

# Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority



## March 2018

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### Board of Directors Briefing Materials

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March 26, 2018

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**NNEPRA Office**  
**75 W Commercial St., Suite 104**  
**Portland, Maine**  
**1:00pm**

[AmtrakDowneaster.com](http://AmtrakDowneaster.com)



## **NNEPRA FY2018 Action Plan**

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority 75 W. Commercial Street, Portland, ME 04101 207-780-1000  
Draft 9/30/2017

### **Meet or exceed projected Performance Benchmarks**

- 46% Total Cost Recovery
- 85% On Time Performance
- 84% Café Cost Recovery in Café
- 95% Overall Customer Satisfaction

### **Improve Service Efficiency**

- Increase revenue on peak trains
- Maximize equipment utilization
- Increase performance on off-peak trains
- Improve cost recovery in Café

### **Improve Passenger Services & Communication**

- Implement PIDS at Maine Stations
- Promote and improve connectivity to Amtrak network
- Formalize Station Ambassador Program
- Improve/promote last mile connectivity
- Improve customer interface on AmtrakDowneaster.com
- Seek ways to improve bicycle access

### **Sponsor Capital Projects to improve service quality and efficiency**

- Complete MBTA Haverhill Line Project
- Support Kennebunk Station development
- Secure Funding for and complete Rockingham Siding Rehabilitation
- Initiate Royal Junction Siding Construction
- Participate in Portland Station improvements
- Develop Wells Siding/Platform concept into a potential program.
- Plan FY19 tie replacement program

### **Explore Options for Service Improvement/Expansions**

- Manage Lewiston/Auburn Service Planning study
- Identify opportunities for additional service growth
- Explore implementation of seasonal service on Rockland Branch

### **Maintain Compliance with all Regulations**

- Improve and enhance written policies & procedures
- Improve and enhance data collection & reporting
- Improve internal documentation processes.

### **Identify and Promote Economic and Public Benefits associated with the Downeaster.**

**Work to secure a stable, dedicated and equitable funding mechanisms to sustain Downeaster operations and continued capital investments in the Downeaster Corridor.**

## **BOARD of DIRECTORS MEETING AGENDA**

### **March 26, 2018**

12:15pm      Vote to open meeting and enter Executive Session

1. 1 MRS § 405(6)(C) and 23 MRS § 8115-A to discuss negotiations with Amtrak regarding the operating agreement.

1:00pm      Vote to close Executive Session and open Public Session

- Welcome & Introductions
- Approval of Minutes from February 2018 Board Meeting
- Performance Update
  - Ridership & Revenue
  - Reliability & Customer Satisfaction
- Finance Report
  - Budget Variance Report
- Status Update: FY2018 Action Plan
- 2018 Project Updates
  - Construction Projects
  - PIDS
  - “Coastal Connection” Pilot
  - Lewiston/Auburn Passenger Rail Service Plan
- Other Business
- Public Comment

Next Meeting:  
March 26, 2018



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors  
Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority**

February 26, 2018  
University of Southern Maine  
Portland, ME

**Directors in attendance:**

Mr. Brian Hobart, Mr. Ron McKinnon, Mr. John Melrose, Mr. George Gervais, Mr. Herb Thomson, Mr. Dana Connors, and Mr. Charles Large

**Staff in attendance:**

Ms. Patricia Quinn, Mr. James Russell, Ms. Marina Douglass, Ms. Natalie Bogart, Mr. Brian Beeler, Ms. Jennifer Crosby, and Mr. Stephen Houdlette

**Interested parties:**

Mr. Wayne Davis, TrainRiders Northeast; Mr. Dana Knapp, Concord Coach; Mr. Bill Lord; TrainRiders Northeast; Mr. Bernie Breitbart, All Aboard Brunswick; Ms. Alison Harris, Brunswick Resident; Mr. Gordan Page, Rockland Main Street; Mr. Tom Peaco, Penobscot Bay Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Stephen Corcoran, Amtrak; Mr. Kevin Chittenden, Amtrak; Mr. Richard Rudolph, Rail Users Network; Mr. Stanley C. Koski, Maine Rail Group; Mr. Paul Weiss, Maine Sierra Club; Mr. Tony Donovan, Maine Sierra Club; Mr. Zander Shaw, Rockland Resident; Mr. Josh Levey, Waterstone Development; and, Mr. Greg Day, Waterstone Development

**Opening Remarks**

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**Motion to open Public Session at 12:08pm**

Motion: Mr. McKinnon  
Seconded: Mr. Hobart  
Accepted: All

**Motion to enter Executive Session at 12:09pm for:**

1. 1 MRS § 405(6)(C) and 23 MRS § 8115-A to discuss negotiations with Amtrak regarding the operating agreement.

