

Board Briefing Materials

March 22, 2021

Virtual Meeting

10:00am Public Session



For More Information

 207-780-1000 x 105

 info@nnepra.com



**NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND
PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY**



NNEPRA FY2021 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

March 22, 2021

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 February 22, 2021 Board Meeting
- Performance Update
 - Ridership & Revenue Fiscal Year to Date
- Finance Update
 - Approval of Variance Report
 - Funding Overview
- Service Recovery: Next Step
 - Summer Schedule
 - Marketing & Communications
 - Customer Service Update
- Project Updates
- Other Business
- Public Comment

Next Meeting: April 26, 2021



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

February 22nd, 2021

Directors in Attendance via Zoom Teleconference:

Chairman John Melrose, Chair; Mr. Dana Connors; Mr. Brian Hobart; Mr. Ron McKinnon; Mr. Nate Moulton

Staff in Attendance via Zoom Teleconference:

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

Interested Parties via Zoom Teleconference:

Mr. Ralph Cusack, Nexdine; Mr. Bill Lord, TrainRiders Northeast; Rick Harbinson, GPCOG; Nathaniel Rosenblatt, Farrell, Rosenblatt & Russell; Mr. Thatcher Carter, Press Herald; Mr. Tony Donovan, Maine Rail Transit Coalition; Chris Chop, GPCOG; Stephen Corcoran, Amtrak; Zoe Miller, GPCOG; Mr. Wayne Davis, TrainRiders Northeast; Irwin Gratz, Maine Public Radio; Andy Sardweiss

Opening Remarks

Motion to Open Public Session at 10:03am

Motion: Mr. Hobart

Seconded: Mr. Connors

Accepted: All

Motion to Approve the November 23th, 2020 Minutes

Motion: Mr. Hobart

Seconded: Mr. Connors

Accepted: All

OVERVIEW OF DOWNEASTER PERFORMANCE – Patricia Quinn

Patricia Quinn provided an overview of the performance of the Downeaster through January 2021. Ridership experienced a positive trend, up slightly over December, however 12% of last year's monthly total. Ticket revenue experienced a slight drop however pushed the fiscal year total over \$1M. Weekly ridership appears to be increasing from the low in November. While total On-Time Performance (OTP) for the month was 79%, Customer OTP was 84%. Steve Corcoran, Amtrak, provided an update on additional efforts from Amtrak to improve OTP noting that progress is steadily improve week-over-week. Patricia noted the positive trend in percentage of ridership when compared to last year with December at 9%, January at 12%, and early figures indicate February at 15%.

VARIANCE REPORT– Patricia Quinn

Patricia Quinn provided an overview of the variance report which was modified to reflect what was budgeted for Amtrak revenue and expenses compared to actuals. Last spring, when the budget was developed, it was expected that service recovery would be further along with additional revenue. While for December, both revenue and expenses were less than projected. The Amtrak CARES funding has lasted longer than anticipated.

Chairman Melrose asked about the impact of the additional COVID relief bill in Congress. Patricia noted the new does provides funding for Amtrak and intent is to help states to offset revenue to help through the end of the calendar year.

Chairman Melrose asked for additional information related to expenses in the next Variance Report for planning purposes.

Motion to Approve Variance Report

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

UPDATE ON PORTLAND TRANSPORTATION CENTER STUDY – Patricia Quinn

Patricia Quinn provided an overview on the draft Portland Transportation Center Study released by Maine Department of Transportation for public comment. Chairman Melrose noted that the accompanying memo to project stakeholders included several guiding principles including the ability to use eminent domain. Nate Moulton, MaineDOT, noted that the language’s intent was related to adverse takings, however the goal is to develop a plan within two years if feasible. Nate Moulton noted that the Department will brief the Portland Council on March 17 for City comment. Director Connors noted that he approved of the move to a main line location however wanted to see additional clarification on the use of eminent domain. Director McKinnon concurred with the need to retain the ability to use eminent domain and wanted to see the City of Portland be a full partner in the move. Director Hobart agreed with the previous comments and with Director McKinnon’s comment about Portland.

