
Board Briefing Materials

May 23, 2022

Location:
Virtual Meeting

1:00pm Public Session



For More Information

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**NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND
PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY**

NNEPRA FY2022 Strategic Workplan

NNEPRA was established under Maine law for the general purpose of supporting the operation of passenger rail service. (Section 8111). To accomplish this purpose, NNEPRA shall in part:

1. Take all actions reasonably necessary to initiate, establish, or reinstate regularly scheduled passenger rail service between points within this State and points within and outside this State. (Section 8003)
2. Seek and use all funds necessary to pay all expenses of this passenger rail service that are not met by fares and other funds or revenues. (Section 8006)
3. Set fares at reasonable levels to encourage the use of this service. (Section 8009)
4. Adopt a budget, make allocations and account transfers subject to the approval of Maine's Transportation Commissioner. (Section 8116)

In fulfillment of these statutory expectations, and in recognition of the 20th Anniversary of Downeaster service, the NNEPRA Board of Directors adopts the following FY2022 workplan:

1. Meet high standards for transportation safety including the provision of robust public health safeguards.
2. Maximize public awareness of the Downeaster service, attract new riders and retain existing riders through advertising, promotions, digital, traditional and earned media.
3. Support efforts to provide customers with a travel experience that consistently exceeds their expectations, delivers value and benefit, and contributes to a modern, integrated public transportation system.
4. Support the reduction of vehicle miles travelled and State climate change initiatives by improving service accessibility and quality by taking steps necessary to accomplish the following:
 - a. Extend double track and construct station improvements in Wells to improve service reliability, increase frequency and enhance efficiency.
 - b. Relocate the station in Portland to the railroad mainline to reduce travel times, improve access and operating efficiency.
 - c. Build a new station in Falmouth to improve access to I-95 and communities north of Portland.
 - d. Initiate passenger rail service on the Rockland Branch to expand access and provide traffic relief alternatives to coastal Route 1.
 - e. Prepare for new trainsets purchased by Amtrak which will replace legacy equipment and significantly reduce air emissions.
 - f. Collaborate with MaineDOT on studies and planning efforts associated with rail improvements and service expansions.
 - g. Participate as appropriate in national and regional planning initiatives to enhance access and connectivity.
5. Secure favorable terms for the continuation and expansion of passenger rail service to include the following:
 - a. Surface Transportation Board proceedings related to the Pan Am merger with CSX Transportation
 - b. Amtrak/NNEPRA operating agreement renewal
 - c. Downeaster Municipal Station agreement renewals
 - d. Portland Transportation Center agreement extension/renewal
6. Increase state and federal operational and capital funding opportunities:
 - a. Maximize the benefit of COVID-related assistance
 - b. Monitor federal discretionary grant opportunities including CRISI, RAISE, and State of Good Repair to supplement needs for applicable projects
 - c. Ensure NNEPRA is positioned to receive eligible federal funding made available through surface transportation reauthorization or supplemental infrastructure bills
 - d. Collaborate with MaineDOT to secure resources needed to leverage federal funding opportunities.



NNEPRA BOARD of DIRECTORS

May 23, 2022

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

Draft Agenda

1:00pm Public Session

- Welcome and Introductions
- Public Comment
- Approval of Minutes from April 25, 2022 Board Meeting
- Nomination of Vice Chair
- Downeaster Performance Update
- Budget and Finance
 - April Variance Report
 - Overview of Draft FY23 Budget
- Marketing Update
- Project Updates
- Other Business
 - Amtrak Service Agreement

Next Meeting: June 27, 2022



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

April 25, 2022

Directors in Attendance via Zoom Teleconference:

Chairman Jim Cohen, Chair; Mr. Alan Casavant; Ms. Carol Murray; Ms. Alison Harris; Mr. Steve Lyons; Mr. Bruce Var. Note;

NNEPRA Staff in Attendance via Zoom Teleconference:

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

Interested Parties via Zoom Teleconference:

Mr. Dana Knapp, Concord Coach Lines; Mr. Wayne Davis, TrainRiders Northeast; Mr. Nat Rosenblatt, Farrell, Rosenblatt & Russell; Mr. Steve Corcoran, Amtrak; Mr. Kevin Chittenden, Amtrak; Mr. Irwin Gratz, Maine Public Radio; Ms. Kathleen DeSilva, Rinck Advertising; Mr. Blaise Dupoy.

