
Board Briefing Materials

November 25, 2024

Location:

*University of Southern Maine, Abromson Community Center
Room 216
88 Bedford Street, Portland ME 04101*

3:00pm Public Session



For More Information

 207-780-1000 x 105

 info@nnepra.com



**NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND
PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY**

FY2025 NNEPRA Strategic Workplan:

1. Meet and exceed high standards for transportation safety.

- Elevate safety awareness by expanding information, communication and training efforts.
- Increase participation in Operation Lifesaver.
- Optimize safety signage and equipment at stations and facilities as needed

2. Maximize public awareness of the Downeaster service,

- Attract new riders and retain existing riders through multi-faceted marketing program.
- Optimize fare potential while maintaining cost controls and efficiencies.
- Monitor and analyze travel trends to align train schedules with consumer travel patterns.

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.

- Oversee successful transition to Horizon Fleet
- Support Station Ambassador Program & Recruitment efforts
- Assist stations in implementing wayfinding signage at stations
- Implement and expand e-voucher program
- Pursue Maine-made offerings in Café and improve Café CSI
- Collaborate with Amtrak and host railroads to maintain and improve reliability.
- Support efforts to provide and promote last mile connections and transit connectivity.
- Assure NNEPRA owned and Downeaster-related facilities remain in a state of good repair.

4. Support the reduction of vehicle miles travelled and State climate change initiatives by improving service accessibility and quality:

- Complete extension of double track and initiate platform and station project in Wells.
- Design and pursue and secure funding for a mainline Portland Station
- Develop Falmouth station concept into project phase
- Pursue opportunities to initiate passenger rail service on the Rockland Branch
- Update Downeaster Service Development Plan
- Prepare for new Amtrak trainsets

5. Monitor and support programs to sustain passenger rail growth and funding:

6. Pursue state and federal funding opportunities:

- Monitor and pursue grant opportunities
- Ensure NNEPRA is positioned to receive eligible federal funding
- Collaborate with MaineDOT to secure resources needed to leverage federal funding
- Streamline internal accounting, procurement, project delivery and reporting protocols to maximize efficiency, accuracy and transparency.

7. Remain engaged and involved with transportation planning studies, organizations and initiatives in support of transportation access, expansion and connectivity on the local, state and national level.



NNEPRA BOARD of DIRECTORS

November 25, 2024

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

Draft Agenda

3:00pm Public Session

- Welcome and Safety Briefing
- Public Comment
- Approval of Minutes from October 28, 2024 Board Meeting
- Finance updates
 - September Budget Variance Report
 - FY25 Operating Budget Revision
- Fiscal Year 2025 Operations
 - Downeaster Performance FY25 to date
 - FY25 Ridership and Revenue Generating Strategies
- Horizon Transition
- Project Updates
 - Wells Area Improvement Project
 - Capital Maintenance Projects
 - Fed State Partnership
 - Station Improvement Projects
 - Portland Station Relocation
 - West Falmouth
 - Corridor ID
 - Rockland Service
- Other Business
 - Mitchell Award Nominee
- Public Comment

Next Meeting: January 27, 2024



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

October 28, 2024

Directors in Attendance:

Chairman Jim Cohen; Vice Chair Alan Casavant; Ms. Alison Harris; Mr. Nate Moulton; Ms. Carolann Ouellette

NNEPRA Staff in Attendance:

Ms. Patricia Quinn; Ms. Natalie Bogart; Mr. Brian Beeler; Mr. James Russell; Ms. Belle Askinasi; Ms. Catherine Kruglak; Ms. Taylor Auclair; Ms. Emily Bedard

Interested Parties:

Mr. Ed Suslovic, METRO; Mr. Bernie Breithart; Mr. Dana Knapp, Concord Coach Lines; Mr. Kevin Chittenden, Amtrak; Mr. Peter Cole; Ms. Patty Barber, Rail Passengers Association; Mr. Bruce Sleeper, TrainRiders Northeast; Mr. Christian Smith, Wipfli

OPENING REMARKS

Meeting called to order at 3:05 pm and a safety briefing was provided.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Cohen opened the floor to public comment.

