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# Board Briefing Materials

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May 28, 2024

*Location:*

*Regional Transportation Program (RTP) Conference Room  
1 Ledgeview Drive, Westbrook, ME 04092*

3:00pm Public Session

For More Information

 207-780-1000 x 105

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



**NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND  
PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY**

**FY2024 NNEPRA Strategic Workplan Summary:**

**Safety and Health**

The safety and health of passengers, crews and employees remains our first priority.

**Performance Measures**

Meet and exceed Performance Targets identified in the approved FY24 Operating Budget and 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.

<b>FY24 Performance Targets</b>					
Ridership	<b>555,899</b>	Train On Time Performance	<b>85%</b>	Café Cost Recovery	<b>75%</b>
Revenue	<b>\$ 10,840,029</b>	Customer On Time Performance	<b>90%</b>	Café Capture Ratio	<b>19%</b>
Average Fare	<b>\$ 19.50</b>	Overall Customer Satisfaction	<b>90%</b>	Café Check Average	<b>\$8.85</b>
Overall Cost Recovery	<b>50%</b>				

**Service Improvement and Planning**

Support the reduction of vehicle miles travelled and State climate change initiatives by improving service accessibility and quality and by taking steps necessary to:

- Complete Wells Area Improvement Project
- Relocate Portland Station and build a new station in Falmouth
- Build a new station in Falmouth to improve access to I-95 and communities north of Portland.
- Initiate a *regularly scheduled* passenger rail service *pilot program* on the Rockland Branch
- Update the Downeaster Service Development Plan
- Collaborate with Amtrak and MassDOT to improve connectivity between North Station and NEC
- Collaborate with CSX and Amtrak to seek to reduce overall travel time and maximize utility of positive train control (PTC).
- Prepare for new Amtrak trainsets to replace legacy equipment and significantly reduce air emissions.
- Collaborate with MaineDOT on studies and planning efforts.
- Assure NNEPRA owned and Downeaster-related facilities remain in a state of good repair.

**Funding Resources**

Pursue state and federal operational and capital funding opportunities to meet operation and project needs.

**Information and Education**

Support and participate in policy efforts to maintain and secure favorable terms for the continuation and expansion of passenger rail service on the local, state and national level.

- Remain engaged and involved with transportation planning studies, organizations and initiatives in support of transportation access, expansion and connectivity.

## **NNEPRA BOARD of DIRECTORS**

*May 28, 2024*

**Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority**

### **Draft Agenda**

#### **3:00pm      Public Session**

- Welcome and Safety Briefing
- Public Comment
- Approval of Minutes from April 22, 2024 Board Meeting
- Downeaster Performance Update
  - Operating Statistics
  - Marketing Initiatives
- Finance Update
  - Review of Budget Variance Report Jul 2023-Apr 2024
  - Review FY25 Draft Operating Budget Recommendations
- Horizon Transition
- Project Updates
  - Wells Area Improvement Project
  - Capital Maintenance
  - Fed/State Partnership Project
  - Rockland Pilot Service
  - Corridor ID
    - Portland Station Relocation & West Falmouth Station
- Other Business
  - Town of Cumberland proposal
  - Freeport Station Changes
- Public Comment

**Next Meeting: June 24, 2024**



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

**April 22, 2024**

**Directors in Attendance:**

Chairman Jim Cohen; Mr. Steve Lyons; Ms. Alison Harris; Ms. Maggie Fleming; Mr. Nate Moulton

**NNEPRA Staff in Attendance:**

Ms. Patricia Quinn; Ms. Natalie Bogart; Ms. Olivia Richmond; Mr. Brian Beeler; Mr. James Russell; Ms. Belle Askinasi; Ms. Catherine Davidson; Ms. Taylor Belanger

**Interested Parties:**

Mr. Bernie Breitbart, Brunswick Resident; Mr. Tom Wilhite, Camden Resident; Mr. Luke Irvine, Amtrak; Ms. Patty Barber, Rail Passengers Association; Mr. Dana Knapp, Concord Coach Lines

**OPENING REMARKS**

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Meeting called to order at 3:02 pm and a safety briefing was provided.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

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Chairman Cohen opened the floor to public comment.

