
- **"Pass Back" Capability:** New technology now allows a user to tap for themselves (using their specific fare or cap) and then tap again to pay for friends or family riding with them.
- **Revenue and Frequency:** The fare increase is estimated to generate \$210,000 in the first year. Metro management aims to review fares more frequently to avoid asking for large sums of money at once.
- **Transfers:** Transfers are valid for 90 minutes. If transferring from a local bus to the Breez, riders pay the difference in fare; however, transferring from the Breez to a local bus is free.

Route Changes and Improvements:

- A new route to Scarborough via South Portland is expected to begin this summer.
- Route 8 will become bi-directional with increased hours.
- Efforts are being made to create a straighter, half-hourly route from South Portland to the Mall area.
- The Breez and Micro-transit: Stopping the Breez in Falmouth was discontinued to save time for long-distance riders, but micro-transit solutions are being considered to connect Falmouth riders to the Breez at Exit 15.

Safety, Security, and Facilities

- **Safety Concerns:** Riders expressed significant concerns regarding safety at certain stops and the presence of "hard folks." Metro is working with city police and has hired a new Dispatch Manager to monitor stops and provide assistance.
- **The Pulse (Transit Hub):** Customers asked for the Pulse to fully reopen so customers do not have to wait in the cold. Metro staff confirmed it will reopen once necessary safety fixes are completed.



- Reliability: Metro staff is addressing "earlies" (buses leaving stops ahead of schedule), which have decreased but remain a focus for improvement.

Community Partnerships and Future Planning

- Institutional Relationships: Metro partners with universities, MaineHealth, and large apartment developers to encourage transit use and reduce the need for parking spaces.
- Economic Factors: Current fare increases are largely driven by predictable wage growth and long-term contracts. If gas prices remain high, fare reviews may happen every three years instead of six.
- Service Hours: Management is working to balance the need for more frequent daytime service with requests for later evening service for those attending shows or working late.

Accessibility and Reduced Fares

- Senior and Reduced Fares: Riders turning 65 can update their fare status via email or an online application.
- Income-Based Programs: Metro is currently working with Cumberland County on a program to provide reduced fares based on income

Survey Results

Rider Profiles and Habits

- Frequency of Use: Approximately 64% of respondents ride the bus at least four times per week, with nearly 40% riding 6–7 times per week.
- Transfers: A significant majority (roughly 72%) only need to take one route to reach their destination, meaning most riders do not currently require transfers.
- Popular Routes: Survey respondents' route preferences roughly aligned with relative ridership, with Route 4 (42% of respondents) and Route 9A/9B (40% of respondents) listed as commonly used routes. Route 2 (15% of respondents) was relatively underrepresented, with only 8 of 53 respondents listing it as an often-used route despite ranking 3rd behind only Route 4 and Route 9 in overall ridership in 2025.
- Demographics: The largest age group represented is 26–44 (over 50%). Over 80% of respondents identified as Caucasian/White.

Feedback on Proposed Fare Changes

- Overall Sentiment: Public opinion is split; approximately 38% view the changes as "mostly or entirely negative," while about 30% feel some changes are positive and others are negative.



- **Reduced Fare Qualifications:** Only about 21% of respondents currently receive reduced fares, even though the policy covers seniors, students, veterans, and individuals with disabilities. That said, there is a call for Metro to expand reduced fare eligibility to include riders based on monthly income (such as those receiving SNAP or TANF), rather than just age or disability.
- **Service vs. Cost:** When asked what is more important, 61% of respondents prioritized improving the amount and quality of transit service over keeping costs as low as possible.
- **Cash Payment Barriers:** One rider pointed out that a \$2.20 or \$2.25 fare is harder to pay in cash than a flat \$2.00, potentially leading to vulnerable people being turned away if they lack 25 cents in loose change.