OPENING REMARKS

Opened meeting at 1:00pm

Vote to Open Meeting and Enter Executive Session at 1:00pm

• 1 MRS § 405(6)(C) and 23 MRS § 8115-A to discuss negotiations with Maine DOT and Midcoast Rail Service, Inc. regarding operating agreements.

Motion to enter into Executive Session:

Motion: Ms. Murry
Seconded: Mr. Lyons
Accepted: All

Vote to end Executive Session and Enter Public Session at 1:31pm

Motion: Ms. Murry
Seconded: Mr. Lyons
Accepted: All

William Gayle opened Public Session by Roll Call.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Cohen opened the floor to public comment. No public comments made.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to Approve the March 28, 2022 Minutes

Motion: Ms. Murray

Seconded: Mr. Lyons
Accepted: All

OVERVIEW OF DOWNEASTER PERFORMANCE – Patricia Quinn

Patricia Quinn provided an overview of Downeaster ridership and revenue.

Brian Beeler provided an update on the Downeaster Cafe highlighting the retirement of Café manager, Ralph Cuszak from NexDine noting that he has been a tremendous asset who will be missed. Mr. Beeler also reported that Amtrak has been gathering information about the at-seat Café ordering app which NexDine has developed for the Downeaster and has met with NexDine and NNEPRA staff to discuss development of a nationwide implementation.

VARIANCE REPORT– Leslie Guerrette

Leslie Guerrette reviewed the March 2022 budget variance report.

Director Harris asked what was included in “Other Revenue” line item. Patricia Quinn noted it was largely related to credit card royalties.

Motion to Approve the March Variance Report

Motion: Ms. Murray
Seconded: Mr. Lyons
Accepted: All

MARKETING UPDATE – Natalie Bogart

- Natalie Bogart provided the marketing update noting that a new Downeaster marketing campaign featuring passenger testimonials is scheduled to launch in mid-May. Natalie also reported that she participated in the GPCOG “Ride with Me” event developed to enable people with transportation barriers to share their experience, perspectives, and ideas and to enable decision-makers to get first-hand insight into the challenges experienced by community members with transportation barriers. Natalie travelled with a transit-dependent senior citizen who was pleasantly surprised by the ease and accessibility of the Downeaster itself, but noted she was not able to ride on a regular basis because of the lack of transit connections between her home and the Downeaster station. The proposals received in response to NNEPRA’s RFP for an advertising agency are under review.
- Brian Beeler reported that he recently hosted a familiarization trip so members of the Brunswick Downtown Association could experience the Downeaster and North Station. Director Harris participated and noted how helpful the trip was including the excellent customer service provided by Ralph.
- Natalie also mentioned that the Downeaster spring schedule will take effect on May 14. The only change is the start of seasonal service to Old Orchard Beach.

PROJECT UPDATE– Patricia Quinn

James Russell provided an overview of the Wells Area Improvement Project highlighting the relocation of fiber optic cable by AT&T’s contractor would delay some of the track bed work Shaw Brother’s is doing, but that the overall schedule should not be impacted significantly. Bids for long lead procurement items including rail and turnouts came in higher than anticipated due to inflation. Purchase orders for the materials have been issued and with delivery of rail expected in December and turnouts in spring 2023.

Chair Cohen asked a clarifying question on the utility relocation and James replied the utility has a lease agreement with the host railroad.

OTHER BUSINESS – Patricia Quinn

Chair Cohen asked how the recent court decision lifting the mask mandate on public transportation has impacted service. Patricia Quinn noted that this was news to everyone at the same time and Steve Corcoran, Amtrak, stated there has been no negative feedback on regarding the lifting of the mask mandate to date.

Chair Cohen asked if the spike in the price of fuel would lead to a surcharge on ticket prices. Patricia Quinn responded that surcharges have not imposed during past periods of inflating noting that increases in fuel prices tend to have a positive impact on ridership.

Patricia Quinn provided an update highlighting that the PACTS Policy Board voted (11-9) to approve an allocation of emergency ARPA funding developed by PACTS staff without consultation with transit agencies. Six of seven transit agencies opposed the motion. NNEPRA has not yet signed the split letter.

