

# Advocacy Committee

February 19, 2026 | 3:00 pm – 4:00 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://meet.google.com/odj-qrkq-ksn>

Or dial: (US) +1 260-527-2197 PIN: 532 751 733#

## MEETING AGENDA

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER	ACTION or INFORMATION
<b>1. Call Meeting to Order (3:00)</b>	Lou Simms, Committee Chair	N/A
<b>2. Public Comment (3:00 – 3:05)</b>  The Advocacy 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.	Lou Simms, Committee Chair	Information
<b>3. Meeting Minutes (3:05-3:10)</b>  Review and approve minutes from the November 19, 2025 Advocacy Committee Meeting.	Lou Simms, Committee Chair	Action
<b>4. Legislative Update (3:10 – 3:20)</b>  Staff will review status of state resolves and new bills, pending federal funding, and rules affecting public transit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State</li><li>• Federal</li></ul>	Megan Hannan, Director of Government Affairs & Community Engagement	Information
<b>5. Advocacy Update (3:20 – 3:40)</b>  Staff will update the committee on new and continuing efforts in statewide and Federal advocacy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gubernatorial Candidate Education</li><li>• MEREDA / GPCOG Housing &amp; Transit</li><li>• Public Transit Advisory Council</li><li>• Maine Transit Association</li></ul>	Megan Hannan, Director of Government Affairs & Community Engagement	Information

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non- Domiciled CDLs</li> </ul>		
<b>6. Future Agenda Items (3:40 – 3:42)</b> Committee members may request future agenda items. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Initiatives Affecting Transit</li> <li>• Bus Rapid Transit</li> <li>• Workplan Development (Strategic Plan)</li> <li>• Coalition Building, State Advocacy, Local as appropriate</li> </ul>	Lou Simms, Committee Chair	Information
<b>8. Upcoming Meetings (3:42 – 3:45)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Committee – February 23, 2026 at 3:30 pm</li> <li>• Board of Directors – February 26, 2026 at 4:00 pm</li> <li>• Finance Committee – March 4, 2026 at 3:00 pm</li> <li>• Mkt/Coms Committee – March 11, 2026 at 3:30 pm</li> <li>• Plan/Ops Committee – March 18, 2026 at 10:30 am</li> <li>• Advocacy Committee – March 19, 2026 @ 3:00 pm</li> </ul>	Lou Simms, Committee Chair	Information
<b>9. Adjournment (3:45)</b>	Lou Simms, Committee Chair	<b>ACTION</b>

*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 Advocacy Committee**  
**Wednesday November 19, 2025:**  
**DRAFT Meeting Minutes:**

Member	Municipality	Role	Status
Linda Cohen	South Portland	Chair	Present
David Morse	Westbrook	Vice Chair	
Anna Bullett	Portland	Committee Member	Present
Lou Simms	Gorham	Committee Member	Present
Hope Cahan	Falmouth	Exec Committee Liaison	
Ed Suslovic	Portland	Board President	Present

Staff Present	Identified Members of the Public
Glenn Fenton – Executive Director Chad Heid – Chief Transportation Officer Mike Tremblay – Director of Transit Development Megan Hannan – Director of Government Affairs & Community Engagement	

- I. With a Quorum in place, this meeting was called to Order By: Linda Cohen at 4:30 pm**
- II. Public Comment:**
  - No comments from members of the public present.
- III. Meeting Minutes:**

Anna Bullet moved acceptance of the minutes from the August 20, 2025 Advocacy Committee Meeting. Linda Cohen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted and the motion passed unanimously of voting members present. The slide deck presented to the committee is at the end of these notes.
- IV. Legislative Update:**
  - Megan Hannan provided an update on the Federal budget and state resolves engaged in since the last meeting.
- V. Advocacy Update**
  - Megan Hannan provided an update on advocacy initiatives engaged in since the last meeting.

**VI. Bus Rapid Transit Planning**

- Megan Hannan provided an update on progress of the BRT planning since the last meeting and a communications / advocacy plan to build local and regional support for the BRT.