Adoption of New Technology

- **Future Use:** Approximately 52% of riders state their payment method will not change at all. However, about 20% expect to switch to tap-to-pay as their primary method.
- **Impact on Habits:** The majority (62%) believe that the convenience of tap-to-pay will not change how often they ride transit.
- **Elimination of 10-Ride Pass:** While Metro plans to replace the 10-ride pass with the "pass back" feature, 67% of respondents indicated they don't use the 10-ride pass anyway. The elimination of the 10-ride pass was also criticized by "variable" riders who do not ride enough to hit fare caps but relied on the 10% discount to manage costs.
- **Tap-to-Pay Enthusiasm:** Several riders expressed strong support for the introduction of "tap-to-pay," noting it could remove the "stigma" of riding the bus and make the system more accessible for locals and visitors who currently find the app or cash systems confusing. Some users were disappointed that tap-to-pay might not include free transfers, arguing this adds unnecessary complication and friction for new riders.

Service Quality and Safety

- **Safety:** Multiple respondents urged Metro to use the increased revenue to improve safety and physical conditions at the Pulse and stops.
- **Reliability Issues:** Several riders felt it was "unfortunate" or a "bad look" to raise fares while service remains inconsistent, citing late buses and "no-shows."
- **Route Priorities:** Feedback included requests to improve the frequency of the Route 24 A/B (which one user called "virtually unusable" on weekends) and general service in South Portland.

Policy and Priorities

- **Transit vs. Cars:** One detailed comment argued that increasing bus fares without increasing the cost of parking sends a message that public transit is a lower priority than private vehicles.



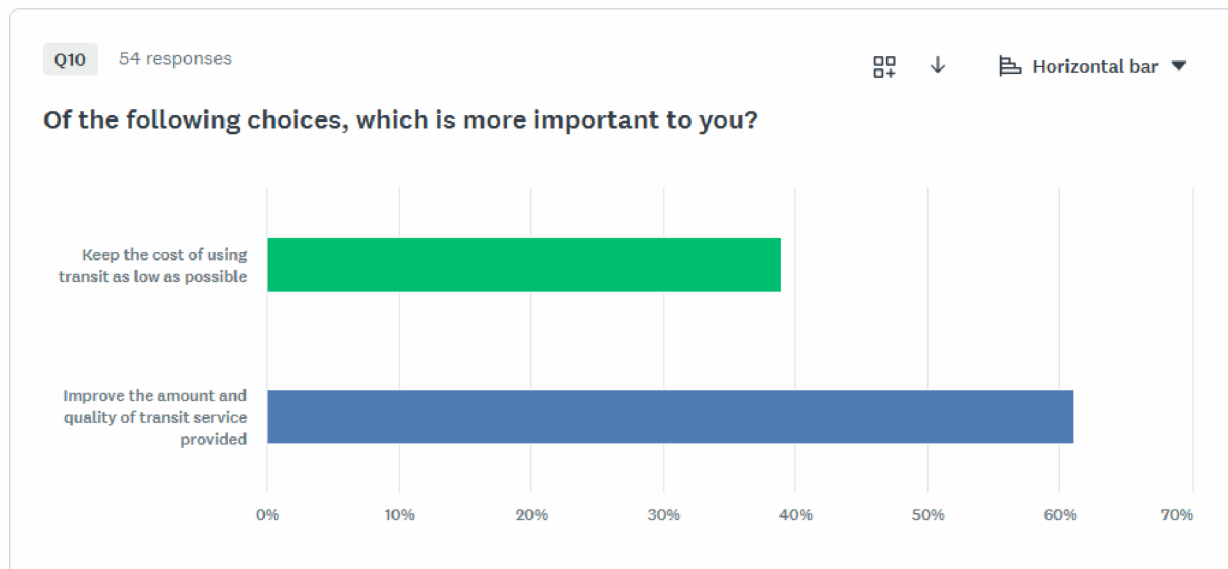
- Support for Drivers: Despite concerns over the policy, some riders took the time to express their appreciation for the drivers and Metro staff

The survey results are showing opinion is split; approximately 38% view the changes as "mostly or entirely negative," while about 29% feel some changes are positive and others are negative; however, 13% of respondents suggested that these changes are mostly or entirely positive. The survey responders also called for Metro to expand reduced fare eligibility to include riders based on monthly income (such as those receiving SNAP or TANF), rather than just age or disability. A majority of poll responses indicate that keeping or improving the amount and quality of transit service available (61%) is more important than keeping the cost of using transit as low as possible (39%).