Patricia Quinn reported that discussions with Midcoast Rail Service related to the potential for passenger rail service on the Rockland Branch have continued, noting that many details still need to be finalized before service can begin including schedule, crews, service levels and cost. The staff recommendation is to continue negotiations and efforts to pursue a pilot program.

Chair Cohen noted this issue was discussed in Executive Session and asked the Board to reaffirm the direction.

Motion to authorize the Executive Director and Staff to continue to work in partnership the Maine Department of Transportation and Midcoast Rail Service, Inc. to explore establishing a pilot passenger rail service between Brunswick and Rockland.

Motion: Director Harris

Seconded: Murray

Accpeted: All

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Cohen opened the floor to public comment.

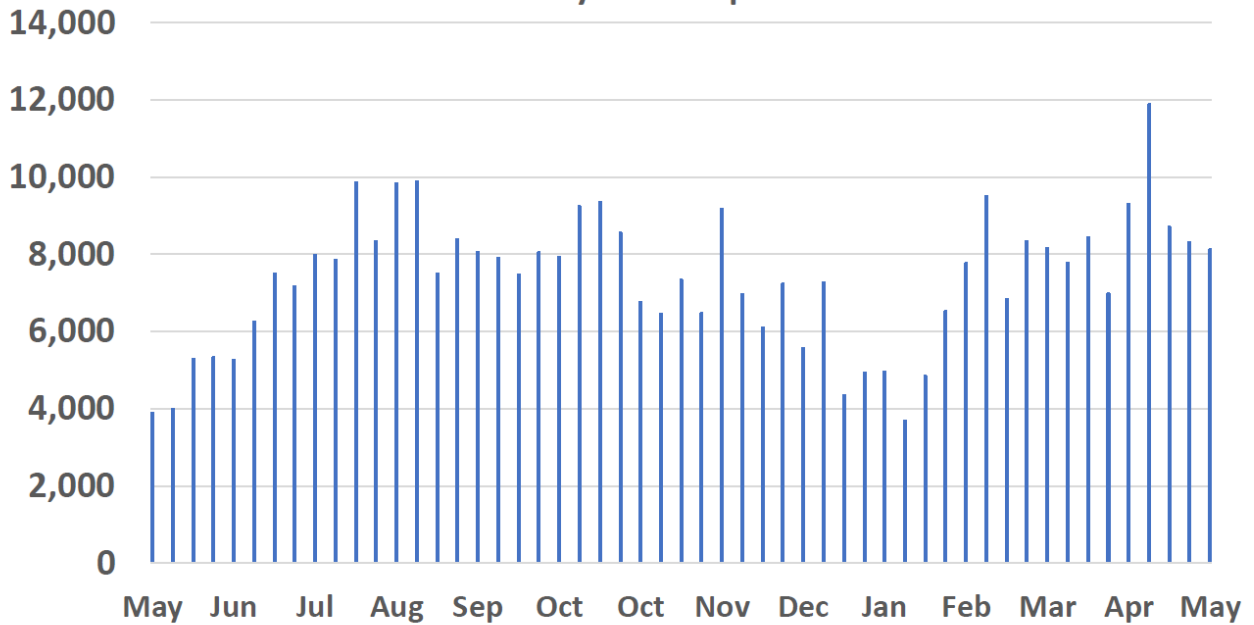
There was no public comment.

Meeting adjourned via roll call vote.