No public comment.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

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**Motion to approve February 26, 2024 Minutes**

Motion: Mr. Steve Lyons

Seconded: Ms. Alison Harris

Approved: All

**OVERVIEW OF DOWNEASTER PERFORMANCE – Patricia Quinn**

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Ms. Patricia Quinn provided an overview of the Downeaster performance through March 2024, noting strong ridership and revenue growth. Severe weather caused train cancellations in March and April but Amtrak, CSX and the MBTA addressed and resolved issues on the railroad quickly and efficiently. Customer Satisfaction (CSI) scores remained high in March. Director Harris specifically commented on the Amtrak crew scores and noted that during her travels the Downeaster crews are always helpful and go above and beyond to assist passengers.

Chairman Cohen inquired about the continued low scores for onboard Wi-Fi. Patricia explained there are several known “dead spots” between Brunswick and Freeport as well as in the Exeter area. Patricia noted that efforts to improve Wi-Fi performance would continue.

**MARKETING UPDATE – Taylor Belanger**

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Ms. Taylor Belanger provided an update on marketing initiatives and gave an overview of paid, visual, and traditional media strategies. Samples of print collateral for the summer schedule as well as the updated Café menu and station signage were shared. The summer Downeaster schedule will go into effect on May 20<sup>th</sup>, restoring seasonal service to Old Orchard Beach.

### **CORRIDOR ID PROGRAM AND INITIATIVES – Catherine Davidson**

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Ms. Catherine Davidson provided an overview of the Corridor ID (CID) Program administered by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) noting that the goal of the program is to guide passenger rail development and improvements. CID is a three (3) step grant program, and each step has specific deliverables. Catherine provided an overview of NNEPRA's current Strategic Initiatives and noted that the CID Program will be instrumental in achieving these initiatives.

Patricia provided an overview of the Portland Station Relocation project and background on studies that have been done in coordination with Maine DOT regarding location and parking. Three (3) sites have been identified on St. John Street for the Portland Station. A public meeting will be held on Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm to explain the sites and get feedback.

Chairman Cohen commented that he will need to recuse himself should the Board need to formally vote on a station site due to a long-standing relationship with one of the property owners in the area.

Director Fleming provided an update on the Falmouth Station initiative, noting positive discussions with the Town and stakeholders regarding a potential station location at the West Falmouth Crossing. Next steps include meetings with local stakeholders. Patricia added that a station in West Falmouth would reduce the parking needed in Portland.

Patricia reported that there have been no updates on the Rockland service but noted that NNEPRA and Amtrak have been working diligently to develop and operating plan and satisfy necessary regulatory requirements. A meeting is scheduled later in the week with Maine DOT to discuss the project. Mr. Nate Moulton commented that the landscape has changed given that Dragon Cement, the major freight customer on the Rockland Branch, has closed. Negotiations with Amtrak and the host railroad will inform the feasibility of the project.

### **FINANCE REPORT – Patricia Quinn**

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Patricia provided an overview of the operating budget variance report through February.

#### **Motion to accept February 2024 Variance Report**

Motion: Mr. Steve Lyons

Second: Ms. Maggie Fleming

Approved: All

### **AMTRAK AGREEMENT AMENDMENTS – Patricia Quinn**

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Patricia informed the Board of two amendments to Amtrak service agreements.

- The first amendment is related to the transition to Horizon coaches. The compatibility of boarding plates, quality of Wi-Fi and installation of bike racks in the Horizon coaches remain open items. The current plan is to transition one (1) Horizon coach into each Downeaster trainset starting May 20th. However, Patricia reiterated that NNEPRA will not sign an agreement for the full transition to Horizon coaches until all issues have been addressed. Mr. Luke Irvine noted that Amtrak is working to resolve those issues.
- The second amendment is related to the new Amtrak Cost Methodology.