The new tap-to-pay technology generated several answers:

- Approximately 52% of riders state their payment method will not change at all. About 20% expect to switch to tap-to-pay as their primary method, and another 28% suggested they will use Tap to Pay in combination with their primary payment method.
- Several riders expressed strong support for the introduction of "tap-to-pay," noting it could remove the "stigma" of riding the bus and make the system more accessible for locals and visitors who currently find the app or cash systems confusing. Some users were disappointed that tap-to-pay would not include free transfers, arguing this adds unnecessary complication and friction for new riders.
- The majority (62%) believe that the convenience of tap-to-pay will not change how often they ride transit. About 22% of survey respondents suggested Tap-to-Pay would enable them to ride a lot more often (10%) or somewhat more often (12%)





Consideration of Public Comments

Metro staff considered feedback from survey respondents and public meeting attendees carefully. While Metro understands that any fare increase will usually generate some negative reactions, Metro also heard positive comments, indicating that the fare increase was reasonable or possibly even not high enough, given our aspirations for improved service. The general tone of public feedback was generally “disappointed but understanding”.

As such, after discussion with our consultant, several Board of Directors committees, and stakeholders, Metro and BSOOB Transit opted to keep the proposed fare structure unchanged from what was presented to the public.

Review and Recommendation

Metro staff reviewed the fare policy update process at Board of Directors and Committee meetings February through May, with presentations of recommended fares and policy updates reviewed by both the Planning and Operations Committee and the Marketing and Communications Committee on May 20. Metro staff presented the recommendations to Executive Committee on May 27, 2026 and the committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of changes to the regional fare policy to Metro’s Board of Directors. **The Board of Directors voted to approve the recommended fare increases at their meeting on June 25, 2026.**





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 25, 2026

Contact:

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Greater Portland Metro and Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach (BSOOB) Transit to increase fares effective August 1, 2026

Greater Portland, ME – The Greater Portland Transit District (Metro) Board of Directors voted at their June 25, 2026 board meeting to increase bus fares and make other changes to fare policy effective **August 1, 2026**. The Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit (**BSOOB Transit**) Transit Committee voted to approve the changes on May 19, 2026.

The base fare will increase from \$2.00 to \$2.25, with similar changes across most fare categories. The full list of changes is outlined at gpmetro.org/fare-policy-update/.

The last fare increase for both transit systems was in October 2020, when Metro and its partner agency fares increased for the first time in over a decade. The DiriGo Pass smartcard and mobile app were also introduced at that time.

In partnership with BSOOB, Greater Portland Metro conducted a fare policy review in Winter/Spring 2026. The fare changes were developed based on a peer review of similar transit agencies, a public survey, four public meetings to provide information and gather feedback, and additional research.

“Metro has not had a fare increase in six years. The last change to our fare structure was in October of 2020 when our DiriGo Pass was introduced,” said Metro’s Executive Director Glenn Fenton. “Metro’s budget is funded in part by fare revenues. An increase will help Metro continue providing our existing service while planning for the future.”



Fare increases effective August 1, 2026

- A base fare change to \$2.25 from \$2.00 per ride; Reduced fare increase from \$1 to \$1.10
- Metro BREEZ increase to \$4.50 from \$4.00; Reduced fare increase to \$2.25 from \$2.00
- BSOOB Route 70 (ZOOM) service would decrease fare from \$5.00 to \$4.50; Reduced fare would decrease from \$2.50 to \$2.25. These fare decreases align BSOOB's Route 70 fares with Metro's BREEZ fares.
- Increase in the base daily and monthly fare cap to \$6.50/\$65, respectively, from \$6.00/\$60.00 today. Fare caps for reduced fare passengers will not change from the current \$3 daily/\$30 monthly caps.

Fares make up a significant portion of Metro's operating budget. Fare increases are sometimes required in order for transit agencies to continue to provide service as costs related to labor, parts, fuel, and other expenses tend to increase each year.