Downeaster FY2022 Performance to Date

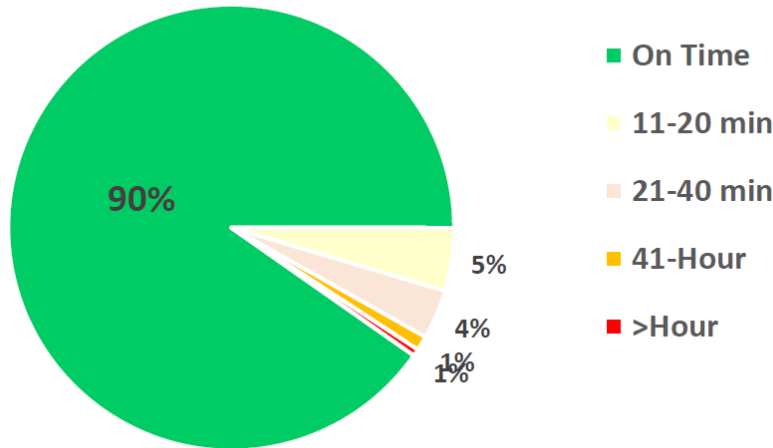
Downeaster Performance Metrics - Last 12 Months									
Period	FY	Ridership				Revenue			
		Actual	Budget	Variance	vs. 2019	Actual	Budget	Variance	\$/Rider
Apr 22	FY22	37,745	29,867	7,878	78%	\$ 768,036	\$ 552,538	\$ 215,499	\$20.35
Mar 22	FY22	31,519	28,188	3,331	67%	\$ 657,202	\$ 521,470	\$ 135,732	\$20.85
Feb 22	FY22	27,600	24,653	2,947	68%	\$ 527,474	\$ 456,072	\$ 71,402	\$19.11
Jan 22	FY22	20,396	22,594	-2,198	54%	\$ 407,690	\$ 417,993	\$ (10,303)	\$19.99
Dec 21	FY22	28,966	23,481	5,485	63%	\$ 604,116	\$ 434,406	\$ 169,710	\$20.86
Nov 21	FY22	32,722	25,562	7,160	69%	\$ 617,699	\$ 472,905	\$ 144,794	\$18.88
Oct 21	FY22	37,383	25,308	12,075	74%	\$ 748,767	\$ 474,517	\$ 274,250	\$20.03
Sep 21	FY22	32,682	23,648	9,034	68%	\$ 632,226	\$ 443,404	\$ 188,822	\$19.34
Aug 21	FY22	38,534	32,632	5,902	63%	\$ 751,210	\$ 611,859	\$ 139,351	\$19.49
Jul 21	FY22	37,260	30,536	6,724	68%	\$ 726,323	\$ 572,553	\$ 153,770	\$19.49
FY22 To Date		324,807	266,470	58,337	67%	\$6,440,744	\$4,957,717	\$ 1,483,027	\$19.83
Jun 21	FY21	25,668	27,000	-1,332	53%	\$ 515,857	\$ 459,000	\$ 56,857	\$ 20.10
May 21	FY21	18,643	26,350	-7,707	42%	\$ 379,959	\$ 447,950	\$ (67,991)	\$ 20.38

Downeaster Weekly Ridership - Last 12 Months



Downeaster Performance Metrics - Last 12 Months								
Period	FY	Trains Operated	Passenger Miles	On Time Performance		Downeaster Café		CSI
				End Point	Customer	Capture Ratio	Check AVG	
Apr-22	FY22	300	3,382,824	83%	90%	16%	\$ 8.54	91
Mar 22	FY22	310	2,947,118	77%	82%	18%	\$ 8.22	90
Feb-22	FY22	280	2,521,546	75%	81%	16%	\$ 8.66	91
Jan 22	FY22	310	1,858,131	79%	88%	19%	\$ 8.78	88
Dec-21	FY22	308	2,568,592	87%	91%	18%	\$ 8.60	94
Nov 21	FY22	297	2,566,478	66%	76%	16%	\$ 7.85	85
Oct-21	FY22	306	3,257,121	71%	79%	17%	\$ 8.03	88
Sep 21	FY22	296	2,730,658	70%	81%	17%	\$ 8.43	88
Aug-21	FY22	306	3,287,802	66%	77%	20%	\$ 8.27	89
Jul 21	FY22	298	3,208,359	64%	73%	19%	\$ 8.38	89

Delay Intensity (By Rider)