### **PROJECT UPDATES – Jim Russell**

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Mr. Jim Russell reported on capital projects:

- The double track extension portion of the Wells Area Improvement Project will resume in the summer (2024). The necessary agreements with CSX have been finalized and FRA has given approval to proceed. A pre-construction meeting with CSX contractor, RJ Corman was to be held later in the week.
- Construction of the new platform and pedestrian bridge is pending permits and stakeholder approvals. The project is anticipated to be out for bid in summer 2024, with construction still expected to begin in the fall of 2024.
- Progress on Fed/State Partnership Tie Replacement Project is pending FRA approval of grant documents. Environmental approvals have been granted, and CSX is preparing to proceed with the project in the fall 2024. A schedule has not been established, so the impacts on Downeaster service are still unclear. It is expected that service outages will be necessary.

Patricia noted that the FY24 Capital Program agreement is pending CSX signature and contains brush cutting, welding and grade crossing updates. Patricia also noted the Positive Train Control (PTC) project funded by Amtrak and is underway. The Board engaged in a discussion on how PTC would positively impact service. Patricia noted that the installation of PTC will help mitigate current restrictions on Downeaster frequencies and speed.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS – Natalie Bogart**

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Ms. Natalie Bogart provided an update on Downeaster stations.

- The Hose Tower in Freeport has been sold to a private business and the current Train Center located within it will close. The Amtrak ticketing machine, NNEPRA informational kiosk, and the technology hub for the PIDS sign on the platform are located within the building. NNEPRA staff have met with the new Town Manager to discuss alternative location(s) for this important equipment in order to maintain these important passenger information and communication resources.
- The Old Orchard Beach Chamber of Commerce is exploring relocating the Amtrak ticketing kiosk to a location which is accessible outside of Visitor Center hours. NNEPRA has met with the community leaders to discuss improvements that could be made to the platform and explore alternative locations for the ticketing kiosk.
- There have been dramatic improvements to the cleanliness and security of Saco station. A reduction in station hours and limitations to Wi-Fi access have been helpful.
- The City of Dover has invested in repairs and improvements to their station.

Lastly, Natalie reiterated that the station communities continue to show support for the service. NNEPRA remains engaged in the communities and supports planning and improvement efforts made by the stations.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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Chairman Cohen opened the floor to public comment.

Ms. Patty Barber noted the press coverage, both positive and negative, regarding the public meeting for the Portland Station Relocation. Additionally, Ms. Barber voiced her support for expansion to Rockland.

Mr. Tom Wilhite also voiced his support for the Rockland service, noting that communities between Brunswick and Bucksport are vibrant and eager to support service to the area.


End public comment.

Chairman Cohen lead a discussion regarding a meeting in May. The Board agreed to meet on May 28<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm.


**Meeting Adjourned at 4:42 pm.**

Downeaster Performance Metrics - Last 12 Months									
Period	FY	Ridership				Revenue			
		Actual	Budget	Variance	vs. FY23	Actual	Budget	Variance	\$/Rider
Apr 24	FY24	48,976	51,405	-2,429	109%	\$ 1,151,840	\$ 989,546	\$ 162,294	\$23.52
Mar 24	FY24	46,537	40,191	6,346	122%	\$ 1,105,299	\$ 783,722	\$ 321,577	\$23.75
Feb 24	FY24	42,045	36,742	5,303	126%	\$ 1,009,621	\$ 707,287	\$ 302,334	\$24.01
Jan 24	FY24	41,238	38,979	2,259	116%	\$ 897,352	\$ 750,336	\$ 147,016	\$21.76
Dec 23	FY24	46,905	41,631	5,274	118%	\$ 1,020,290	\$ 811,813	\$ 208,477	\$21.75
Nov 23	FY24	48,005	45,818	2,187	110%	\$ 1,003,399	\$ 893,447	\$ 109,952	\$20.90
Oct 23	FY24	54,816	50,213	4,603	115%	\$ 1,093,794	\$ 979,155	\$ 114,639	\$19.95
Sep 23	FY24	52,994	47,961	5,033	116%	\$ 1,060,397	\$ 935,237	\$ 125,160	\$20.01
Aug 23	FY24	61,769	54,323	7,446	119%	\$ 1,241,359	\$ 1,059,295	\$ 182,064	\$20.10
Jul 23	FY24	57,876	54,659	3,217	111%	\$ 1,171,407	\$ 1,065,847	\$ 105,560	\$20.24
<b>FY24 To Date</b>		<b>501,161</b>	<b>461,922</b>	<b>39,239</b>	<b>116%</b>	<b>10,754,758</b>	<b>\$ 8,975,685</b>	<b>\$ 1,779,073</b>	<b>\$21.46</b>
Jun 23	FY23	45,027	43,411	1,616	93%	\$ 900,524	\$ 835,654	\$ 64,870	\$20.00
May 23	FY23	39,276	39,986	-710	88%	\$ 754,624	\$ 769,732	\$ (15,108)	\$19.21
<b>FY23 Final</b>		<b>516,723</b>	<b>479,651</b>	<b>37,072</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>\$ 10,420,681</b>	<b>\$ 9,233,283</b>	<b>1,137,637</b>	<b>\$20.17</b>