Patricia Quinn noted there are some assumptions, conclusions and recommendations in the draft report that staff does not endorse, however the relocation of the station onto the mainline is critically important to service sustainability and growth.

During public comment, Tony Donovan asked if the City of Portland is contributing to the station relocation and questioned whether NNEPRA has the planning or policy capacity to take the lead on the project in addition to their management responsibilities of the Downeaster. He noted that the location seemed ideal. Ms. Quinn confirmed that staff has the resources to lead the project. Wayne Davis, TrainRiders Northeast, noted NNEPRA’s approach to the report and station relocation has been correct.

UPCOMING INTIATIVES– Patricia Quinn

Patricia Quinn provided an overview of several service improvement initiatives Amtrak has implemented on the Downeaster such as bike access, and ability to accept cash onboard. Staff continues to focus marketing efforts on being nimble and flexible to address market segments when they are ready to travel.

Patricia Quinn provided an update on efforts to modify the Downeaster schedule to add a round trip by this summer.

Director Hobart commented that a lot can change in a month and that we should be planning for a 5th round trip by Memorial Day weekend. Chairman Melrose concluded that the Board will revisit next month to decide.

PROJECT UPDATES – James Russell

James Russell provided an update on various projects including the capital maintenance program. An update was provided for the ongoing brush cutting and procurements to mitigate slow orders. Spring will see work on grade crossings with additional grade crossings to be identified for the FY22 work program. NNEPRA is continuing work with FRA to sign the grant agreement for the Wells Siding Extension with an intent to advertise for earthwork activities in the spring.

GPCOG TRANSIT TOMORROW PRESENTATION – Rick Harbison

Rick Harbison, Zoe Miller, and Chris Chop provided an overview of GPCOG's Transit Tomorrow Plan. Zoe Miller and Rick Harbison provided a background, overview of the recommendations, and encouraged the public and staff to review the plan.

During public comment, Tony Donovan asked why the plan does not reference the existing State-owned railroad regional corridor that connects to the Old Port of downtown Portland from the commuter owns north of City and what the impact of additional buildings on West Commercial St. have on the Westbrook service plan?

Patricia Quinn concluded with by commenting that efforts to enhance connectivity between Downeaster stations and regional transit is exciting and important.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Andy Sandweiss requested the Board's thoughts on potential service to Bangor and on L.D. 227 for a feasibility study for that route. Chairman Melrose commented that it was hard to balance thinking about extending service with the realities of current ridership figures. Currently, there is no opposition to it however do not plan on actively pursuing service extensions at this time.