Mr. Ed Suslovic, METRO, announced that the South Portland Bus service had been voted to be merged with Greater Portland Metro.

Mr. Peter Cole commented on the Amtrak crew and customer service at the Brunswick station, noting that they are always helpful and professional.

Mr. Bruce Sleeper, TrainRiders Northeast, inquired commented on the positive Board meeting location change to USM and thanked NNEPRA's Marketing Director, Ms. Tayler Auclair for providing TrainRiders Northeast with "swag" for various events over the summer and fall.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve August 26, 2024 Minutes

Motion: Mr. Alan Casavant

Seconded: Ms. Alison Harris

Approved: All

FY2024 AUDIT REPORT AND OVERVIEW

Ms. Patricia Quinn introduced Mr. Christian Smith, who attended from NNEPRA's auditing firm, Wipfli, to provide a high-level review of the FY24 Financial Audit.

Christian provided an overview of Wipfli's relationship to NNEPRA and the Board, noting that Wipfli is a firm of independent auditors that assist NNEPRA with financial management and yearly audit preparation.

Christian stated that the FY24 audit was considered a “clean audit” and there were no adjustments or items of concern highlighted.

Chairman Cohen led the Board in a discussion regarding the audit results, and next steps. The Board agreed they were satisfied with the outcome and Ms. Alison Harris made a motion to accept the audit reports as submitted.

Motion to accept FY24 Audit Reports as submitted

Motion: Ms. Alison Harris
Second: Mr. Alan Casavant
Approved: All

OVERVIEW OF QUARTER 1 OF FY2025 DOWNEASTER PERFORMANCE – Patricia Quinn

Patricia provided an update that Ms. Olivia Richmond, NNEPRA’s Finance Associate, had resigned her position effective October 10, 2024. Patricia introduced Ms. Emily Bedard, noting that Emily had been on NNEPRA’s staff since July 1, 2024, in the role of Senior Accountant.

Patricia provided an overview of Q1 of FY2025 Downeaster performance, three (3) months of performance data from and only two (2) months of financial data. Ridership continued to be strong in Q1 of FY25, considering 19 train cancelations in July and August due to track work but OTP continues to struggle. NNEPRA and Amtrak remain in continuous communication with CSX to address issues. Mr. Kevin Chittenden with Amtrak noted that he continues to work closely with Mr. Luke Irvine on ways to mitigate delays.

Chairman Cohen asked if the delays are due to track work. Patricia responded that extended delays are usually caused by unexpected events. Patricia noted that Wednesday, October 30th was the last scheduled track outage with CSX and there was no additional work planned until February 2025 when PTC installation would begin. Patricia also noted that the Fed / State Tie Job project had been scheduled and anticipated to start March 30, 2025.

Mr. Nate Moulton asked how CSI scores are calculated. Patricia responded that Amtrak provides data on various touchpoints and NNEPRA picks the most relevant categories to the Downeaster to report on. Chairman Cohen commented that WiFi is consistently the lowest scoring category.

MARKETING UPDATE – Taylor Auclair

Ms. Taylor Auclair provided an overview of the Q1 marketing data and the FY25 growth strategy. Taylor noted that she continues to work with Amtrak to increase Downeaster visibility on Amtrak.com. The Downeaster is approaching transporting it’s 10 Millionth Rider and Taylor provided an overview of various activations planned to celebrate this milestone including partnerships with the Mariners Hockey team, Downeast Magazine and Freeport Sparkle Weekend. Taylor commented that group sales have rebounded back to pre-pandemic numbers and September had its best month ever for group sales.

FINANCE UPDATE – Patricia Quinn

Patricia provided an overview of the July and August variance report, noting that NNEPRA had yet to receive September financial data from Amtrak.

Motion to accept August Budget Variance

Motion: Mr. Alan Casavant
Second: Ms. Carolann Ouellette
Approved: All

FY2025 BUDGET MODIFICATION – Patricia Quinn

Patricia provided the Board with an updated FY25 Budget, noting that the adjustments made mostly had to do with rescheduled timing of the major tie replacement project. Realigning the budget to reflect when the work will be complete would capture a more accurate budget. Patricia noted that Amtrak rates had also been updated to reflect actuals, which were not available at the time the budget was approved.