**VII. Future Agenda Items:**

- Federal Initiatives Affecting Transit
- Bus Rapid Transit
- Workplan Development (ongoing)
- Coalition Building, State Advocacy; Local as appropriate – committee members reiterated this should be a top priority, and to lean into private entities to provide bus passes

**VIII. Upcoming Meetings:**

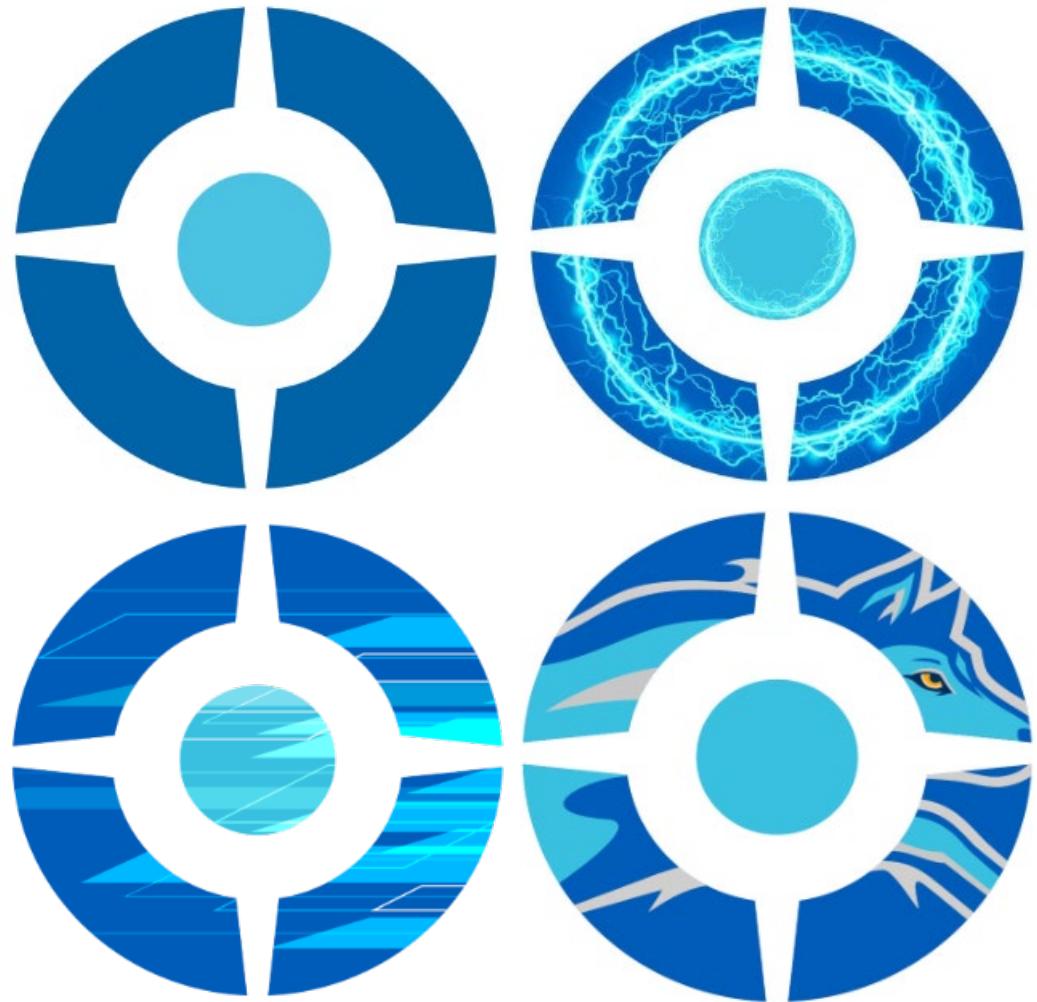
- Board of Directors – Thursday, December 11, 2025 at 4:00pm
- 2026 Meetings TBD

**IX. Adjournment:** Meeting is adjourned by mutual consent at 5:21 pm.

# GREATER PORTLAND METRO

## Advocacy Committee

November 19, 2025



**metro CONNECT**  
GREATER PORTLAND ON-DEMAND TRANSIT

# State Budget

- Transit Operations \$5 Million Total:
  - \$3 million for operating
  - \$1.14 million for operating additional
  - Total (current state FY) of \$4.14 million operating plus fund for the State
  - \$2million for discretionary capital projects related to the state transit plan.
- Goal is \$8 Million