Downeaster Pandemic Recovery Period Summary

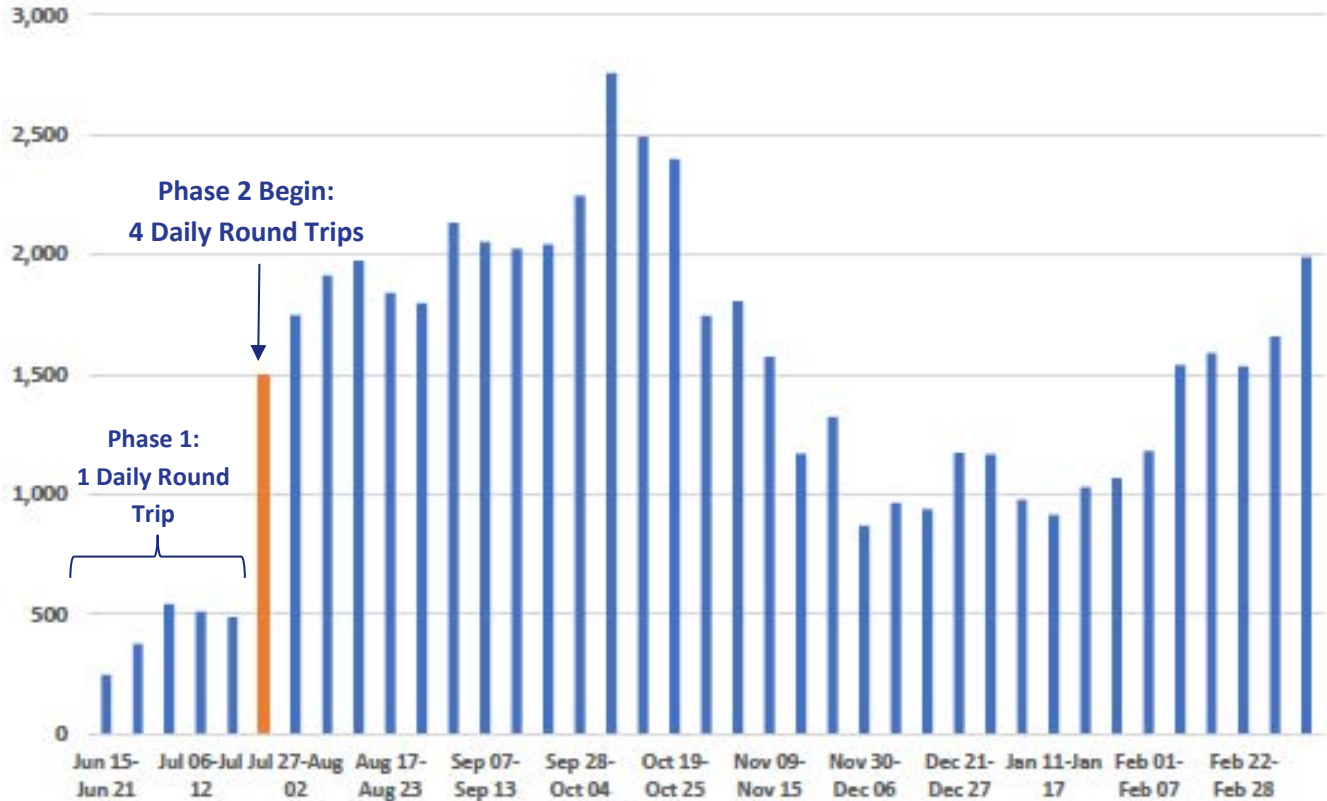
FY21 Performance			
Period	Trains Operated	Riders	Ticket Revenue
July	122	4,028	\$ 99,832.51
August	248	8,099	\$ 187,759.38
September	240	8,538	\$ 189,765.33
October	248	10,383	\$ 234,441.90
November	240	6,233	\$ 140,089.72
December	244	4,408	\$ 98,587.00
January	248	4,447	\$ 96,657.00
February	224	5,756	\$ 127,509.00
Total	1,814	51,892	\$1,174,641.84