**Fiscal Year 2024 To Date**




**4,879**



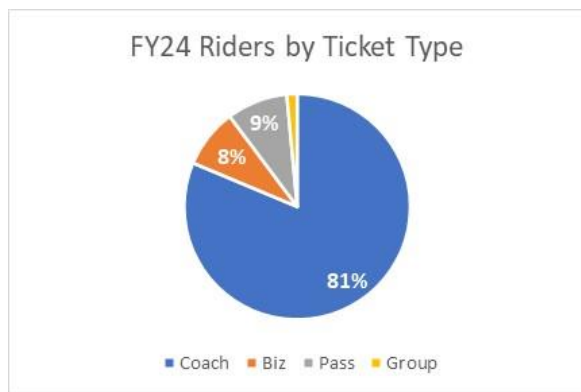
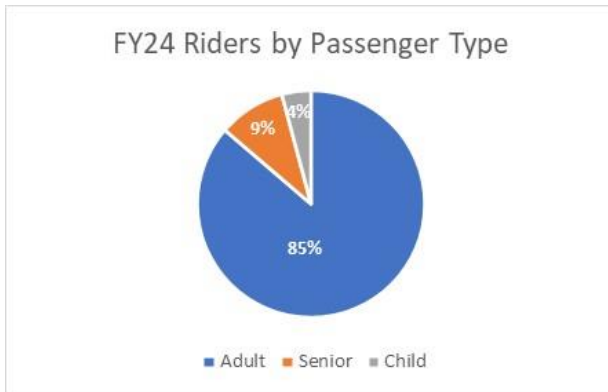
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**823**

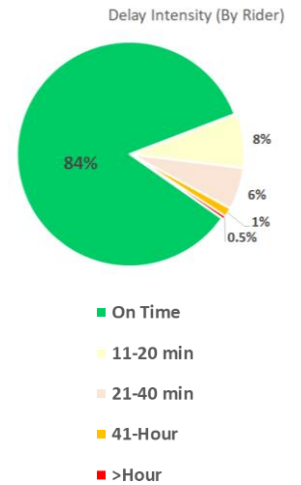


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FY24 Performance Targets			
Ridership	555,899	Train On Time Performance	85%
Revenue	\$ 10,840,029	Customer On Time Performance	90%
Average Fare	\$ 19.50	Overall Customer Satisfaction	90%
Overall Cost Recovery	50%	Café Cost Recovery	75%
		Café Capture Ratio	19%
		Café Check Average	\$8.85

