

MAINE TRANSIT ASSOCIATION



Minutes of Wednesday, April 17, 2024 via Zoom

Members Present:

Tom Reinauer, YCCAC, President
Erin Bingham, KVCAP, Vice President
Chad Heid, BSOOB Transit, Treasurer
Mike Tremblay, Greater Portland Metro, Clerk
Hank Berg, Casco Bay Lines
Jamie Parsons, Midcoast Connector
Maddie Jensen, BACTS
Andrew Clark, GPCOG
Laurie Linscott, City of Bangor
Larry Allen, AVCOG
Micah Desmond, Aroostook RTS
Paul Murphy, Acadia Island Explorer
Stephanie Farrar, Penquis

Others Present: Ryan Neale, MaineDOT; Bill Ferdinand, Eaton Peabody

1. Call to Order/Introductions:

Vice President Tom Reinauer called the meeting to order at 9:01am.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes:

With a quorum, minutes from the March 20, 2024 meeting were moved for approval by Chad Heid, seconded by Hank Berg, and approved unanimously of those present without additional discussion.

3. MaineDOT Updates

Ryan Neale provided the following updates:

***FTA On-site State Management Review:** FTA was on-site at KVCAP and Penquis CAP on Tuesday/Wednesday of last week (April 9/10). Still wrapping up documentation and final questions.*

Question (Erin Binghalib): For 5339, will there be additional opportunities to apply for funding this year or will there another opportunity (like for 5311 or 5310)? It is very difficult for us to come up with a 50% match in such a short timeline.

Answer (RN): I will need to get back to you on that.

Low-No and Bus and Bus Facilities Grants: *Working with our consultant, Hatch Consultants, to pull the grant applications together. The deadline was Thursday 4/25, but targeting this week to submit the application.*

Question (Tom Reinauer): Is the cost of the vehicles and local match finalized? Do you need an answer on the Hatch vans by Friday (4/19)?

Answer: (RN): I will follow up with Hatch on that. I will follow up with the match letter for the vehicles as well. We are ensuring we are as accurate as we can be on those.

Question (Chad Heid): If we do not win the low-no grant, is there an opportunity for the agencies that applied for the low-no grant to use the state funding for other programs outside of Low-no?

Answer (RN): Those funds are intended for matching funds for electrification and hybrid vehicles, and we are optimistic that we'll win some funding through low-no. If we don't the funds would be repurposed in some fashion, but that has not been determined yet.

Intercity Bus Pilot: *In final negotiations with vendor. Still targeting a Summer 2024 launch. Hopefully will have more to share in the coming weeks.*

4. Legislative Update

No legislative update.

5. Expanding Association Capacity

Chad Heid discussed moving forward with a short-term agreement (May to December) with Lexian for a flat fee of \$3000 per month, as opposed to a per hour billing rate, which will keep costs predictable while providing 40 hours a month of service. The term automatically renews at the end of our fiscal year, with an option to terminate in December. Tom Reinauer adds that Lexian will provide a monthly report of their activity so that the Association can understand how they are spending their time.

Question (Hank Berg): In the future, should contract discussions be held in executive session before an agreement is made? I'm used to negotiation discussions happening in executive session so they are not made public.

Answer: Tom Reinauer: Not sure if by-laws have a provision for this.

Comment (Bill Ferdinand): I'm not sure if I should be in this meeting; it may not be an executive session item but certainly should be limited to membership only at the very least. (Bill and Ryan Neale left after this comment).

A motion to approve the contract and authorize the President to proceed was made by Mike Tremblay, seconded by Erin Binghalib, and approved unanimously of those present.

6. Funding and Grants

Tom Reinauer provided update on additional state transit funding, and noted that it is very important for several agencies that the state funding question be resolved as quickly as possible. Discussed with MaineDOT the possibility of keeping the same method of distribution (population, road miles, geographic area for each region), but updating the numbers based on the 2020 census and road miles from DOT so that the formula wouldn't change for FY 2025, then revisit the formula itself for future years.

Chad Heid added that a critical piece of information we are still trying to find out is how much of the additional \$5 million are transit agencies going to have access to, and how will those funds be distributed? The membership wants an answer on the upcoming FY (July-June) on how much general fund assistance that can be expected from the State. For this year, we'll use the same formula. Is DOT comfortable using the same formula with updated data? We're also hearing that the state would like a set-aside of \$2 million. If a set-aside does get taken out, it would be helpful for the agencies to get a breakdown of how those funds will be used and allocated.

Ryan Neale notes that the time is right to re-examine the formula.

Question (Hank Berg): Is this only for bus agencies? If Casco Bay Lines could join the discussion at some point, that would be helpful; there are certain metrics that do not work for how Casco Bay Lines runs service.

Answer (Chad Heid): Casco Bay Lines received \$20k from the \$1.2 million allocation. For the PACTS region, we get a slice of the funding based on population alone.

Question (Erin Binghalib): On our distribution letter, it says 30% regional distribution, but then it says "at most, we get 15%. So where is the rest? I get that other locations have other funding sources, but KVCAP does not.

Answer (RN): I'll have to get back to you on that.

Comment (EB): It is critical that set-aside money is not locked behind a formula grant that rural agencies would have to compete for.

7. Financial Update

Chad Heid notes that most member dues have been paid, and we are in good fiscal shape with funds to spare for other needs (website, hosting, other general expenses). Just two members have yet to submit their payments.

Current balance is \$58,000 and some change available. We just authorized an 8-month contract at \$3,000 per month with Lexian, and we have an existing contract with Eaton Peabody for \$18,000, which expires this year. We'll need to account for potential increases to that contract.

8. 2025 Tri-State Transit Conference

Subcommittee met on some options for September 2025. Proposals, costs, other information from five vendors. Will be best to nail down the venue and dates first, then work backwards from there.

Comment (Ryan Neale): Would be best to consider travel times from Vermont, New Hampshire, as well as elsewhere in Maine

Comment (Mike Tremblay): Would be great if the location would not preclude some kind of real-world transit option for an interactive piece of the program, rather than a remote area with no transit access.

9. Information Exchange

Hank Berg reports that Casco Bay Lines' triennial review concluded with no findings – five in a row with no findings.

Chad Heid notes that BSOOB Transit is in discussions with their union, ATU 714. Their contract expires in June. Hopeful that a new contract will be in place before this one expires.

10. Future Agenda Items

- 2024 Goals and Objectives
- Committee Assignments
- Legislative Priority Setting
- Fiscal Sponsorship/Banking Arrangement

11. Upcoming Membership Meeting:

May 15, 2024 via Zoom

Meeting Adjourned at 10:17am: No Motion needed