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

FY2021 Draft Budget Variance Report

December 2020

NNEPRA Draft FY21 Board Variance Report

Jan-21

Revenues	Current Month				Fiscal Year to Date			
	Jan. Actual	Jan Budget	Variance	Percent	Actual	Budget	Variance	%
Amtrak Ticket Revenue	\$ 96,657	\$ 368,900	\$ (272,243)	-74%	\$ 1,174,639	\$ 1,307,300	\$ (132,661)	-11.3%
Operating Revenue								
Amtrak Ticket Revenue		\$ 386,900	\$ (386,900)		\$ -	\$ 1,307,300	\$ (1,307,300)	
Food Service Revenue	\$ 6,690	\$ 21,700	\$ (15,010)	-69%	\$ 65,792	\$ 97,500	\$ (31,708)	-48.2%
Advertising Revenue		\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Parking Lot Revenue	\$ 959	\$ 13,850	\$ (12,891)	-93%	\$ 15,484	\$ 65,550	\$ (50,066)	0.0%
Interest and Other Revenue	\$ 12,154	\$ 15,000	\$ (2,846)	-19%	\$ 60,132	\$ 105,000	\$ (44,868)	-74.6%
Total Operating Revenues	\$ 19,803	\$ 437,450	\$ (417,647)	-95%	\$ 141,408	\$ 1,575,350	\$ (1,433,942)	-1014.0%
Expenses								
Administration								
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 69,541	\$ 69,000	\$ 541	1%	\$ 486,583	\$ 483,000	\$ 3,583	0.7%
Office Expenses	\$ 8,150	\$ 9,000	\$ (850)	-10%	\$ 65,981	\$ 63,000	\$ 2,981	4.5%
Professional Services	\$ 7,338	\$ 10,000	\$ (2,662)	-36%	\$ 90,446	\$ 70,000	\$ 20,446	22.6%
Insurance	\$ 2,246	\$ 2,246	\$ 0	0%	\$ 16,381	\$ 15,720	\$ 661	4.0%
Board Operations	\$ 521	\$ 1,000	\$ (479)	-92%	\$ 4,030	\$ 7,000	\$ (2,970)	-74%
Total Administration Expenses	\$ 87,796	\$ 91,246	\$ (3,450)	-4%	\$ 663,421	\$ 638,720	\$ 24,701	3.7%
Train Operations								
Amtrak Operations	\$ 669,427	\$ 1,396,551	\$ (727,124)	-109%	\$ 4,626,056	\$ 8,127,407	\$ (3,501,351)	-75.7%
Train Fuel Cost	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	#DIV/0!
Other Train Operations	\$ 211	\$ 5,000	\$ (4,789)		\$ 929	\$ 20,000	\$ (19,071)	0.0%
Facilities	\$ 15,725	\$ 20,000	\$ (4,275)	-27%	\$ 137,342	\$ 140,000	\$ (2,658)	-1.9%
Capital Maintenance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 9,940	\$ 9,940	\$ -	0.0%
Total Train Operations	\$ 685,363	\$ 1,421,551	\$ (736,188)	-107%	\$ 4,774,267	\$ 8,297,347	\$ (3,523,080)	-73.8%
Station Operations								
Portland Station Rent	\$ 9,100	\$ 9,400	\$ (300)	-3%	\$ 63,700	\$ 65,200	\$ (1,500)	-2.4%
Portland Station CAMS	\$ 21,800	\$ 22,200	\$ (400)	-2%	\$ 152,900	\$ 154,800	\$ (1,900)	-1.2%
Platform Ins.	\$ 10,000	\$ 11,145	\$ (1,145)	-11%	\$ 63,436	\$ 78,018	\$ (14,582)	-23.0%
Station Platform Leases	\$ 3,813	\$ 3,813	\$ -	0%	\$ 22,877	\$ 26,689	\$ (3,812)	-16.7%
Station Improvements	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 8,000	\$ 14,000	\$ (6,000)	0.0%
Total Station Operations	\$ 44,713	\$ 46,558	\$ (1,845)	-4%	\$ 310,914	\$ 338,707	\$ (27,794)	-8.9%
Food Service	\$ 39,306	\$ 69,020	\$ (29,714)	-76%	\$ 277,203	\$ 410,500	\$ (133,297)	-48.1%
Marketing	\$ 20,304	\$ 41,667	\$ (21,363)	-105%	\$ 218,969	\$ 291,667	\$ (72,697)	-33.2%
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 877,482	\$ 1,670,041	\$ (792,560)	-90%	\$ 6,244,774	\$ 9,976,941	\$ (3,732,168)	-59.8%
Additional Funding Required	\$ 857,680	\$ 1,232,592	\$ (374,913)	-44%	\$ 6,103,367	\$ 8,401,591	\$ (2,298,225)	-37.7%

Note: NNEPRA has a net fixed-price agreement with Amtrak through January 2021 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 reported are not reflected in the budget variance report.