
Board Briefing Materials

June 24, 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



**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.

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

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

June 24, 2024

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

Draft Agenda

3:00pm Public Session

- Welcome and Safety Briefing
- Public Comment
- Approval of Minutes from May 28, 2024 Board Meeting
- Downeaster Performance Update
 - Operating Statistics
 - Marketing Initiatives
- Finance Update
 - Review of Budget Variance Report
 - Approval FY25 Operating Budget
- Horizon Transition
- Project Updates
 - VHB Presentation - Portland Station Relocation
- Other Business
 - Town of Cumberland proposal
- Public Comment

Next Meeting: July 22, 2024



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

May 28, 2024

Directors in Attendance:

Chairman Jim Cohen; Vice Chair Alan Casavant; Ms. Maggie Fleming; Ms. Carol Murray; Ms. Alison Harris; 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. Irwin Gratz, Maine Public Radio; Mr. Kevin Chittenden, Amtrak; Mr. Tom Wilhite, Camden Resident; Ms. Patty Barber, Rail Passengers Association; Mr. Bruce Sleeper, TrainRiders Northeast; Mr. Dana Knapp, Concord Coach Lines

OPENING REMARKS

Meeting called to order at 3:01 pm and a safety briefing was provided.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve April 22, 2024 Minutes

Motion: Ms. Alison Harris
Seconded: Mr. Moulton
Approved: All

OVERVIEW OF DOWNEASTER PERFORMANCE – Patricia Quinn

Ms. Patricia Quinn provided an overview of the Downeaster performance through April 2024, noting strong ridership and revenue growth for another record-breaking month. Customer Satisfaction (CSI) scores remain high in April; the onboard Wi-Fi score improved.

MARKETING UPDATE – Taylor Belanger

Ms. Taylor Belanger provided an update on marketing initiatives and gave an overview of paid, visual, and traditional media strategies. Taylor noted that she is working with Blaze on the FY2025 creative strategy and that a photoshoot is scheduled for June 10th. Additionally, 60 thousand unique users visited the Amtrak Downeaster website in April.

FINANCE REPORT – Patricia Quinn

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

Motion to accept April 2024 Variance Report

Motion: Ms. Carol Murray
Second: Ms. Maggie Fleming
Approved: All

Patricia provided an overview of the proposed draft FY2025 operating budget specifically addressing projected revenue and expense assumptions. Chairman Cohen commented that the proposed numbers seemed reasonable, noting that the cost of fuel remains unpredictable.

Patricia stated that the next steps in the budget process will be to finalize projections and present the budget to the MaineDOT Commissioner for approval. It is anticipated the budget will be complete for the Board to approve for adoption of July 1st at the June meeting.

HORIZON UPDATE – Patricia Quinn

Patricia stated that one (1) Horizon coach had been added to each train set as of May 17th. NNEPRA and Amtrak are working toward a formal agreement, but there is no set timeline for when the full transition to the Horizon fleet will happen. Amtrak is working with a vendor to install bike racks and improve WiFi in the Horizon fleet.

PROJECT UPDATES – Jim Russell

Mr. Jim Russell reported on capital projects:

- The double track extension portion of the Wells Area Improvement Project has begun. It is estimated that it will take approximately three (3) to four (4) months to construct the 6-mile segment.
- 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 late 2024.
- The FY24 Capital Maintenance Project agreement with CSX has been received and signed. The program includes brush cutting, welding and grade crossing update. The FY25 Capital Maintenance program will be forthcoming.
- The Fed/State Partnership Tie Replacement Project is pending FRA approval of grant documents. A schedule has not been established, so the impacts on Downeaster service are still unclear. It is expected that service outages will be necessary.

Mr. Nate Moulton provided an update regarding the Rockland project, noting that service is unlikely to begin this year and there are several moving parts that cannot be discussed at this time. Patricia commented that NNEPRA, MaineDOT and Amtrak are still working with the Host Railroad on a path forward. The new target start date is May 2025.

Patricia provided an update on the Portland Station Relocation project noting that a public meeting was held on April 25th to present three (3) sites identified on St. John Street for the potential Portland Station relocation. A formal two (2) week public comment period followed the public meeting. VHB has collected the comments and is working to review and synthesize them. A high-level overview indicates that most of the comments were in favor of the project, with the most support for site number three (3). NNEPRA continues to collect feedback from local stakeholders as well as Amtrak and CSX. Chairman Cohen inquired about next step in the process. Patricia responded that VHB will provide the information collected to the Board for a potential site recommendation. Chairman Cohen reiterated that he will need to recuse himself when 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.

Patricia provided an update on the Falmouth Station initiative, noting a positive meeting with the Town and stakeholders regarding a potential station location at the West Falmouth Crossing specific to the Dunkin Donuts parcel.

VHB will work on concepts to review with the Town and stakeholders at the next meeting. Chairman Cohen inquired as to how much land is available for the Falmouth Station. Jim Russell responded that the parcel of land is approximately three (3) acres.

Patricia noted that NNEPRA hired a contractor to assist with larger planning projects for the Downeaster, specifically the FRA Service Development Plan that is part of the Corridor ID program.

OTHER BUSINESS – Patricia Quinn

Mr. Bill Shane was unable to present the Town of Cumberland Proposal as scheduled.

Patricia reported that the Hose Tower in Freeport has been sold to a private business and the current Train Center located there will close on June 30. The Amtrak ticketing machine and the technology hub for the PIDS sign on the platform are located within the building. NNEPRA staff has met with the new Town Manager to discuss alternative location(s) for this equipment to maintain these important passenger information and communication resources. Chairman Cohen noted that a letter of support from the Board may be appropriate to encourage a continued partnership between NNEPRA and the Town.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Cohen opened the floor to public comment.