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 24	FY24	294	4,307,349	74%	84%	18%	\$ 10.61	90
Mar 24	FY24	306	4,058,625	82%	86%	19%	\$ 10.88	88
Feb 24	FY24	290	3,655,150	83%	89%	18%	\$ 10.79	90
Jan 24	FY24	308	3,716,256	78%	87%	18%	\$ 10.76	94
Dec 23	FY24	305	4,137,821	82%	89%	17%	\$ 10.85	92
Nov 23	FY24	298	4,137,882	80%	86%	16%	\$ 10.37	90
Oct 23	FY24	306	4,711,135	69%	80%	16%	\$ 9.77	92
Sep 23	FY24	297	4,524,931	60%	73%	16%	\$ 8.88	91
Aug 23	FY24	310	5,439,692	65%	78%	18%	\$ 9.03	90
Jul 23	FY24	310	5,075,219	55%	68%	17%	\$ 8.64	91
<b>FY24 To Date</b>		<b>3,024</b>	43,764,060	<b>73%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>\$ 10.06</b>	<b>91</b>
Jun 23	FY23	300	3,737,241	80%	83%	18%	\$ 9.97	90
May 23	FY23	310	2,827,872	76%	87%	17%	\$ 9.46	88
<b>FY23 Final</b>		<b>3,593</b>	43,148,483	<b>73%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>\$ 9.17</b>	<b>89%</b>



FY 2024 Downeaster Customer Satisfaction											
	Sample Size	Overall Score	Train Comfort	Train Cleanliness	Train Crew	OTP	Train Status Info	Café	WiFi	Station Staff	Station Overall
Apr	546	90.3	88	85	95	86	82	78	77	95	n/a
Mar	529	88.2	86	85	94	83	79	76	70	91	88
Feb	528	90.3	86	84	93	86	84	75	72	91	88
Jan	635	88.6	87	83	92	82	82	76	72	91	87
Dec	751	92.0	87	87	94	92	88	78	74	91	83
Nov	680	90.0	87	87	92	84	83	76	72	88	85
Oct	1,477	92.0	89	88	94	84	83	79	68	89	82
Sep	1,654	89.1	88	87	90	75	77	79	74	89	86
Aug	1,807	89.5	90	89	93	83	84	82	80	92	87
Jul	1,335	92.2	91	90	94	81	85	79	81	92	86
<b>FY24</b>	<b>8,867</b>	<b>90.5</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>85</b>
Jun	1,175	89.7	90	90	92	87	87	83.0	79.0	92.0	87.0
May	853	87.7	9	9	93	87	84	79.0	80.0	91.0	86.0
Apr	784	86.7	91	90	92	87	86	80.0	80.0	91.0	87.0
<b>FY23 Year End</b>	<b>8,610</b>	<b>89.3</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>8.7</b>