Motion: Mr. Connors  
Seconded: Mr. Large  
Accepted: All

**Motion to reopen Public Session at 1:00pm**

Motion: Mr. Hobart  
Seconded: Mr. McKinnon  
Accepted: All

**Vote to accept minutes as presented by the staff**

Motion: Mr. Connors  
Seconded: Mr. Thomson  
Accepted: All

**DOWNEASTER PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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Ms. Quinn reviewed the Performance Report highlighting the following:

- FY18 ridership from July 2017 through January 2018 was 332,273, 9% above target of 304,700.
- January 2018 ridership of 34,458, 6% below target of 36,800.
- January 2018 revenue of \$623,626, \$7,288 below target of \$630,915.
- FY18 to date revenue July 2017 through January 2018 of 6,150,680, 16% above target of 5,289,740. FY18 to Date Average fare per passenger was \$18.51.
  - March ridership is lagging slightly behind projections;
- February 2018 ridership is on target to meet projections.
- Overall CSI score through November 2017 is 87%. Amtrak national CSI scores are trending down.
  - Stephen Corcoran noted that CSI scores have likely been negatively impacted by weather. Onboard train heating/ cooling system has struggled to regulate during the big swings in outdoor temperatures in October, November and December.
- OTP continues to be a challenge with signal issues, a broken rail, etc. OTP month-to-date is 75%.

**Marketing Update- Natalie Bogart**

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- Ms. Bogart provided an overview of marketing initiatives:
  - Ms. Bogart noted that Maine school vacation week had solid ridership.
  - NNEPRA is partnering with Thompson's Point on a number of special events including, The Maine Flower Show and Sunaana Music Festival.
  - Ms. Bogart and Ms. Crosby will be attending the AAA Travel Marketplace in Foxboro, MA to promote taking The Train to Maine.

**FINANCE REPORT – Marina Douglass**

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Ms. Douglass reviewed the December 2017 preliminary finance report.

**Vote to accept preliminary variance Report**

Motion: Mr. Thomson  
Seconded: Mr. Hobart  
Accepted: All

**Project Updates – Jim Russell**

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- Mr. Russell noted that most Projects are on hold due to winter weather and will resume in the spring.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

### Downeaster Coastal Connection

- Mr. Melrose opened the discussion acknowledging the significant public support and work done by the NNEPRA staff and the proposed station communities for the pilot program for passenger rail service to Bath, Wiscasset, Newcastle, and Rockland this summer.
- Ms. Quinn noted that recent changes in Amtrak's national policy concerning operating trains in "dark" territory, now require an additional level of review before Amtrak can commit to operating service. This is expected to delay the start of the proposed "Coastal Connection" service by approximately one month.
- Mr. Melrose added that the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) provided a letter reiterating it would not approve any State or federal funding to support the passenger operations on the Rockland Branch. The letter further stated that the MaineDOT is assessing bridges on the Rockland Branch, which may limit the speed of passenger trains.
- Given these considerations, the Board proposed operating a three-week pilot in August, focusing on anticipated high ridership around events: Rockland Lobster fest, Rockland Boat Show, and Dome Car. Believe these three-weekends have the potential to breakeven requiring no subsidy.
- Mr. Connors noted that the Board recognizes intent to move forward under necessary requirements and is hopeful to negotiate three-weekends of service with MaineDOT.

### Public Comment

- Mr. Shaw, introduced himself as a Rockland resident who lives next to the Rockland train station. Mr. Shaw supports rail transit and the Downeaster expanding to Rockland, but expressed concerns about noise, air quality/ diesel fumes.  
Mr. Donovan shared his support of expansion to Rockland. Mr. Donovan noted that service to Lewiston Auburn (L/A) should come first. In addition, Mr. Donovan asked if Amtrak must be the operator and suggested that NNEPRA investigate using DMUs to mitigate pollution. Mr. Donovan requested that he be added to list of public hearings.
- Ms. Quinn responded that the limited service to Rockland is an extension of Downeaster service which is only financially feasible because it will use the existing equipment pool and crews.
- Ms. Quinn responded that Amtrak is exploring a new fleet for the national network and that DMU's are among the equipment types being considered.
- Mr. Rudolph inquired into the recent comments made by Amtrak president regarding PTC and trains not operating in dark territory and asked if this is a threat to the Downeaster service.
- Ms. Quinn responded that Congress has mandated that PTC must be installed on routes where more than 12 passenger trains operating along with freight trains by December 31, 2018. The MBTA portion of the Downeaster route is required to be PTC compliant by that date due to frequency, but the portions in NH and Maine is not.

- Mr. Peaco with the Penobscot Bay Chamber of Commerce noted that he received overwhelming positive public comment about service to Rockland and believes it would be a mistake to put this off to 2019. Mr. Peaco cautioned that it would be a big mistake to pull the rug out from community members and businesses now that they are very excited about the opportunities.

