

# Board Briefing Materials

## November 23, 2020

Virtual Meeting

10:00am Public Session



For More Information

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**NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND  
PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY**



## NNEPRA FY2021 *Draft* Action Plan

FY21 will focus on weathering the COVID-19 pandemic, recovering from its impacts, and preparing for an unknown and new “normal” going forward.

### Core Objectives:

- **Support and maintain a culture of health and safety.**
- **Provide a high-quality service at levels which meet the needs of the travelling public.**
- **Seek and secure funding opportunities to support operations and service improvement projects.**
- **Remain informed, nimble and positioned to adjust and adapt to changing circumstances.**

### Goals/Action Items:

- **Continue to implement, support and/or communicate practices which maximize the health and safety of our riders, our front-line service providers, and our team.**
- **Develop a Business Plan and strategic framework to address the challenges and opportunities in the post-pandemic world.**
- **Improve communication with riders and keep our partners and stakeholders engaged with efforts to enhance service.**
- **Advance Capital Projects to Improve Safety, Service Quality and Efficiency**
  - Wells Siding Project
  - State of Good Repair Projects
  - Positive Train Control
- **Explore Options for Service Improvement/Expansions**
  - Portland Station options and alternatives on the Mainline
  - A platform at West Falmouth Crossing
  - Enhanced connectivity to Amtrak’s national network
  - Other planning initiatives as appropriate

## **NNEPRA BOARD of DIRECTORS**

*November 23, 2020*

**Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority**

**Virtual Zoom Meeting**

### **10:00am      Vote to open meeting**

- Welcome and Introductions
  - Ground rules for virtual format
- Approval of Minutes from September 28, 2020 Board Meeting
- Performance Update
- Finance Update
- Project Updates
- Other Business
- Public Comment

**Next Meeting: TBD**



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

September 28th, 2020

### Directors in Attendance via Zoom Teleconference:

Mr. John Melrose, Chair; Mr. Brian Hobart; Mr. Steve Lyons; Mr. Ron McKinnon, Mr. Bruce Van Note

### Staff in Attendance via Zoom Teleconference:

Ms. Patricia Quinn, Mr. Brian Beeler, Ms. Natalie Bogart, Ms. Jennifer Crosby, Mr. William Gayle, Ms. Leslie Guerrette, Mr. Stephen Houdlette, Mr. James Russell

### Interested Parties via Zoom Teleconference:

Mr. Ralph Cusack, Nextdine; Mr. Carmen Morello, Nextdine; Mr. Greg Girard, Nextdine; Mr. Kevin Chittenden, Amtrak; Ms. Kathleen DeSilva, Rinck Advertising; Mr. Tony Donovan, Maine Rail Transit Coalition; Mr. Richard Rudolph, Maine Rail Group; Mr. Stan Koski, Maine Rail Group; Mr. Dana Knapp, Concord Coach Lines

## Opening Remarks

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### Motion to Open Public Session at 10:00am

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

### Motion to Approve the July 27, 2020 Minutes

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

## OVERVIEW OF DOWNEASTER PERFORMANCE IN JULY – Patricia Quinn

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Patricia Quinn provided an overview of Phase 1 Downeaster performance report.

Chairman Melrose requested clarification on what restrictions are in place for travel to Massachusetts. Patricia Quinn noted that passengers traveling between Maine and Massachusetts are no longer required to quarantine for 14 days or take a COVID test.

### MARKETING UPDATE – Natalie Bogart

Natalie Bogart provided an overview of recent media campaign for return to service. Marketing efforts have been focused on brand awareness and NNEPRA continues to conduct rider surveys on travel behaviors, schedule preferences, and customers concerns and barriers to travel. NNEPRA remains connected with customers through a variety of communication channels.

Commissioner Van Note noted that messaging from the Department of Economic Development had been focused on more of a “staycation”. Steve Lyons expanded mentioned that the Office of Tourism has begun focusing advertising on the five states that are currently exempt from the quarantine restrictions through October.

Chairman Melrose asked about specific aspects of train travel which distinguish themselves as positives when traveling, such as air exchange, size of the cars, etc. Natalie Bogart noted that space and room to move around is important to customers. Chairman Melrose also noted that air exchange rate in Amtrak rail cars is frequent. Brian Beeler confirmed that onboard filtration systems exchange fresh air in Amtrak rail cars every 4-5 minutes.