**NNEPRA Fiscal Year 2024  
Operating Budget Variance Report  
July 2023 - April 2024**

	April-24			Fiscal Year to Date April 2024				
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	%	
<b>Operating Revenue</b>								
Amtrak Ticket Revenue	\$ 1,151,840	\$ 989,546	\$ 162,294	10,754,758	\$ 8,975,685	\$ 1,779,073	20%	
Food Service Revenue	\$ 86,932	\$ 87,414	\$ (482)	898,542	\$ 785,497	\$ 113,045	14%	
Parking Lot Revenue	\$ 59,431	\$ 63,500	\$ (4,069)	603,035	\$ 469,500	\$ 133,535	28%	
Interest & Other Revenue	\$ 62,638	\$ 37,000	\$ 25,638	638,846	\$ 370,000	\$ 268,846	73%	
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 1,360,841</b>	<b>\$ 1,177,460</b>	<b>\$ 183,381</b>	<b>\$ 12,895,181</b>	<b>\$ 10,600,682</b>	<b>\$ 2,294,499</b>	<b>22%</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>								
<b>Administration</b>								
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 81,933	\$ 95,833	\$ (13,900)	\$ 848,018	\$ 958,330	\$ (110,312)	-12%	
Office Expenses	\$ 11,200	\$ 10,190	\$ 1,010	\$ 132,576	\$ 140,075	\$ (7,499)	-5%	
Professional Services	\$ 12,092	\$ 13,630	\$ (1,538)	\$ 104,490	\$ 138,080	\$ (33,590)	-24%	
Insurance	\$ 4,355	\$ 4,250	\$ 105	\$ 48,099	\$ 43,250	\$ 4,849	N/A	
Board Operations	\$ 1,727	\$ 1,250	\$ 477	\$ 14,937	\$ 19,323	\$ (4,386)	-23%	
<b>Total Admin Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 111,307</b>	<b>\$ 125,153</b>	<b>\$ (13,846)</b>	<b>\$ 1,148,120</b>	<b>\$ 1,299,058</b>	<b>\$ (150,938)</b>	<b>-12%</b>	
<b>Train Operations</b>								
Amtrak Train Operations	\$ 527,942	\$ 656,884	\$ (128,942)	\$ 5,891,520	\$ 6,414,088	\$ (522,568)	-8%	
Amtrak Equipment Maintenance	\$ 702,328	\$ 791,162	\$ (88,834)	\$ 7,453,656	\$ 8,099,185	\$ (645,529)	-8%	
Amtrak Support Services	\$ 152,805	\$ 180,441	\$ (27,636)	\$ 1,665,016	\$ 1,699,572	\$ (34,556)	-2%	
Train Fuel Cost	\$ 202,581	\$ 216,216	\$ (13,635)	\$ 2,271,957	\$ 2,268,724	\$ 3,233	0%	
Other Train Operations	\$ 5,776	\$ 187,333	\$ (181,557)	\$ 1,703,746	\$ 1,770,054	\$ (66,308)	-4%	
Facilities	\$ 34,792	\$ 40,264	\$ (5,472)	\$ 515,876	\$ 592,892	\$ (77,016)	-13%	
FY24 Capital Maintenance	\$ 685	\$ 685	\$ -	\$ 33,017	\$ 33,017	\$ -	N/A	
<b>Total Train Operations</b>	<b>\$ 1,626,909</b>	<b>\$ 2,072,985</b>	<b>\$ (446,076)</b>	<b>\$ 19,534,788</b>	<b>\$ 20,877,531</b>	<b>\$ (1,342,743)</b>	<b>-6%</b>	
<b>Station Operations</b>								
Portland Station	\$ 50,313	\$ 47,857	\$ 2,456	\$ 437,567	\$ 408,632	\$ 28,935	7%	
Platform Insurance	\$ 16,518	\$ 17,076	\$ (558)	\$ 167,219	\$ 170,759	\$ (3,540)	-2%	
Station Platform Leases	\$ 3,798	\$ 4,020	\$ (222)	\$ 38,186	\$ 40,204	\$ (2,018)	-5%	
Station Improvements	\$ 3,107	\$ 3,107	\$ -	\$ 17,172	\$ 17,172	\$ -	N/A	
<b>Total Station Operations</b>	<b>\$ 73,736</b>	<b>\$ 72,060</b>	<b>\$ 1,676</b>	<b>\$ 660,144</b>	<b>\$ 636,767</b>	<b>\$ 23,377</b>	<b>4%</b>	
<b>Total Food Service</b>	<b>\$ 104,983</b>	<b>\$ 107,490</b>	<b>\$ (2,507)</b>	<b>\$ 1,073,268</b>	<b>\$ 1,053,129</b>	<b>\$ 20,139</b>	<b>2%</b>	
<b>Total Marketing</b>	<b>\$ 42,279</b>	<b>\$ 49,231</b>	<b>\$ (6,952)</b>	<b>\$ 330,198</b>	<b>\$ 417,913</b>	<b>\$ (87,715)</b>	<b>-21%</b>	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,959,214</b>	<b>\$ 2,426,919</b>	<b>\$ (467,705)</b>	<b>\$ 22,746,518</b>	<b>\$ 24,284,399</b>	<b>\$ (1,537,881)</b>	<b>-6%</b>	
<b>Add'l Funding Required</b>	<b>\$ 598,373</b>	<b>\$ 1,249,458</b>	<b>\$ (651,085)</b>	<b>\$ 9,851,337</b>	<b>\$ 13,683,717</b>	<b>\$ (3,832,380)</b>	<b>-28%</b>	
Downeaster Ridership	48,976	51,405	(2,429)					
Overall cost recovery	69%	49%		57%	44%			
Café Recovery	83%	81%		84%	75%			