

# Board Briefing Materials

## May 10, 2021

Virtual Meeting

1:00pm Public Session

(2)



For More Information

 207-780-1000 x 105

 [info@nnepra.com](mailto: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**

*May 10, 2021*

**Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority**

**Virtual Zoom Meeting**

### **1:00pm      Vote to open meeting**

- Ground rules for virtual format
- Welcome and Introductions
- Approval of Minutes from March 22, 2021 Board Meeting
- Performance Update
  - Downeaster Ridership & Revenue Fiscal Year to Date
- Finance Update
  - Approval of Variance Report
- Project Updates
- Other Business
  - Approval of Extension of Legal Services
- Public Comment

**Next Meeting: June 28, 2021**



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

March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021

### Directors in Attendance via Zoom Teleconference:

Chairman John Melrose, Chair; Mr. Dana Connors; Mr. Brian Hobart; Mr. Ron McKinnon; Commissioner Van Note; Mr. Steve Lyons

### Staff in Attendance via Zoom Teleconference:

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

### Interested Parties via Zoom Teleconference:

Mr. Ralph Cusack, NexDine; Nathaniel Rosenblatt, Farrell, Rosenblatt & Russell; Mr. Tony Donovan, Maine Rail Transit Coalition; Stephen Corcoran, Amtrak; Kevin Chittenden, Amtrak; Dean Rybolt, Amtrak; Richard Rudolph, Maine Rail Transit Coalition; Mr. Wayne Davis, TrainRiders Northeast; Kathleen de Silva, Rinck Adverstising

### Opening Remarks

Motion to Open Public Session at 10:00am

Motion: Mr. McKinnon

Seconded: Mr. Hobart

Accepted: All

Motion to Approve the February 22nd, 2021 Minutes

Motion: Mr. Hobart

Seconded: Mr. Connors

Accepted: All

### OVERVIEW OF DOWNEASTER PERFORMANCE – Patricia Quinn

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Patricia Quinn reviewed the performance report for the Downeaster through February 2021. Chairman Melrose asked for an update on the travel restrictions between states. Natalie Bogart mentioned that as of March 5, Maine released travel restrictions for folks coming into Maine and Massachusetts lifted restrictions as of today. The Downeaster is able to fully transport passengers within the three states without quarantine.

### FINANCE REPORT– Leslie Guerrette

Leslie Guerrette provided an overview of the budget variance report. Director McKinnon mentioned he was pleased with operations over the year. Chairman Melrose asked how relief funding provided to Amtrak would benefit Downeaster service. Patricia Quinn noted that the COVID relief packages passed in December and January are anticipated to provide approximately a \$6M credit to be applied to Amtrak costs assessed to NNEPRA for the operation of the Downeaster throughout federal fiscal year 2021 and 2022.

### Motion to Approve Variance Report

Motion: Mr. Hobart

Seconded: Mr. Connors

Accepted: All

**FORECAST FOR REMAINING FY21 – Patricia Quinn**

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Patricia Quinn provided an outlook for the remainder of FY21 noting that NNEPRA's FY21 budget projected that FY21 ridership/revenue would average about 37% of FY19 levels. The impacts of the pandemic have lasted longer than initially anticipated last spring and Downeaster ridership has actually averaged 13% of FY19 levels through February FY21. The significant losses in revenue will be offset by Amtrak's relief funding as well as CARES funds and no additional state funding is anticipated to meet obligations. Maintaining NNEPRA's Designated Recipient status will be a needed to ensure a seat at the table for allocating these funds.

Commissioner Van Note noted how difficult forecasting is during these unpredictable times. Chairman Melrose clarified that it is anticipated that, due to the federal funding, NNEPRA would not need additional funding from MaineDOT to complete FY21. Patricia Quinn agreed noting that operational changes at NexDine and Amtrak to reduce costs also play a key role.

Patricia Quinn discussed need for a resolution to support the designated recipient status for NNEPRA. Commissioner Van Note emphasized the need for coordination among transit providers noting that change may be appropriate in the future, but that the region should maintain the current status at least through while the impacts of the pandemic are being felt.