**Vote to approve three-weekend pilot in August with understanding of the following conditions:**

- 1. An operating agreement between CMQ and Amtrak can be reached**
- 2. Amtrak-FRA safety requirements are met.**
- 3. The Brunswick to Rockland travel time is 2hr 15 minutes or less**
- 4. The timetable is compliant with recommendations from the bridge study**

Motion: Mr. Connors

Seconded: Mr. Hobart

Accepted: All (Mr. Thomson abstained)

**Other Business**

**Lewiston Auburn Passenger Rail Service Plan**

Ms. Quinn reported that a service plan for passenger rail service to Lewiston Auburn is being developed with VHB. Information about the project is posted on NNEPRA.com projects page. Two public meetings are scheduled for March 27 and 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Public Comment**

- Mr. Rudolph requested that consultants provide opportunity for various passenger rail advocacy groups to meet with them. Ms. Quinn responded that she would relay the information to the stakeholder group.

**Waterstone Presentation**

- Greg Day and Josh Levy from Waterstone Properties gave a presentation on their Transit Oriented Development project in Westbrook.
- If funding is secured, Mr. Day requested that NNEPRA manage and lead the feasibility studies for this transit concept.

**Vote to approve the request for NNEPRA to manage and lead a feasibility study for transit concept if funding is secured.**

- Motion: Mr. Connors
- Seconded: Mr. Hobart
- Accepted: All

**Public Comment**

Mr. Weiss expressed concern that the trail study sponsored by GPCOG represented a conflict of interest because they are using the same consultant (VHB) which is conducting the L/A Passenger Rail Service Plan project. Ms. Quinn stated that there was no conflict of interest, the projects were procured separately and are not mutually exclusive. She further noted that that there are many places where high speed trains operate alongside pedestrian trails.

**Vote to adjourn at 2:28 pm**

Motion: Mr. Large

Seconded: Mr. McKinnon

Accepted: All

**NEXT MEETING: March 26, 2018 at the NNEPRA office.**



## Downeaster Performance Update

Fiscal Year 2018 to date: July 2017-January 2018

Ridership						
	FY2017 Actual	FY2018 Actual	FY2018 Target	Variance to Target	Var %	Passenger Miles
July	51,402	<b>57,652</b>	50,000	7,652	15%	4,865,639
<b>August</b>	53,627	<b>57,306</b>	54,400	2,906	5%	4,767,867
September	45,315	<b>50,016</b>	46,000	4,016	9%	4,034,228
October	38,979	<b>47,174</b>	40,000	7,174	18%	3,812,780
November	35,599	<b>42,110</b>	39,000	3,110	8%	3,369,379
December	38,259	<b>43,557</b>	38,500	5,057	13%	3,578,943
January	37,915	<b>34,458</b>	36,800	(2,342)	-6%	-
February	37,275	<b>37,498</b>	36,900	598	2%	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>338,371</b>	<b>369,771</b>	<b>341,600</b>	<b>28,171</b>	<b>8%</b>	

Revenue						
	FY2017 Actual	FY2018 Actual	FY2018 Target	Variance to Target	Var %	Average Fare
July	\$ 921,482	\$ <b>1,042,712</b>	\$ 887,500	\$ 155,212	17%	\$ 18.09
<b>August</b>	\$ 942,790	\$ <b>1,052,422</b>	\$ 965,600	\$ 86,822	9%	\$ 18.36
September	\$ 752,830	\$ <b>933,017</b>	\$ 772,800	\$ 160,217	21%	\$ 18.65
October	\$ 550,988	\$ <b>875,607</b>	\$ 685,403	\$ 190,204	28%	\$ 18.56
November	\$ 539,612	\$ <b>791,778</b>	\$ 679,677	\$ 112,102	16%	\$ 18.80
December	\$ 660,248	\$ <b>831,519</b>	\$ 667,845	\$ 163,674	25%	\$ 19.09
January	\$ 651,837	\$ <b>623,626</b>	\$ 630,915	\$ (7,288)	-1%	\$ 18.10
February	\$ 675,094	\$ <b>698,382</b>	\$ 668,306	\$ 30,076	5%	\$ 18.62
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 5,694,881</b>	<b>6,849,062</b>	<b>5,958,046</b>	<b>891,017</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>18.52</b>

Customer Satisfaction			
February	Downeaster	Amtrak	FY to Date
Overall Customer Satisfaction	89	85	89
Value of Amtrak Service for Price Paid	86	81	87
Overall Cleanliness of Train	89	85	89
Clarity of Announcements	80	80	82
Friendliness/Helpfulness of Train Conductor	90	89	92
Friendliness/Helpfulness of Café Car Personnel	95	87	93
Quality/Freshness of Food in Café Car	86	78	84
Overall Experience in Café Car	87	80	87