Metro and BSOOB Transit also plan to launch a 'tap to ride' fare payment option in July 2026. This system will provide a simple way to pay for transit fares without having to carry cash or enroll in a fare payment system. Instead of searching for cash or pre-loading a DiriGo card, riders can use their credit card or debit card or digital wallet.

BSOOB Transit serves the communities of Biddeford, Saco, and Old Orchard Beach while providing vital regional connectivity across southern Maine. In addition to local routing, the agency operates key intercity connections linking Saco to Scarborough, South Portland, and Portland, alongside premium commuter express service connecting Biddeford and Saco directly to downtown Portland.

Greater Portland Metro is southern Maine's largest public transit provider, serving Brunswick, Falmouth, Freeport, Gorham, Portland, South Portland, Westbrook, Yarmouth, Scarborough, and Bath. Metro's mission is to provide a public transportation experience that is frequent, fast, safe, and simple.



Fare Prices Effective August 1, 2026

DiriGo Pass Smartcard & Mobile App	Current LOCAL	New Fare Aug 1, 2026 LOCAL		Current BREEZ Express	Current ZOOM Express	New Fare August 1, 2026 BREEZ and ZOOM (Express)
Single Ride (90 min. pass)	\$ 2.00	\$ 2.25		\$ 4.00	\$ 5.00	\$4.50
Full Fare	\$ 1.00	\$ 1.10		\$ 2.00	\$ 2.50	\$2.25
Reduced Fare*						
Daily Fare Cap	\$ 6.00	\$ 6.50		\$12.00	\$15.00	\$13.00
Full Fare	\$ 3.00	\$ 3.00		\$ 6.00	\$ 7.50	\$ 6.00
Reduced Fare*						
Monthly Fare Cap	\$60.00	\$65.00		\$120.00	\$150.00	\$130.00
Full Fare	\$30.00	\$30.00		\$ 60.00	\$ 75.00	\$ 60.00
Reduced Fare*						
Cash Fares Exact Change	Current LOCAL	New Fare August 1, 2026 LOCAL		Current BREEZ Express	Current ZOOM Express	New Fare August 1, 2026 BREEZ and ZOOM (Express)
Single Ride	\$ 2.00	\$ 2.25		\$ 4.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 4.50
Full Fare	\$ 1.00	\$ 1.10		\$ 2.00	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.25
Reduced Fare*						
Ten Ride Pass: Ten Ride DiriGo Passes will be discontinued. Passbacks (using a single account) will be accepted for multiple riders. Reduced fare, if applicable, would apply to the first tap only.						

Local Routes:

Metro Routes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9A, 9B, 21, 24A, 24B, 25* and Husky Line
BSOOB Transit Routes: 50, 51, 52, 53, 60, 71

Express Routes: Metro BREEZ | Zoom Express - 70

All rides using the DiriGo Pass allow for free transfer within 90 mins.

*Portland/Scarborough bus route - date tbd

* Reduced Fare

Persons with Disabilities,
Veterans, Seniors (65+),
Youth (6-18), and
Medicare card holders.

w/Valid ID

6.16.26

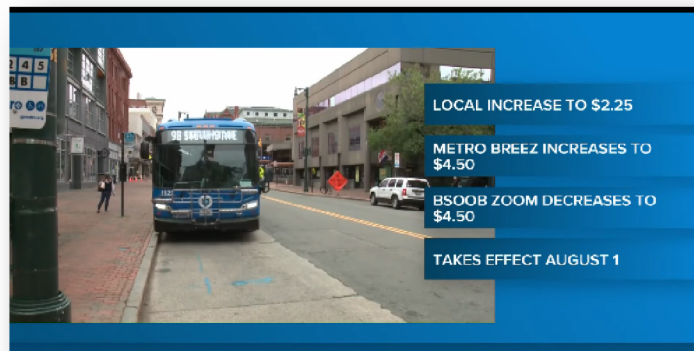


Marketing and Communications: Fare Policy Increase

Metro Board of Directors Vote: June 25, 2026 Fare increase: Effective August 1, 2026