**Resolution: Given current conditions and level of uncertainty, the Board supports the current designated recipient status of NNEPRA and that it should be maintained for all transit providers in the region.**

Motion: Mr. Hobart

Seconded: Mr. McKinnon

Accepted: All

**SERVICE RECOVERY NEXT STEP – Patricia Quinn**

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Natalie Bogart provided an overview of the marketing plan moving into the spring highlighting coordination and partnership with MBTA and other transit modes. Director Lyons noted that from the national standpoint there is a rise in travel motivation as more vaccines are becoming available. It is expected that leisure travel will come back fast than business travel with an anticipated recovery in FY22. Director Lyons commented that it is important to get people to start thinking about travelling again as the national data is showing people are ready and willing to travel.

Brian Beeler provided an overview of recent service upgrades implemented by Amtrak including the bid-up program; expanded bike access; cash ticket sales; waived change fees; capacity indicator; and the ride reserve program. Mr. Beeler also noted that a station refresh initiative was underway and that new Amtrak ticketing kiosks were scheduled to arrive in 2021.

Patricia Quinn proposed that the spring/summer schedule for Downeaster service, which includes the restoration of the 5<sup>th</sup> round trip, be implemented on May 3, 2021. She noted that the increase in service would result in modest increases in crew, fuel, and railroad costs, but that Amtrak's relief funding was intended to reinstate furloughed employees. The added round trip will also distribute riders among more trains which will provide more option when Amtrak eliminates the 50% seating capacity.

**Provided that the American Rescue Acts requires furloughed Amtrak employees to be reinstated, that added service will not require additional operating support from the state of Maine this year, and increased costs will be modest, the Board authorizes the restoration of the 5<sup>th</sup> Downeaster round trip in May 2021.**

Motion: Commissioner Van Note

Seconded: Mr. Hobart

Accepted: All

### **PROJECT UPDATES – James Russell**

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Commissioner Van note proved an update on the Portland Transportation Center Study Report noting that the report was presented to the Portland City Council on March 17<sup>th</sup>.

James Russell provided an update on various projects including the capital maintenance brushcutting efforts. Additional parking for Brunswick Station is progressing. The Wells Siding Project is close to completing the NEPA process and a grant agreement with FRA is eminent. Patricia Quinn and Jim Russell met with representatives of the Town of Falmouth and business owners to further the concept of a West Falmouth Station.

### **OTHER BUSINESS – Patricia Quinn**

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Patricia Quinn provided an overview of TrainRiders Northeast initiative to enhance the connectivity to Amtrak by pursuing Amtrak service between Boston North station and New York. NNEPRA continues to monitor the Pan Am Railway sale to CSX as well as working with Amtrak on service and station agreements. Two new board members have been nominated and action is expected to be taken later this year. As the legislative session continues NNEPRA will monitor various rail related bill.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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Tony Dovovan asked a number of questions including who has the final say in 5307 funding, whether the Downeaster a recipient of CMAQ funding, when enhancement allocations would be made, what enhancements projects are, and whether NNEPRA intend to submit applications for federal funds. He further expressed concerns with the location of a new Portland train station, asked if there would be a public participation phase of the relocation efforts and inquired about the status of the Westbrook Study?

Patricia Quinn replied that the 5307 funding is determined by the designated recipients and that NNEPRA does receive CMAQ funds, that funding for enhancement projects in the Portland region are allocated through a different framework, that NNEPRA does not have immediate plans to apply for any construction funding, suggested that Portland station relocation efforts would likely include public participation and that the Westbrook Study was done in partnership with a private entity and that no actions have been taken since its completion.

Richard Rudolph requested clarification on the potential schedule change, noting that the 5:00pm Downeaster train from Boston was often sold out, and that the 6:15pm train was not being reinstated.

Patricia Quinn replied that two peak rush hour departures out of Boston are not required at this time and that staff will monitor trends carefully and schedule trains when people want to travel, responding to travel patterns if they change.