Mr. Bruce Sleeper commented on Trainriders Northeast's 35th Annual Meeting, noting that it was well attended by NNEPRA staff and others.

Bruce inquired if the FY 2025 draft budget included impacts of the Rockland Service. Patricia responded that it did not and if the service were to launch, there would need to be an adjustment.

Bruce commented on the Portland Station relocation stating that the number of parking spots (105) that VHB has identified to accommodate passengers still seems like not enough. Patricia responded that MaineDOT did a similar study in 2018, and they came to a similar conclusion. Additionally, there is potential for added parking dependent on various stakeholder involvement. Bruce noted that at the public meeting there had been a comment about a shuttle service between the new Portland station and the Transportation Center. Patricia responded that there are options that currently exist such as Metro Bus and the diversion of Concord Coach Lines, but there is a possibility for new services to develop as well.

Lastly, Bruce inquired if the Town of Freeport would be interested in volunteer hosts. Mr. Brian Beeler responded that as of July 1st, there will not be a facility for a host to occupy.


Mr. Tom Wilhite voiced frustration regarding the Rockland service update. Tom commented that this project has been discussed for years and that the public deserves to know and understand what issues continue to delay service. Chairman Cohen thanked Tom for his comments and responded that the Board anxiously awaits more information as well.

End public comment.


Meeting Adjourned at 4:29 pm.

Downeaster Performance Metrics - Last 12 Months									
Period	FY	Ridership				Revenue			
		Actual	Budget	Variance	vs. FY23	Actual	Budget	Variance	\$/Rider
May 24	FY24	46,412	45,167	1,245	118%	\$ 1,074,148	\$ 880,764	\$ 193,384	\$23.14
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
FY24 To Date		547,573	507,089	40,484	116%	11,828,906	9,856,449	1,972,457	\$21.60
Jun 23	FY23	45,027	43,411	1,616	93%	\$ 900,524	\$ 835,654	\$ 64,870	\$20.00
FY23 Final		516,723	479,651	37,072	90%	\$ 10,420,681	\$ 9,233,283	1,137,637	\$20.17


Fiscal Year 2024 To Date




5,175



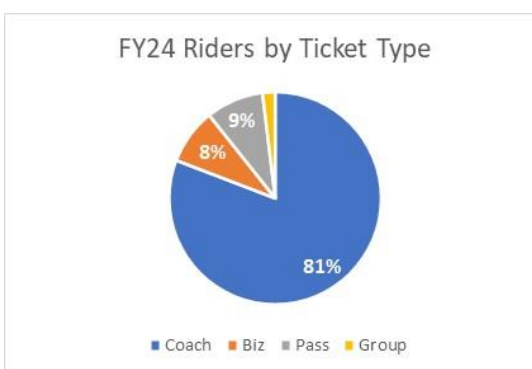
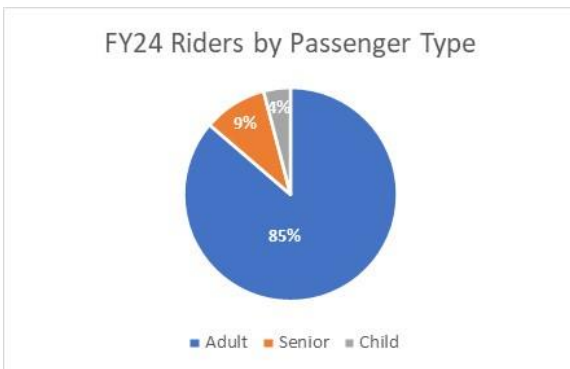
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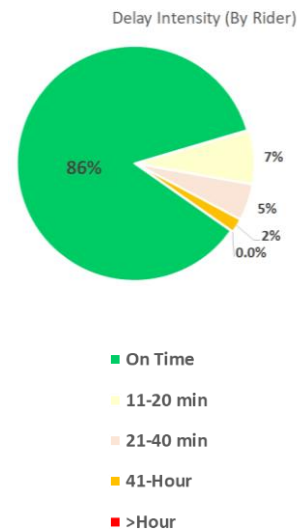


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FY24 Performance Targets			
Ridership	555,899	Train On Time Performance	85%
Revenue	\$ 10,840,029	Customer On Time Performance	90%
Average Fare	\$ 19.50	Overall Customer Satisfaction	90%
Overall Cost Recovery	50%	Café Cost Recovery	75%
		Café Capture 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	
May 24	FY24	310	4,037,621	73%	86%	17%	\$ 9.92	92
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
FY24 To Date		3,334	47,801,681	73%	82%	17%	\$ 10.05	91
Jun 23	FY23	300	3,737,241	80%	83%	18%	\$ 9.97	90
FY23 Final		3,593	43,148,483	73%	83%	17%	\$ 9.17	89%



FY 2024 Downeaster Customer Satisfaction												
	Sample Size	Overall Score	Train			OTP	Train Status Info		Café		Station	
			Comfort	Cleanliness	Crew					WiFi	Staff	Overall
May	604	92.2	89	88	96	88	85	76	76	91	n/a	
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	
FY24	10,546	90.4	88.0	86.6	93.3	84.1	82.9	77.5	74.1	90.9	70.2	
Jun	1,175	89.7	90	90	92	87	87	83.0	79.0	92.0	87.0	
FY23 Year End	8,610	89.3	8.9	9.0	9.2	8.6	8.6	8.2	8.0	9.2	8.7	