## **DOWNEASTER STATION UPDATE –Brian Beeler**

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Brian Beeler reported that Downeaster trains now accept roll-on bike service to/from any Downeaster station. He also reported on safety-related technology improvements Amtrak has implemented which are now available on the Downeaster which include the Ride Reserve program enabling passengers travelling with an unreserved pass to reserve their seat and support social distancing prior to travel, and the availability of an online Capacity Indicator allowing passengers to see how full a train is in real time before reserving their ticket and/or travelling.

Director Hobart provided an update of the Station Committee meeting on September 24th. Representatives from each of the station communities participated with positive support and high turn-out from various municipal staff including town managers and planners.

## **VARIANCE REPORT– Leslie Guerrette**

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Leslie Guerrette provided an overview of the variance report. Chairman Melrose asked about the federal revenue forecast for the months ahead. Patricia Quinn responded that all state partners, including NNEPRA, are currently in fixed fee relationship with Amtrak due to CARES Act. Amtrak had forecasts that the fixed fee amount is likely extended through December. NNEPRA continues to work with Amtrak and the States for additional funding.

## **Motion to Approve Variance Report as Presented**

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

## **PROJECT UPDATES – Jim Russell**

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Jim Russell provided an overview of several capital maintenance projects that were completed including the Fore River Bridge tie replacement as well as upcoming work related to grade crossing replacements and brush cutting. He also noted that the Thompson's Point utility relocation in the vicinity of the Portland Layover facility has been going well.

William Gayle provided an update on the Wells CRISI grant noting the project is currently working its way through approval of the grant agreement and environmental work. He further noted that an announcement regarding the FY20 State of Good Repair grant application was expected in late October.

Bruce Van Note provided a brief update on the Portland Transportation Study. The Study is being finalized for comment by stakeholders but does not show any of the proposed locations having a large benefit over any other site. Maine DOT hopes to have a draft of the report ready soon.

Patricia Quinn commented that the Pan Am Railways sale is continuing however did not have any additional news to share.

## **OTHER BUSINESS – Patricia Quinn**

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Patricia Quinn provided an overview of the FY21 Action Plan in development discussing each of the core objectives and action items. Chairman Melrose and Commissioner Van Note provided comments that the current environment makes planning for the future difficult and that the focus for now should continue to remain on getting through the pandemic. Commissioner Van Note thanked the Board for the work on the Lewiston/Auburn Rail Study and noted Maine DOT is committed to working with the communities in coming to the table for the next phase of the study. Patricia Quinn requested the Board send any additional thoughts and feedback on the Plan back to staff.

Patricia Quinn noted the intention to put together a strategic framework to assist in scenario planning the different trends that may appear in the near future to be better able to proactively respond to situation in the future.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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Tony Donovan, Maine Rail Transit, asked if projects that NNEPRA is pursuing in the future would be a part of the State's rail plan and asked if the State of Maine had interest in purchasing a portion of Pan Am Railways line.

Commissioner Van Note noted that the long-range projects identified by NNEPRA should be incorporated into updates of the State's rail plan and that staff is working on that and that it is unlikely the State would be in a position to buy the line at this time, but would continue to monitor the situation.

## **Motion to Adjourn at 11:15pm**

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



### Downeaster Pandemic Recovery Period Summary

FY21 Performance			
Period	Trains Operated	Riders	Ticket Revenue
July	122	1,028	\$ 99,833
August	248	8,099	\$ 187,759
September	240	8,538	\$ 189,765
October	248	10,383	\$ 234,442
<b>Total</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>28,048</b>	<b>\$ 711,799</b>

Note: 2 daily trains operated weekdays only July 1-19.  
8 daily trains started operating July 20

### Weekly Ridership Summary

Amtrak Downeaster Ridership By Week (Mon-Sun)



On Time Performance		
	End Point	Customer
20-Jul	34.40%	40.00%
20-Aug	64.50%	79.10%
20-Sep	81.30%	88.00%
20-Oct	41.30%	64.80%
20-Nov	57.30%	74.70%