Performance						
Calendar	October	November	December	January	February	March
2018	58%	67%	67%	65%	76%	73%
2017	75%	66%	61%	82%	74%	80%



<b>PRELIMINARY VARIANCE REPORT - FEBRUARY 2018</b>							
	Current Month Actual	Current Month Budget	Current Month Variance	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Year to Date Variance	Year to Date Percent
<b>Revenues</b>							
<b>Operating Revenue</b>							
Amtrak Ticket Revenue	698,382	668,306	30,076	6,849,063	5,958,046	891,017	15%
Food Service Revenue	53,286	57,195	(3,909)	553,330	529,480	23,850	5%
Advertising Revenue	495	0	495	4,008	1,500	2,508	167%
Parking Lot Revenue	37,486	30,000	7,486	389,476	331,900	57,576	17%
Interest on Accounts	1,152	141	1,011	6,852	1,128	5,724	507%
Other Revenue	19,557	24,809	(5,252)	173,446	217,307	(43,861)	-20%
<b>Total Operating Revenues</b>	<b>810,358</b>	<b>780,451</b>	<b>29,907</b>	<b>7,976,174</b>	<b>7,039,361</b>	<b>936,813</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>							
<b>Wages and Benefits</b>							
Permanent Full-Time	31,717	31,982	(265)	252,537	252,952	(415)	0%
Benefits	20,704	20,742	(38)	164,816	164,812	4	0%
<b>Total Wages and Benefits</b>	<b>52,420</b>	<b>52,724</b>	<b>(304)</b>	<b>417,353</b>	<b>417,764</b>	<b>(411)</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Administration</b>							
Office Expenses	7,449	10,480	(3,031)	68,781	76,288	(7,507)	-10%
Professional Services	1,887	8,334	(6,447)	49,454	86,672	(37,218)	-43%
Insurance	2,439	2,552	(113)	19,704	20,046	(342)	-2%
Board Operations	1,848	1,638	210	12,055	13,054	(999)	-8%
<b>Total Administration Expenses</b>	<b>13,623</b>	<b>23,004</b>	<b>(9,381)</b>	<b>149,995</b>	<b>196,060</b>	<b>(46,065)</b>	<b>-23%</b>
<b>Train Operations</b>							
Amtrak Operations	1,300,442	1,300,442	0	10,433,092	10,434,250	(1,158)	0%
Train Fuel Cost	152,646	160,000	(7,354)	1,229,984	1,280,000	(50,016)	-4%
PanAm	107,170	107,170	0	883,986	854,324	29,662	3%
Other Train Operations	4,567	2,802	1,765	34,382	23,916	10,466	44%
Facilities	41,858	25,944	15,914	240,832	188,492	52,340	28%
Capital Maintenance	0	0	0	30,202	26,200	4,002	15%
<b>Total Train Operations</b>	<b>1,606,683</b>	<b>1,596,358</b>	<b>10,325</b>	<b>12,852,477</b>	<b>12,807,182</b>	<b>45,295</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Station Operations</b>							
Portland Station	30,900	31,150	(250)	252,165	244,950	7,215	3%
Platform Ins	10,904	11,302	(398)	87,571	88,436	(865)	-1%
Station Platform Leases	0	0	0	32,689	32,964	(275)	-1%
Other Station Improvements	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Station Operations</b>	<b>41,804</b>	<b>42,452</b>	<b>(648)</b>	<b>372,425</b>	<b>366,350</b>	<b>6,075</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Food Service</b>							
Regular	70,768	68,265	2,503	631,681	631,960	(279)	0%
<b>Total Food Service</b>	<b>70,768</b>	<b>68,265</b>	<b>2,503</b>	<b>631,681</b>	<b>631,960</b>	<b>(279)</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Marketing</b>							
Marketing	26,453	27,000	(547)	293,497	294,300	(803)	0%
<b>Total Marketing</b>	<b>26,453</b>	<b>27,000</b>	<b>(547)</b>	<b>293,497</b>	<b>294,300</b>	<b>(803)</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,811,751</b>	<b>1,809,803</b>	<b>1,948</b>	<b>14,717,428</b>	<b>14,713,616</b>	<b>3,812</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Additional Funding Required</b>	<b>1,001,392</b>	<b>1,029,352</b>	<b>(27,960)</b>	<b>6,741,253</b>	<b>7,674,255</b>	<b>(933,002)</b>	<b>-12%</b>
<b>Revenue Per Passenger</b>	<b>21.61</b>	<b>21.15</b>		<b>21.57</b>	<b>20.61</b>		
<b>Cost Recovery</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>43%</b>		<b>54%</b>	<b>48%</b>		
<b>Café Cost Recovery</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>84%</b>		<b>88%</b>	<b>84%</b>		