# Key State Laws Passed

LD 1359	Resolve, To Direct The Department Of Transportation To Report Progress Made Toward Implementing Recommendations Based On The 2025 Public Transit Advisory Council Report
LD 1451	Resolve, Directing The Department Of Transportation To Establish The Maine Coordinating Working Group On Access And Mobility

# Key Bills Carried Over

- LD 305      An Act Regarding Transportation In Maine
- LD 394      An Act To Improve Transportation Infrastructure In Maine
- LD 1804      An Act Concerning Funding And Oversight Of Transportation Matters

# New Bill

LR 2647

An Act to Enhance the Safety of Public Transit  
Bus Operators Through the Installation of  
Vehicle Security Barriers

# Federal Budget

## House and Senate THUD Bill Comparison

Program	Senate FY26	House FY26	Notes
<b>Transit Total</b>	\$16.8B	\$19.2B*	*House includes IIJA advance funds, so not directly comparable
<b>Capital Investment Grants</b>	\$1.9B	\$1.65B	Senate stronger support
<b>Bus &amp; Bus Facilities</b>	\$1.1B	Baseline only	Senate adds discretionary funds
<b>Congressionally Directed Spending</b>	\$96M	\$96M	In concurrence
<b>Ferry Programs</b>	\$55M	n/a	Rural ferries called out

# Federal Budget

# USDOT Funding Curveball

POLITICO PRO



Gift article

FEDERAL

## Trump administration proposals seek to eliminate transit funding

DOT recently sent two proposals to the White House budget office seeking to pare back transit money.



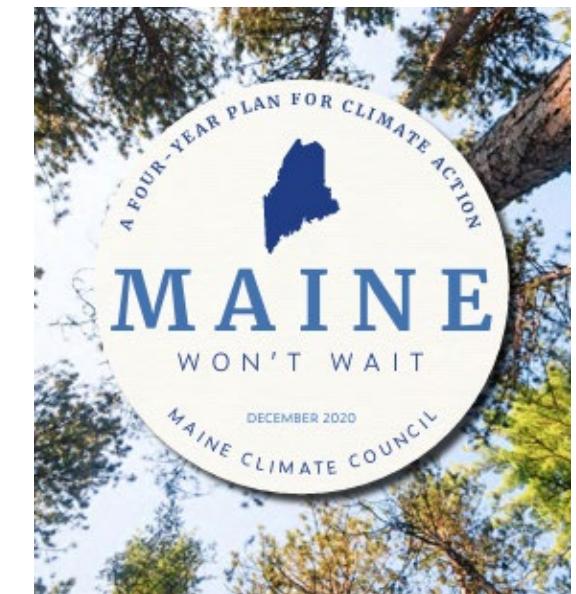
BY: CHRIS MARQUETTE | 11/14/2025 06:11 PM EST

The Trump administration is seeking to significantly curb federal spending on mass transit, according to two internal proposals obtained by POLITICO.

The actions fall in line with a flurry of Trump-led efforts targeting Democratic-run states and cities.

# Advocacy Update

- Public Transit Advisory Council
- Maine Transit Association
- Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System
- MaineDOT Climate Initiative
- Candidate Education
- Member & Legislator Education
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
- Non-domiciled CDL Holders