Chairman Cohen lead the Board in a discussion regarding the adjustment, noting that considering Q1 has already closed, it would make sense to have the new budget be reflective of October 1, 2024 through the end of FY25. Mr. Nate Moulton confirmed that with an adjustment to the budget, it would need to be approved by the Commissioner. The Board agreed to vote on the budget at the November meeting.

HORIZON UPDATE – Patricia Quinn

Patricia provided an update on the Horizon transition noting that Amtrak had discovered corrosion within some cars and the status of the national fleet is unknown. Amtrak is contractually obligated to provide the Downeaster with four (4) coaches. Ms. Alison Harris asked if the Horizon cars currently on the Downeaster have been tested for corrosion. Patricia responded that the Horizons on the Downeaster have been through recent overhauls.

PROJECT UPDATES – Jim Russell

Mr. Jim Russell reported on capital projects:

- The double track extension portion of the Wells project will likely be complete at the end of November.
- The Wells Platform final design has been approved by the FRA. An Invitation to Bid (ITB) is expected to be advertised by October 30th with bids to be due December 4th.
- The FY24 and FY25 Capital Maintenance Agreement projects are anticipated to be completed by the end of calendar year 24.
- The Brunswick and Freeport station project is underway. Bancroft Contracting Corp. has been working to remove rust stains from the platform and reseal the concrete. Additionally, Bancroft will remove rust from the railings and repaint them.
- The Fed / State tie replacement project has been rescheduled for March 2025.

Patricia provided an update on the Portland Station Relocation (PSR) project, noting that VHB had completed the site alternative analysis. VHB has begun preliminary engineering and NEPA work to progress the project. Stakeholder outreach to local businesses continues and NNEPRA is working to apply for a final design and construction grant in the next Fed / State Partnership grant opportunity due December 16, 2024.

Patricia noted that there were no updates to report on the West Falmouth project. NNEPRA continues to work with the Town to coordinate with property owners and tenants.

Patricia provided an update on the Corridor ID (CID) program noting that the NNEPRA advertised a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a consultant team to update the Downeaster Service Development Plan (SDP). NNEPRA selected DB Eco North America as the consultant. FRA expects to have NNEPRA's CID Step 2 grant to complete the SDP obligated by December 1.

Mr. Nate Moulton provided an update regarding the Rockland Branch, noting that MaineDOT had issued an RFP for rail operators and proposals were due back November 15th. Nate reiterated that there would not be any plans for service on the Rockland Branch until an operator/host railroad has been identified.

OTHER BUSINESS – Patricia Quinn

Patricia reported that NNEPRA awarded a contract for the legal services to Bernstein Shur and that Nat Rosenblatt would extend his engagement until December 31st to assist with the transition.

Patricia noted that yearly insurance renewals are expected on December 1st and the budget would be updated to accurately reflect new premiums. Additionally, yearly NTD reporting has been complete.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Cohen opened the floor to public comment.

Ms. Patty Barber stated that the City of Westbrook and Town of Windham initiated a request for a Rail Use Advisory Council (RUAC) process to allow an interim recreational trail in the rail bed between along sections of the Mountain Branch.

End public comment.

Motion to adjourn

Motion: Mr. Alan Casavant


Second: Ms. Alison Harris

Approved: All

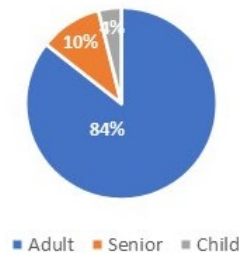
Meeting Adjourned at 4:29 pm.