Rider education / communication campaign elements include:

- Press release sent
– June 25, 2026
- Earned media: June 2026
WMTW (6.26.26)
Newscenter Maine (6.27.26)
- Website
- Social media
- Signage
- On-Board
Announcements



GREATER PORTLAND
metro
gpmetro.org | 207-774-0351

Local Service
Portland, Westbrook, Falmouth, Gorham,
Scarborough, and South Portland

Full Fare	\$2.25
Reduced Fare	\$1.10

Persons with Disabilities, Seniors (65+),
Veterans, and Youth (ages 6-18) with Valid ID
Ages 5 and Younger - FREE

BREEZ Express Service
Between Portland, Yarmouth,
Freeport, and Brunswick

Full Fare	\$ 4.50
Reduced Fare	\$ 2.25

**Three (3) Ways
to Pay your Bus Fare**

TAP & RIDE
Tap your card, scan your phone.
Credit Cards, Debit Cards, and
Digital Wallets accepted.
All riders pay full fare.

DiriGo Pass
Tap DiriGo Pass smartcard or
Scan DiriGo Pass mobile app.
Download **UMO** mobility app.
for rider benefits.

Cash Accepted
Please have exact fare ready.
Drivers do not make change.
Sorry, no refunds.

REV 6.30.26

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**Fare Increase
Effective August 1, 2026**

Local Service

Full Fare	\$ 2.25
Reduced Fare	\$ 1.10

Reduced Fares:
Persons with Disabilities, Seniors (65+), Veterans, and
Youth (ages 6-18) with Valid ID

BREEZ Express Service

Full Fare	\$ 4.50
Reduced Fare	\$ 2.25

3 WAYS TO PAY

TAP & RIDE | **DiriGo** | **UMO**

Find more info at gpmetro.org/fares

Bus Service Changes
تغييرات خدمة الحافلات
Modifications de service de bus
Modifiche ai servizi di autobus
Cambios en el servicio de autobuses
Aloppa katha kura chidithey

Transit
Portland - Freeport - Brunswick
www.transitmaine.org 207-732-0200

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Marketing and Communications: Tap to Ride

Launched on July 14, 2026 -- Current Marketing Strategies:

- Website
- Social Media
- Signage
- Print ads
- On-board reader
- Voice Announcements

Coming Soon:

- Radio Ads
- Influencers
- Videos
- Testimonials
- Community Outreach/Tourists
- Print ads
- Jetport/Casco Bay Lines, Visit Portland
- Bus advertising – exteriors/shelters
- Bus signs



Marketing and Communications: Westbrook High School Partnership

Communications:

- Public Meeting August 3, 2026
- Press Release sent following meeting: August 3, 2026

Earned Media:

- WMTW (8.3.26)
- WGME (8.3.26)
- NewsCenter Maine (8.4.26)
- Portland Press Herald (8.6.26)

Westbrook approves free bus passes for high schoolers

pressherald.com/2026/08/06/westbrook-approves-free-bus-passes-for-high-schoolers

August 6, 2026



Rider puts their bike on the front of a Greater Portland Metro Bus on Congress Street in Portland in February. (Brianna Soukup/Staff Photographer)

The Westbrook City Council on Monday approved a program that will give high school students free passes for unlimited bus rides in Greater Portland.

The council's vote followed a lengthy discussion about how an additional bus stop at the corner of Stroudwater Street and Monroe Avenue, near the high school, could impact traffic in the neighborhood.

The one-year pilot program will begin at the end of August, providing 700 students with free Metro bus passes for the 2026-27 school year.

The agreement with Greater Portland Metro will cost the city, at most, \$34,000 a year. The city will pay \$1.13 per ride for up to 30,000 rides each year, using funds from rental vehicle registrations — a new funding source the city recently identified.

1/8

Greater Portland Metro to offer free access to Westbrook High School students

Greater Portland Metro is partnering with Westbrook High School to offer students full access to the entire Metro.



Updated: 8:16 AM EDT Aug 4, 2026

[Editorial Standards](#)

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