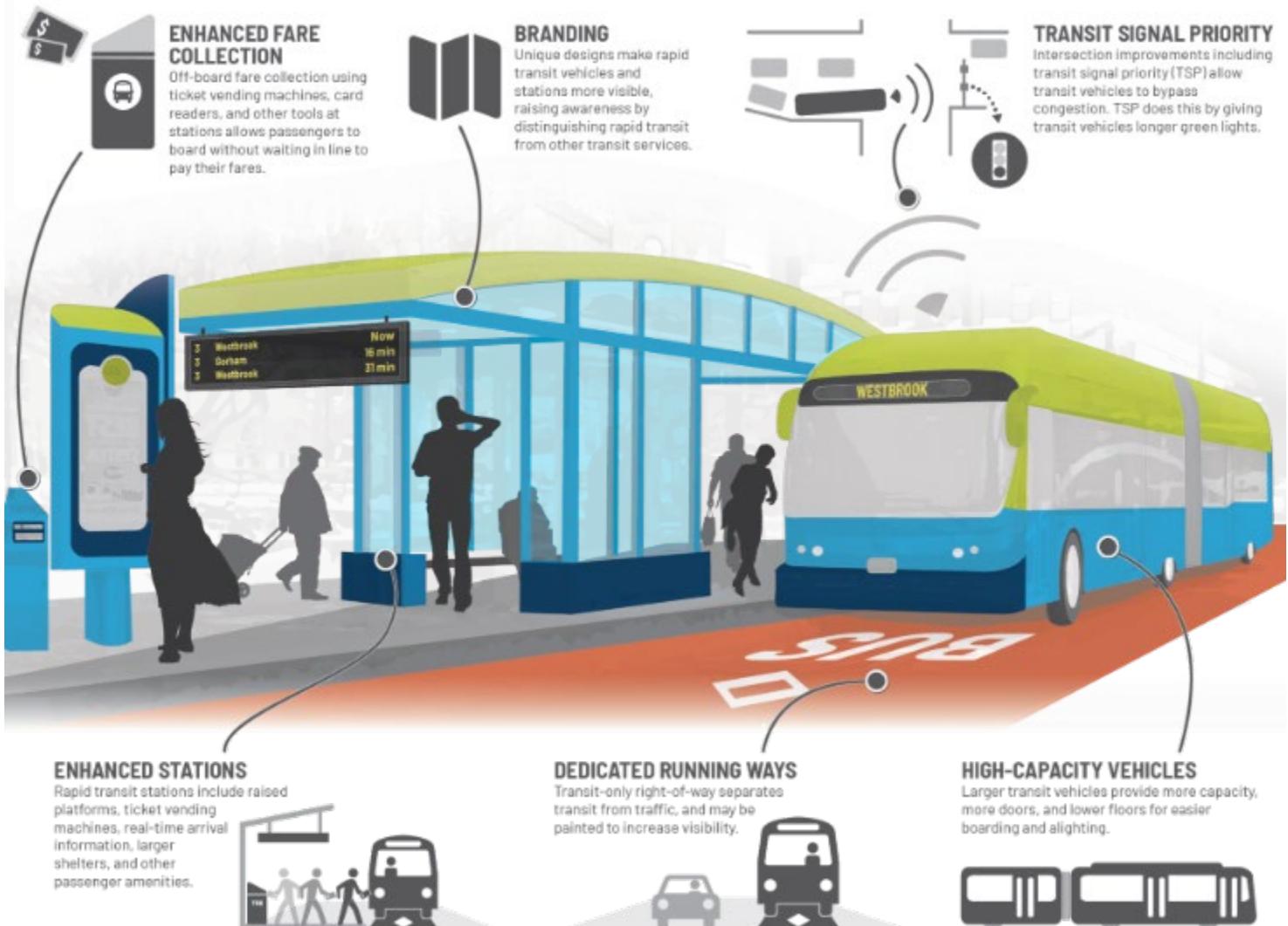


# BRT Advocacy Plan



- Create a communications plan for local media and residents (incl. new branding for the project)
- Find (or create!) a few super-supporters in each city/town
- Further develop the Strategy Chart; better understand board & staff superpowers
- “Train” the supporters and Metro board members in the comms plan, basic advocacy persuasion techniques

# BRT Advocacy Plan



# BRT Advocacy Plan



## Messaging

This is media advocacy, we are trying to convince people to agree with us.

- Frame the conversation around mobility, choice, and economic growth rather than *just another bus or more taxes*
- *“A modern, reliable connection between Maine’s fastest-growing communities — designed to move people, not just cars.”*
- Message Segmentation
  - Residents/Commuters, Electeds & Staff (state & local), Employers, MDOT/MTA, Media, Metro Internal

# BRT Advocacy Plan



Goals	Organizational Considerations	Constituents, Allies, Opposition	Decision Maker(s)	Tactics
Long Term	Resources	Constituents	Primary	
Medium Term	Capacity Building	Allies	Secondary	
Short Term	Internal Problems	Opposition		