Downeaster Performance Metrics - Last 12 Months									
Period	FY	Ridership				Revenue			
		Actual	Budget	Variance	vs. FY23	Actual	Budget	Variance	\$/Rider
Oct 24	FY25	52,059	52,075	-16	95%	\$ 1,232,802	\$ 1,218,560	\$ 14,242	\$ 23.68
Sep 24	FY25	51,640	45,045	6,595	97%	\$ 1,216,884	\$ 1,045,246	\$ 171,638	\$ 23.56
Aug 24	FY25	56,667	62,856	-6,189	92%	\$ 1,372,957	\$ 1,458,268	\$ (85,311)	\$ 24.23
Jul 24	FY25	57,854	59,034	-1,180	100%	\$ 1,368,838	\$ 1,369,578	\$ (740)	\$ 23.66
FY25 To Date		218,220	219,010	-774	96%	5,191,481	3,873,092	99,829	\$ 23.79
Jun 24	FY24	50,853	48,530	2,323	113%	\$ 1,191,491	\$ 965,829	\$ 225,662	\$ 23.43
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%	\$ 1,156,686	\$ 989,546	\$ 167,140	\$ 23.62
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
FY24 Total		598,428	556,618	41,810	127%	13,051,548	10,882,278	2,169,270	\$ 21.81

Fiscal Year 2025 To Date			
 2,037	 2,781	 384	 1,301

FY25 Riders by Passenger Type



FY25 Riders by Ticket Type

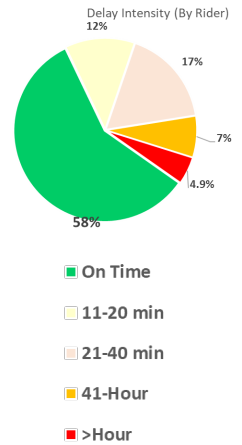


FY25 Performance Targets

Ridership	542,462	Train On Time Performance	75%	Café Cost Recovery	78%
Revenue	\$ 12,639,493	Customer On Time Performance	85%	Café Capture Ratio	18%
Average Fare	\$ 23.30	Overall Customer Satisfaction	90%	Café Check Average	\$10.95
Overall Cost Recovery	47%				

Modified 10/1/24

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	
Oct 24	FY25	303	4,454,370	43%	58%	16%	\$ 9.84	83
Sep 24	FY25	294	4,384,718	70%	82%	17%	\$ 10.28	93
Aug 24	FY25	293	5,010,367	64%	75%	18%	\$ 10.47	90
Jul 24	FY25	300	5,444,093	65%	78%	18%	\$ 10.47	90
FY25 To Date		1,190	19,293,548	61%	73%	18%	\$ 10.27	89



Jun 24	FY24	298	4,529,993	55%	70%	19%	\$ 10.28	88
May 24	FY24	310	4,037,621	73%	86%	17%	\$ 9.92	90
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
FY24 Total		3,622	52,332,352	71%	81%	18%	\$ 10.43	90

FY 2025 Downeaster Customer Satisfaction											
	Sample Size	Overall Score	Train Comfort	Train Cleanliness	Train Crew	OTP	Train Status Info	Café	WiFi	Station Staff	Station Overall
Oct	1,186	83.2	81	76	88	57	71	66	66	87	85
Sep	1,126	92.8	87	89	93	87	88	77	72	94	83
Aug	786	89.7	86	86	91	75	79	80	81	87	86
Jul	1,335	92.2	91	90	94	81	85	79	81	92	86
FY25 to Date	1,335	91.6	87.9	88.4	92.7	81.1	84.0	78.7	78.0	91.0	85.0
Jun	746	89.8	86	82	90	70	75	73	68	90	83
May	604	92.2	89	88	96	88	85	76	76	91	84
Apr	546	90.3	88	85	95	86	82	78	77	95	83
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
FY24 Year End	11,292	90.4	87.8	86.2	93.3	82.9	82.2	77.2	73.6	90.9	85.2