### Downeaster Pandemic Recovery Period Summary

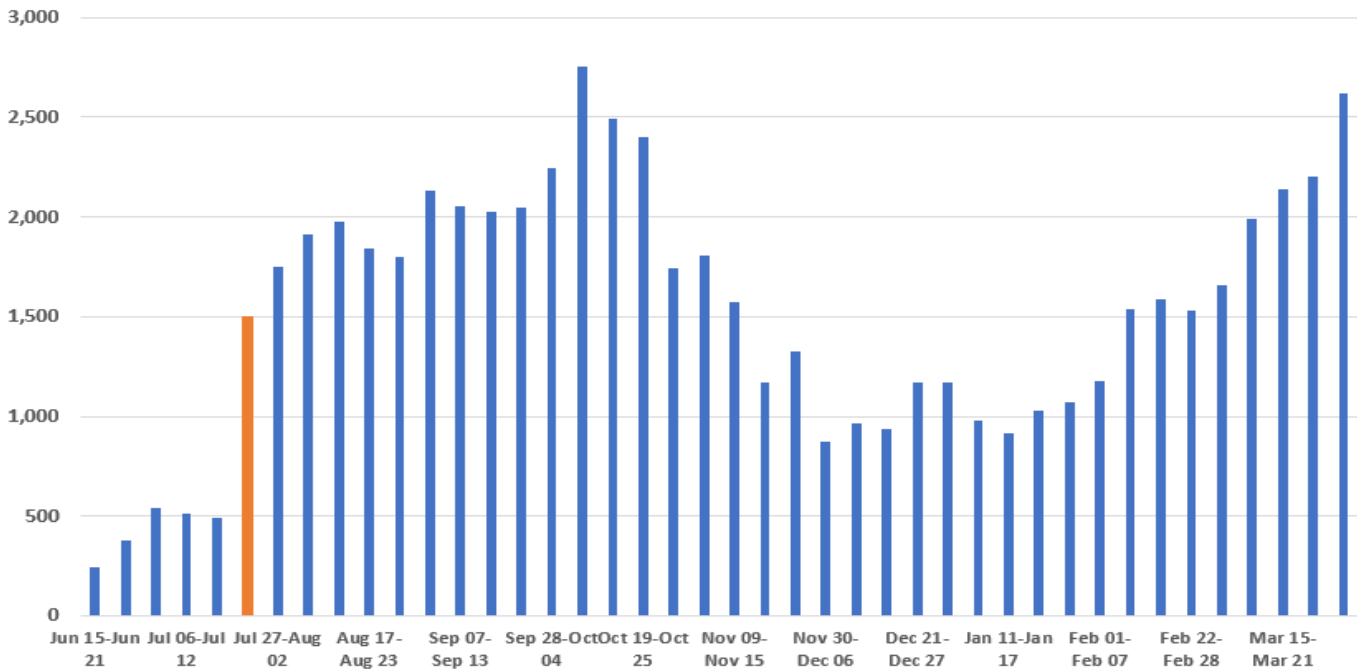
On Time Performance		
Period	Endpoint OTP	Customer OTP
July	34%	40%
August	65%	79%
September	81%	88%
October	52%	65%
November	62%	78%
December	63%	74%
January	79%	84%
February	76%	85%
March	71%	82%

FY2021 Performance			
Period	Trains Operated	Riders	Ticket Revenue
July	122	4,028	\$ 99,833
August	248	8,099	\$ 187,759
September	240	8,538	\$ 189,765
October	248	10,383	\$ 234,442
November	240	6,233	\$ 140,090
December	244	4,408	\$ 98,587
January	248	4,447	\$ 96,657
February	224	5,756	\$ 127,509
March	248	8,606	\$ 170,785
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,062</b>	<b>60,498</b>	<b>\$ 1,345,428</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)