NNEPRA Draft FY22 Budget Variance Report

July 2021- April 2022

Revenues	Apr-22				Fiscal Year to Date			
	April Actual	April Budget	Variance	%	Actual	Budget	Variance	%
Operating Revenue								
Amtrak Ticket Revenue	\$ 768,036	\$ 552,538	\$ 215,498	39%	\$ 6,440,744	\$ 4,957,717	\$ 1,483,027	30%
Food Service Revenue	\$ 50,297	\$ 43,103	\$ 7,194	17%	\$ 464,106	\$ 384,557	\$ 79,549	21%
Advertising Revenue	\$ 525	\$ -	\$ 525		\$ 525	\$ -	\$ 525	
Parking Lot Revenue		\$ 27,601	\$ (27,601)	-100%	\$ 224,905	\$ 249,806	\$ (24,901)	-10%
Interest and Other Revenue	\$ 36,790	\$ 13,400	\$ 23,390	175%	\$ 478,807	\$ 134,000	\$ 344,807	257%
Total Operating Revenues	\$ 855,648	\$ 636,642	\$ 219,006	34%	\$ 7,609,087	\$ 5,726,080	\$ 1,883,007	33%
Expenses								
Administration								
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 66,869	\$ 68,000	\$ (1,131)	-2%	\$ 670,390	\$ 680,000	\$ (9,610)	-1%
Office Expenses	\$ 9,036	\$ 8,000	\$ 1,036	13%	\$ 85,276	\$ 80,000	\$ 5,276	7%
Professional Services	\$ 9,500	\$ 13,500	\$ (4,000)	-30%	\$ 178,592	\$ 205,000	\$ (26,408)	-13%
Insurance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 58,147	\$ 50,374	\$ 7,773	
Board Operations	\$ 1,087	\$ 1,250	\$ (163)	-13%	\$ 9,334	\$ 12,500	\$ (3,166)	-25%
Total Administration Expenses	\$ 86,492	\$ 90,750	\$ (4,258)	-5%	\$ 1,001,739	\$ 1,027,874	\$ (26,135)	-3%
Train Operations								
*Amtrak Operations	\$ 1,419,954	\$ 1,517,654	\$ (97,700)	-7%	\$ 12,907,078	\$ 14,534,646	\$ (1,627,568)	-12.6%
*Train Fuel Cost	\$ 313,814	\$ 173,330	\$ 140,484	45%	\$ 2,047,100	\$ 1,662,316	\$ 384,784	18.8%
*Other Train Operations	\$ 147,540	\$ 142,500	\$ 5,040	3%	\$ 1,334,919	\$ 1,425,000	\$ (90,081)	-6.7%
ARPA Relief Credit	\$ (300,000)	\$ (300,000)	\$ -	0%	\$ (3,316,034)	\$ (3,316,034)	\$ -	0.0%
Facilities	\$ 26,507	\$ 32,000	\$ (5,493)	-21%	\$ 270,119	\$ 314,784	\$ (44,665)	-16.5%
FY22 Capital Maintenance	\$ 1,207	\$ 50,000	\$ (48,793)		\$ 346,296	\$ 780,000	\$ (433,704)	-125.2%
Total Train Operations	\$ 1,609,022	\$ 1,615,484	\$ (6,462)	0%	\$ 13,589,478	\$ 15,400,712	\$ (1,811,234)	-13.3%
Station Operations								
Portland Station Rent		\$ 9,200	\$ (9,200)		\$ 82,200	\$ 92,000	\$ (9,800)	-11.9%
Portland Station CAMS		\$ 31,000	\$ (31,000)		\$ 210,800	\$ 234,000	\$ (23,200)	-11.0%
Platform Ins.	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 197,740	\$ 197,012	\$ 728	0.4%
Station Platform Leases	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 46,853	\$ 52,000	\$ (5,147)	-11.0%
Station Improvements	\$ -	\$ 2,000	\$ (2,000)		\$ 3,855	\$ 20,000	\$ (16,145)	
Total Station Operations	\$ -	\$ 42,200	\$ (42,200)		\$ 541,448	\$ 595,012	\$ (53,564)	-9.9%
Food Service	\$ 84,503	\$ 64,995	\$ 19,508	23%	\$ 709,082	\$ 640,844	\$ 68,238	9.6%
Marketing	\$ 35,827	\$ 40,000	\$ (4,173)	-12%	\$ 309,471	\$ 440,000	\$ (130,529)	-42.2%
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 1,815,844	\$ 1,853,429	\$ (37,585)	-2%	\$ 16,151,218	\$ 18,104,442	\$ (1,953,224)	-12.1%
Additional Funding Required	\$ 960,197	\$ 1,216,788	\$ (256,591)	-27%	\$ 8,542,132	\$ 12,378,363	\$ (3,836,230)	-44.9%

*Estimates- Amtrak Invoice not yet received for April 2022