Goals	Organizational Considerations	Constituents, Allies, Opposition	Decision Maker(s)	Tactics
<b>Long Term</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successful BRT service</li> <li>Overwhelming Support</li> <li>80% satisfaction rate</li> <li>80% full rate</li> </ul>	<b>Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BRT Analysis</li> <li>BRT Field Trip</li> <li>Decision Maker Mtgs</li> </ul> </li> <li>Trained board members</li> </ul>	<b>Constituents</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board of Directors</li> <li>Staff</li> </ul> <b>Allies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GPCOG</li> <li>MaineDOT</li> <li>Me Turnpike Auth.</li> <li>PTAC</li> <li>MTA</li> <li>Governor</li> <li>GOPIF Climate Council</li> <li>USM Staff &amp; Students</li> <li>Rock Row</li> <li>Local Employers</li> <li>Bicycle Coalition</li> </ul> <b>Opposition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gorham City Councilor Jones</li> <li>Rail enthusiasts</li> </ul>	<b>Primary</b> Gorham City Councilor Jones  <b>Secondary</b> Gorham City Councilor Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BRT field trip</li> <li>Press events</li> <li>Letter writing &amp; Op-Ed campaign</li> <li>On-site bus parties</li> <li>Council meeting presentations</li> <li>Local info sessions</li> </ul>
<b>Medium Term</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% full rate</li> <li>Pass Program Sales</li> </ul>	<b>Capacity Building</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased staff involvement</li> <li>Increased board involvement in advocacy all around</li> </ul>			
<b>Short Term</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great press &amp; comms plan</li> <li>Majority Support</li> <li>Pass Program Sales</li> </ul>	<b>Internal Problems</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of passion for BRT</li> </ul>			

# BRT Advocacy Plan



## Transit Measures by the Numbers



**November 4, 2025: 13 of 16 measures passed → \$11.64B funding**

**Overall 2025: 16 of 19 measures passed → 84% success rate**

**Mecklenburg County, NC:** 1-cent sales tax → \$11.64B over 30 years (40% roads, 40% rail, 20% bus/microtransit)

**Kalamazoo County, MI:** 1.1-mill CCTA tax → \$39M first year

**City of Niles, MI:** Millage renewal → \$529K annually

**Albuquerque, NM:** \$1.63M GO bond for public transit facilities

**Ellensburg, WA:** Replaced expiring 0.2% Transit Benefit District tax

**Colorado Regional Transportation Authorities (RTAs) approved in 6 jurisdictions, with pass rates 56–89%**

# BRT Advocacy Plan



# Field Trip!

City	Distance from Portland	What to See?
Boston, MA	100 miles 1 hr, 45 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Silver Line BRT (side-running bus lanes, busway, enhanced stations, low-floor boarding).</li><li>•Columbus Avenue center-running bus lanes and stations.</li><li>•Discussion of the Bus Priority Vision.</li><li>•Side-running bus lanes in a downtown environment</li></ul>
Providence, RI	165 miles 2 hr, 30 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Downtown Transit Connector (side-running bus lanes, queue jumps, TSP).</li><li>•R-Line BRT lite (side-running bus lanes, enhanced stations, branded buses).</li><li>•CCRI Warwick and Pawtucket/Central Falls hub connections.</li></ul>

# BRT Advocacy Plan



# Field Trip!

City	Distance from Portland	What to See?
Hartford, CT	205 miles 3 hr, 15 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•CTfastrak is arguably the most successful BRT system in New England.</li><li>•Features bus-only roadway, enhanced stations, branded vehicles, TOD, and integrated network.</li></ul>
Albany, NY	270 miles 4 hr, 30 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•BusPlus network (Purple Line is most recently completed, also Blue Line and Red Line), features branded low-floor vehicles, enhanced stations, TSP, and short bus lanes.</li></ul>

# Future Agenda Items

- Federal Initiatives Affecting Transit
- Bus Rapid Transit
- Workplan Development (Strategic Plan)
- Coalition Building, State Advocacy; Local as appropriate