NNEPRA Fiscal Year 2025
Operating Budget Variance Report
September 2024

	September-24			Fiscal Year to Date September 2024			
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	%
Operating Revenue							
Amtrak Ticket Revenue	\$ 1,216,884	\$ 1,045,246	\$ 171,638	\$ 3,958,679	\$ 3,873,091	\$ 85,588	2%
Food Service Revenue	\$ 97,099	\$ 93,716	\$ 3,383	\$ 289,881	\$ 347,308	\$ (57,427)	-17%
Parking Lot Revenue	\$ 46,248	\$ 52,000	\$ (5,752)	\$ 154,032	\$ 177,600	\$ (23,568)	-13%
Interest & Other Revenue	\$ 52,688	\$ 43,395	\$ 9,293	\$ 192,420	\$ 153,431	\$ 38,989	25%
Total Operating Revenue	\$ 1,412,919	\$ 1,234,357	\$ 178,562	\$ 4,595,012	\$ 4,551,430	\$ 43,582	1%
Expenses							
Administration							
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 94,610	\$ 100,250	\$ (5,640)	\$ 282,336	\$ 300,750	\$ (18,414)	-6%
Office Expenses	\$ 11,102	\$ 19,402	\$ (8,300)	\$ 43,309	\$ 54,556	\$ (11,247)	-21%
Professional Services	\$ 3,443	\$ 12,730	\$ (9,287)	\$ 28,539	\$ 40,570	\$ (12,031)	-30%
Insurance	\$ 5,050	\$ 5,050	\$ (0)	\$ 13,761	\$ 15,151	\$ (1,390)	-9%
Board Operations	\$ 1,488	\$ 1,500	\$ (12)	\$ 4,827	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,827	61%
Total Admin Expenses	\$ 115,693	\$ 138,932	\$ (23,239)	\$ 372,772	\$ 414,027	\$ (41,255)	-10%
Train Operations							
Amtrak Train Operations	\$ 551,666	\$ 638,000	\$ (86,334)	\$ 1,717,986	\$ 1,950,000	\$ (232,014)	-12%
Amtrak Equipment Maintenance	\$ 681,445	\$ 740,344	\$ (58,899)	\$ 2,044,631	\$ 2,241,032	\$ (196,401)	-9%
Amtrak Support Services	\$ 186,485	\$ 185,454	\$ 1,031	\$ 579,156	\$ 579,487	\$ (331)	0%
Train Fuel Cost	\$ 181,448	\$ 222,437	\$ (40,989)	\$ 546,341	\$ 682,139	\$ (135,798)	-20%
Other Train Operations	\$ 164,681	\$ 177,341	\$ (12,660)	\$ 461,989	\$ 529,776	\$ (67,787)	-13%
Facilities	\$ 45,087	\$ 55,375	\$ (10,288)	\$ 128,439	\$ 128,375	\$ 64	0%
FY24 Capital Maintenance	\$ -	\$ 2,000	\$ (2,000)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	#DIV/0!
FY25 Capital Maintenance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,000	\$ (6,000)	-100%
Total Train Operations	\$ 1,810,812	\$ 2,020,951	\$ (210,139)	\$ 5,478,542	\$ 6,116,809	\$ (638,267)	-10%
Station Operations							
Portland Station	\$ 42,812	\$ 44,468	\$ (1,656)	\$ 131,446	\$ 129,465	\$ 1,981	2%
Platform Insurance	\$ 16,518	\$ 17,930	\$ (1,412)	\$ 49,554	\$ 53,789	\$ (4,235)	-8%
Station Platform Leases	\$ 3,838	\$ 4,221	\$ (383)	\$ 11,521	\$ 12,664	\$ (1,143)	-9%
Station Improvements	\$ 26	\$ 25,500	\$ (25,474)	\$ 26	\$ 25,500	\$ (25,474)	0%
Total Station Operations	\$ 63,194	\$ 92,119	\$ (28,925)	\$ 192,547	\$ 221,418	\$ (28,871)	-13%
Total Food Service	\$ 123,838	\$ 125,174	\$ (1,336)	\$ 349,392	\$ 387,195	\$ (37,803)	-10%
Total Marketing	\$ 38,850	\$ 43,333	\$ (4,483)	\$ 98,023	\$ 130,000	\$ (31,977)	-25%
Total Expenses	\$ 2,152,387	\$ 2,420,510	\$ (268,123)	\$ 6,491,276	\$ 7,269,449	\$ (778,173)	-11%
Add'l Funding Required	\$ 739,468	\$ 1,186,153	\$ (446,685)	\$ 1,896,264	\$ 2,718,019	\$ (821,755)	-30%
Downeaster Ridership	50,853	48,234	2,619				
Overall cost recovery	66%	51%		71%	63%		
Café Recovery	78%	75%		83%	90%		