## FY2021 Draft Budget Variance Report October

Revenues	Current Month				Fiscal Year to Date			
	Oct. Actual	Oct. Budget	Variance	Percent	Actual	Budget	Variance	%
<b>Operating Revenue</b>								
Amtrak Ticket Revenue		\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	#DIV/0!
Food Service Revenue	\$ 13,059	\$ 17,050	\$ (3,991)	-23%	\$ 42,809	\$ 37,650	\$ 5,159	12.1%
Advertising Revenue	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Parking Lot Revenue	\$ 1,209	\$ 11,525	\$ (10,316)	-90%	\$ 12,355	\$ 26,625	\$ (14,270)	0.0%
Interest and Other Revenue	\$ 7,500	\$ 15,000	\$ (7,500)	-50%	\$ 29,764	\$ 60,000	\$ (30,236)	-101.6%
<b>Total Operating Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 21,768</b>	<b>\$ 43,575</b>	<b>\$ (21,807)</b>	<b>-50%</b>	<b>\$ 84,928</b>	<b>\$ 124,275</b>	<b>\$ (39,347)</b>	<b>-46.3%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
<b>Administration</b>								
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 68,762	\$ 69,000	\$ (238)	0%	\$ 274,370	\$ 276,000	\$ (1,630)	-0.6%
Office Expenses	\$ 9,500	\$ 9,000	\$ 500	5%	\$ 39,134	\$ 36,000	\$ 3,134	8.0%
Professional Services	\$ 21,699	\$ 15,000	\$ 6,699	31%	\$ 44,941	\$ 45,000	\$ (59)	-0.1%
Insurance	\$ 2,246	\$ 2,246	\$ 0	0%	\$ 9,496	\$ 8,984	\$ 512	5.4%
Board Operations	\$ 450	\$ 1,000	\$ (550)	-122%	\$ 2,042	\$ 4,000	\$ (1,958)	-96%
<b>Total Administration Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 102,657</b>	<b>\$ 96,246</b>	<b>\$ 6,411</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>\$ 369,983</b>	<b>\$ 369,984</b>	<b>\$ (1)</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Train Operations</b>								
Amtrak Operations	\$ 669,457	\$ 1,391,753	\$ (722,296)	-108%	\$ 2,617,744	\$ 2,617,744	\$ -	0.0%
Train Fuel Cost	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	#DIV/0!
Other Train Operations	\$ 500	\$ 750	\$ (250)		\$ 1,030	\$ 750	\$ 280	0.0%
Facilities	\$ 10,321	\$ 20,000	\$ (9,679)	-94%	\$ 82,164	\$ 80,000	\$ 2,164	2.6%
Capital Maintenance			\$ -	#DIV/0!			\$ -	#DIV/0!
<b>Total Train Operations</b>	<b>\$ 680,278</b>	<b>\$ 1,412,503</b>	<b>\$ (732,225)</b>	<b>-108%</b>	<b>\$ 2,700,938</b>	<b>\$ 2,698,494</b>	<b>\$ 2,444</b>	<b>0.1%</b>
<b>Station Operations</b>								
Portland Station Rent	\$ 9,100	\$ 9,300	\$ (200)	-2%	\$ 36,400	\$ 37,200	\$ (800)	-2.2%
Portland Station CAMS	\$ 21,800	\$ 22,100	\$ (300)	-1%	\$ 87,200	\$ 88,400	\$ (1,200)	-1.4%
Platform Ins.	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%
Station Platform Leases	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%
Station Improvements	\$ 4,500	\$ 3,500	\$ 1,000	28.6%	\$ 9,000	\$ 14,000	\$ (5,000)	-35.7%
<b>Total Station Operations</b>	<b>\$ 30,900</b>	<b>\$ 34,900</b>	<b>\$ (4,000)</b>	<b>-11.5%</b>	<b>\$ 132,600</b>	<b>\$ 149,574</b>	<b>\$ (16,974)</b>	<b>-11.4%</b>
<b>Food Service</b>	<b>\$ 31,597</b>	<b>\$ 66,230</b>	<b>\$ (34,633)</b>	<b>-110%</b>	<b>\$ 158,376</b>	<b>\$ 206,590</b>	<b>\$ (48,214)</b>	<b>-23.3%</b>
<b>Marketing</b>	<b>\$ 42,067</b>	<b>\$ 41,667</b>	<b>\$ 400</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>\$ 148,503</b>	<b>\$ 166,668</b>	<b>\$ (18,165)</b>	<b>-10.9%</b>
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 909,267</b>	<b>\$ 1,695,120</b>	<b>\$ (785,853)</b>	<b>-86%</b>	<b>\$ 3,595,328</b>	<b>\$ 3,715,585</b>	<b>\$ (120,257)</b>	<b>-3.2%</b>
<b>Additional Funding Required</b>	<b>\$ 887,500</b>	<b>\$ 1,651,546</b>	<b>\$ (764,046)</b>	<b>-86%</b>	<b>\$ 3,510,401</b>	<b>\$ 3,591,311</b>	<b>\$ (80,909)</b>	<b>-2.3%</b>

Note: NNEPRA has a net fixed-price agreement with Amtrak through December 2020 based on a national formula derived to allocated Amtrak CARES Act funding among Amtrak state partners. As such, Amtrak ticket revenue and some other train-related expenses are not reflected in this report.