# Upcoming Meetings

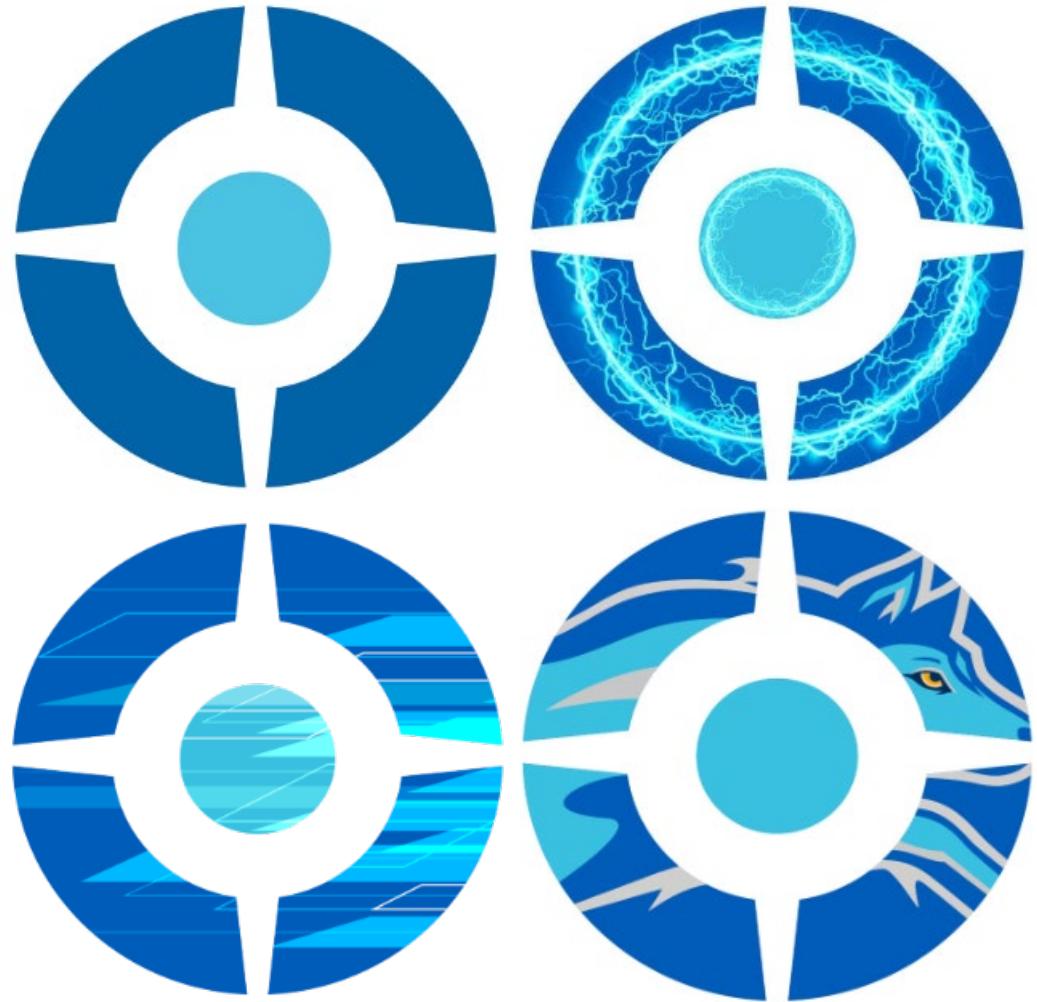
- Board of Directors – Thursday, December 11, 2025  
at 4:00pm
- 2026 Meetings TBD

# GREATER PORTLAND METRO

Advocacy Committee

November 19, 2025

# Adjourn



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GREATER PORTLAND ON-DEMAND TRANSIT



## ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

## AGENDA ITEM 4

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**DATE**

February 19, 2026

**SUBJECT**

Legislative Update

**PURPOSE**

Review future, pending or recently passed legislation that could impact Metro's operations.

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

**At the State level**, we have been active on one new bill and we continue to monitor two resolves that required action and reports at the end of last year and early this.

LD 2062, *An Act to Enhance the Safety of Public Transit Bus Operators Through the Installation of Vehicle Security Barriers*, had its public hearing January 15 and a work session January 29, 2026. There are significant changes from the original language, but the final language is amendable to Metro and our transit partners.

LD 1357, *Resolve, To Direct The Department Of Transportation To Report Progress Made Toward Implementing Recommendations Based On The 2025 Public Transit Advisory Council Report*, was submitted to the Committee on Transportation. Staff from MaineDOT reported their response to the Committee on January 22, 2026.

LD 1451, *Resolve, Directing The Department Of Transportation To Establish The Maine Coordinating Working Group On Access And Mobility*, is meeting about every two weeks. Megan will monitor the committee's ongoing work.