## FY2021 Draft Budget Variance Report

## NNEPRA Draft FY21 Board Variance Report

3/1/2021 v2

	Current Month				Fiscal Year to Date			
	March Actual	March Budget	Variance	Percent	Actual	Budget	Variance	%
<b>Revenues</b>								
Amtrak Ticket Revenue	\$ 170,785	\$ 395,250			\$ 1,472,931	\$ 2,059,550	\$ (586,619)	
<b>Operating Revenue</b>								
Amtrak Ticket Revenue	\$ 170,785	\$ 395,250	\$ (224,465)		\$ 325,155	\$ 2,059,550	\$ (1,734,395)	-533.4%
Food Service Revenue	\$ 14,766	\$ 23,250	\$ (8,484)	-36%	\$ 92,139	\$ 141,750	\$ (49,611)	-53.8%
Advertising Revenue	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Parking Lot Revenue	\$ 1,930	\$ 14,625	\$ (12,695)	-87%	\$ 37,229	\$ 93,675	\$ (56,446)	0.0%
Interest and Other Revenue	\$ 20,613	\$ 15,000	\$ 5,613	37%	\$ 138,943	\$ 135,000	\$ 3,943	2.8%
<b>Total Operating Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 208,094</b>	<b>\$ 448,125</b>	<b>\$ (240,031)</b>	<b>-54%</b>	<b>\$ 593,466</b>	<b>\$ 2,429,975</b>	<b>\$ (1,836,509)</b>	<b>-309.5%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>								
<b>Administration</b>								
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 71,558	\$ 69,000	\$ 2,558	4%	\$ 628,965	\$ 621,000	\$ 7,965	1.3%
Office Expenses	\$ 9,832	\$ 9,000	\$ 832	8%	\$ 84,239	\$ 81,000	\$ 3,239	3.8%
Professional Services	\$ 9,120	\$ 10,000	\$ (880)	-10%	\$ 107,858	\$ 90,000	\$ 17,858	16.6%
Insurance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 29,524	\$ 26,949	\$ 2,575	8.7%
Board Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 11,366	\$ 11,000	\$ 366	3%
<b>Total Administration Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 90,510</b>	<b>\$ 88,000</b>	<b>\$ 2,510</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>\$ 861,953</b>	<b>\$ 829,949</b>	<b>\$ 32,004</b>	<b>3.7%</b>
<b>Train Operations</b>								
Amtrak Operations	\$ 638,348	\$ 1,398,150	\$ (759,802)	-119%	\$ 5,797,351	\$ 10,318,256	\$ (4,520,905)	-78.0%
Train Fuel Cost	\$ 144,730	\$ 153,603	\$ (8,873)		\$ 250,568	\$ 880,094	\$ (629,526)	-251.2%
Other Train Operations	\$ 150,193	\$ 156,112	\$ (5,919)		\$ 299,344	\$ 935,353	\$ (636,009)	0.0%
Facilities	\$ 21,356	\$ 20,000	\$ 1,356	6%	\$ 188,574	\$ 190,000	\$ (1,426)	-0.8%
Capital Maintenance	\$ 113,932	\$ 113,932	\$ -	0%	\$ 189,403	\$ 189,403	\$ -	0.0%
<b>Total Train Operations</b>	<b>\$ 1,068,559</b>	<b>\$ 1,841,797</b>	<b>\$ (773,238)</b>	<b>-72%</b>	<b>\$ 6,725,240</b>	<b>\$ 12,513,106</b>	<b>\$ (5,787,866)</b>	<b>-86.1%</b>
<b>Station Operations</b>								
Portland Station Rent	\$ 9,100	\$ 9,400	\$ (300)	-3%	\$ 81,900	\$ 84,000	\$ (2,100)	-2.6%
Portland Station CAMS	\$ 38,203	\$ 22,200	\$ 16,003	42%	\$ 221,485	\$ 199,200	\$ 22,285	10.1%
Platform Ins.	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 142,067	\$ 133,745	\$ 8,322	5.9%
Station Platform Leases	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%	\$ 42,427	\$ 45,753	\$ (3,326)	-7.8%
Station Improvements	\$ -	\$ 3,500	\$ -		\$ 8,000	\$ 31,500	\$ (23,500)	0.0%
<b>Total Station Operations</b>	<b>\$ 47,303</b>	<b>\$ 35,100</b>	<b>\$ 12,203</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>\$ 495,879</b>	<b>\$ 494,198</b>	<b>\$ 1,681</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
<b>Food Service</b>	<b>\$ 51,081</b>	<b>\$ 69,950</b>	<b>\$ (18,869)</b>	<b>-37%</b>	<b>\$ 376,174</b>	<b>\$ 549,050</b>	<b>\$ (172,876)</b>	<b>-46.0%</b>
<b>Marketing</b>	<b>\$ 13,155</b>	<b>\$ 41,667</b>	<b>\$ (28,512)</b>	<b>-217%</b>	<b>\$ 244,653</b>	<b>\$ 375,000</b>	<b>\$ (130,347)</b>	<b>-53.3%</b>
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,478,703</b>	<b>\$ 2,524,639</b>	<b>\$ (1,045,936)</b>	<b>-71%</b>	<b>\$ 9,297,365</b>	<b>\$ 17,191,278</b>	<b>\$ (7,893,913)</b>	<b>-84.9%</b>
<b>Additional Funding Required</b>	<b>\$ 1,270,610</b>	<b>\$ 2,076,515</b>	<b>\$ (805,905)</b>	<b>-63%</b>	<b>\$ 8,703,900</b>	<b>\$ 14,761,304</b>	<b>\$ (6,057,403)</b>	<b>-69.6%</b>

Note: NNEPRA had a 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 July - January are not reflected in the budget variance report.