**On the Federal front**, the Senate and House passed all the necessary funding mechanisms, including the THUD appropriation. As you know, this has been a long process culminating in two government shutdowns and competing priorities in the House and the Senate and between parties. You have seen previous breakdowns of the funding levels at each level, and here is the final, signed total.

Program	FY25 Enacted	House Proposal	Senate Proposal	Final Enacted
<b>Total Transit Funding</b>	\$20.9B	\$19.2B	\$21.1B	<b>\$21.1B</b>

Program	FY25 Enacted	House Proposal	Senate Proposal	Final Enacted
<b>FTA (Annual Discretionary)</b>	\$16.6B	\$16.8B	\$16.5B	<b>\$16.5B</b>
<b>Capital Investment Grants</b>	\$3.8B	\$1.65B	\$3.55B	<b>\$3.3B</b>
<b>Bus &amp; Bus Facilities (Total)</b>	\$1.0B	Flat	\$1.1B	<b>\$1.1B</b>
<b>Low-No Vehicle Grants</b>	\$1.1B*	N/A	N/A	<b>\$1.1B*</b>
<b>Formula Grants (Total)</b>	\$14.2B	\$14.6B	\$14.6B	<b>\$14.6B</b>
<b>Transit Earmarks (CDS)</b>	\$0**	\$96M	N/A	<b>\$147.9M</b>

Here are some key takeaways:

- The federal budget is no longer a threat to our baseline service for now; it is funded as a stable foundation. However, the 'new normal' involves faster deadlines and more scrutiny.
- The "win" on Earmarks: The final CDS level of \$147.9 million is a significant jump from the \$96 million we were tracking in January – while a significant decline in the previous, appropriated level of \$2.6 billion. While Maine's current project list is heavy on DOT road projects, this restored "member-driven" pot is a key target for our future capital needs.
- Formula Stability: Formula grants are locked at \$14.6 billion, providing the bas we need for our existing service levels and the Scarborough expansion.
- New Oversight/Timeline Risks: The bill includes a strict 120-day deadline for the FTA to allocate designated project funds. We must ensure our grant funds are procured and allocated quickly to protect the funds. Previously granted but unallocated funds were rescinded, partially resulting in the increased CDS funding level.

The Surface Transportation reauthorization was included in the much broader *Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA)*, but it expires on September 30, 2026.

- According to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, one of its main priorities for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress is passing the next bipartisan, multi-year surface transportation reauthorization before the current law expires.

- In January 2025, the Committee began holding hearings to examine different aspects of our highway, transit, and rail transportation programs and ensure that Committee Members gather information in preparation for the development of this legislation.
- On the Senate side, the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Chair has indicated plans to release legislative text in early 2026, with a target for committee markup in early March 2026.
- Senator Jack Reed, D-RI, organized a [letter of support](#) urging Senate Banking Committee and Appropriations Committee leaders to ensure robust public transit funding in the next Surface Transportation Authorization bill. Specifically, the letter urges the Committee leaders to maintain current advance appropriations for public transit and ensure that at least 20 percent of new revenues to the Highway Trust Fund support public transportation.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Undetermined at this time.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Information only.

#### **CONTACT**

Megan Hannan  
Director of Government Affairs  
207-221-8709  
[mhannan@gpmetro.org](mailto:mhannan@gpmetro.org)



## ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

## AGENDA ITEM 5

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**DATE**

February 19, 2026

**SUBJECT**

Advocacy Update

**PURPOSE**

Review on-going advocacy efforts that impact Metro's operations.

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

The Director of Government Affairs and Community Engagement continues to actively work to position Metro as a leader in advocacy for public transit industry in the State of Maine. To that end, staff have been involved in the various statewide advocacy organizations including leadership positions for two. The Committee will hear updates about the following advocacy organizations and initiatives:

- Gubernatorial Candidate Education
- MEREDA / GPCOG Housing & Transit
- Public Transit Advisory Council
- Maine Transit Association
- Non-Domiciled CDL Holders

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Undetermined at this time.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Information only.

**CONTACT**

Megan Hannan

Director of Government Affairs

207-221-8709

[mhannan@gpmetro.org](mailto:mhannan@gpmetro.org)