
Board Briefing Materials

January 9, 2025

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

January 9, 2025

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

Draft Agenda

3:00pm Motion to open NNEPRA Board Meeting Public Session

- Welcome and Safety Briefing
- Public Comment
- Approval of Minutes from November 25, 2024 Board Meeting
- Fiscal Year 2025 Operations
 - Downeaster Performance FY25 to date
 - FY25 Ridership and Revenue Generating Strategies
- Finance updates
 - **October** Budget Variance Report
- 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
- Public Comment
- Motion to close public session
- Motion to enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 M.R.S. § 405(6)(C) for the purpose of discussing the acquisition of real property.

Next Meeting: February 24, 2025



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

November 25, 2024

Directors in Attendance:

Chairman Jim Cohen; Vice Chair Alan Casavant; Ms. Alison Harris; Mr. Nate Howard; Ms. Carolann Ouellette; Ms. Maggie (Fleming) Edson

NNEPRA Staff in Attendance:

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

Interested Parties:

Ms. Patty Barber, Rail Passenger Association; Mr. Kevin Chittenden, Amtrak; Mr. Dana Knapp, Concord Coach Lines; Mr. Luke Irvine, Amtrak; Mr. Bruce Sleeper, TrainRiders Northeast

OPENING REMARKS

Meeting called to order at 3:00 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 October 28, 2024 Minutes

Motion: Mr. Alan Casavant

Seconded: Ms. Alison Harris

Approved: All

DOWNEASTER PERFORMANCE – Patricia Quinn

Ms. Patricia Quinn provided an update on NNEPRA's FY25 Goals and Objectives.

Patricia reported that ridership data was available through October, while financial data was current through September. She explained that the information presented reflected revisions to ridership and revenue projections, as proposed in the revised budget, beginning in October primarily due to changes in timing of track work. Patricia also provided an overview of the different types of riders, explaining how ridership patterns fluctuate with the seasons.

Chairman Cohen led the Board in a discussion of the revised budget noting that the revisions would begin in October. Patricia mentioned that the revised budget had been submitted to the Commissioner, and did not require any changes to state match. A formal approval had not yet been granted.

Patricia then reviewed the October On-Time Performance (OTP) and related challenges, highlighting a significant decline in the Downeaster Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) scores. A graph illustrating the various types of delays in October and November was presented. Patricia clarified that planned construction days typically do not contribute to poor OTP.

Ms. Natalie Bogart shared that the NNEPRA staff had recently been recertified as volunteers for Operation Lifesaver, a nonprofit organization dedicated to rail safety. She emphasized NNEPRA's commitment to public outreach and safety, noting that rail safety information would be incorporated into Board meetings.

Patricia further noted that, in collaboration with CSX Transportation, NNEPRA staff would be meeting with station communities in Maine and NH to raise awareness about safety including removal of snow on platforms as the weather changes.

MARKETING UPDATE – Taylor Auclair

Ms. Taylor Auclair presented an overview of the most recent Downeaster advertising campaign. She highlighted a recent photo shoot and the new creative materials that will be launched in December. Taylor provided an update on the performance of paid, native, connected TV, radio, and broadcast advertising, noting high success rates across all channels. She also mentioned that the January Fare Sale would begin on December 2nd.

FINANCE UPDATE – Patricia Quinn

Patricia presented an overview of the September variance report. She also highlighted that the overall cost recovery for the fiscal year to date stands at 75%.

Motion to accept September Budget Variance Report

Motion: Mr. Maggie (Fleming) Edson

Second: Ms. Alison Harris

Approved: All

FY2025 BUDGET MODIFICATION – Patricia Quinn

Patricia informed the Board that the revised operating budget for October 2024 through June 2025 had been submitted to the Commissioner, but approval is still pending. The revised budget better reflects Amtrak rates and timing of construction outages. There were no changes to the funding requests from the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT).

Patricia provided an update on insurance renewals, noting a significant increase in costs. To meet Excess Liability requirements, NNEPRA will be insured by three carriers. She clarified that increased insurance costs had not been included in the budget and that that line would show a variance.

Chairman Cohen led the Board in discussing the revised budget. Director Harris expressed satisfaction with the budget as presented and made a motion to accept the revised budget, contingent on the Commissioner's approval.

Motion to accept revised Operating Budget as presented subject to final approval from the Commissioner

Motion: Ms. Alison Harris

Second: Mr. Alan Casavant

Approved: All

HORIZON UPDATE – Patricia Quinn

Patricia stated that there were no updates on the Horizon transition at this time.

PROJECT UPDATES – Patricia Quinn

Patricia reported on capital projects:

- The double-track extension portion of the Wells project is nearly complete and ready for use.

- The Invitation to Bid (ITB) for the Wells Platform is currently advertised with a bids due by December 11.
- The Wells Station agreement between NNEPRA and the Maine Turnpike Authority has been extended for three (3) years through December 2027.
- The Positive Train Control (PTC) project is underway.
- The Portland canopy removal project was completed the week of November 18th. Lighting on the platform has been repositioned and video cameras are operational.

Patricia also provided an update on the Portland Station Relocation (PSR) project. VHB has completed the site alternative analysis and the final report will be published within the next week. Preliminary engineering and NEPA work has begun. NNEPRA is preparing to apply for a final design and construction grant in the next Federal/State Partnership grant opportunity, due December 16, 2024.

Patricia noted that there were no updates to report on the West Falmouth project.

Natalie reported that MaineDOT received five proposals for host railroad services for the Rockland Branch. The selection committee is reviewing the proposals, with a decision expected in the coming months.

Patricia noted that NNEPRA continues to work with the FRA to begin the update to the Downeaster Service Development Plan (SDP). The SDP will identify projects to improve reliability, increase service frequency, and reduce travel time.

OTHER BUSINESS – Patricia Quinn

Patricia described the Mitchell Award, which is given annually by NNEPRA to a person or group of persons who demonstrate a commitment to passenger rail service excellence and the communities it serves. Nominees are selected by NNEPRA staff and presented to the Board for approval. The 2024 Mitchell Award nominee is Nathaniel Rosenblatt, who has served as NNEPRA’s attorney and has been a tremendous asset to NNEPRA and the Downeaster service for nearly three decades.

Motion to present the 2024 Mitchell Award to Nathaniel Rosenblatt

Motion: Ms. Maggie (Fleming) Edson

Second: Ms. Carolann Ouellette

Approved: All

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Cohen opened the floor to public comment.

Mr. Bruce Sleeper, TrainRiders Northeast inquired about NNEPRA’s new attorney. Patricia responded that Bernstein Shur is the new legal team; Conor Shankman is the lead.

Bruce also expressed disappointment regarding how trespasser incidents are reported in the news.

End public comment.

Motion to adjourn

Motion: Mr. Alan Casavant

Second: Ms. Maggie (Fleming) Edson


Approved: All

Meeting Adjourned at 4:07 pm.


Downeaster Performance Metrics - Last 12 Months									
Period	FY	Ridership				Revenue			
		Actual	Budget	Variance	vs. FY23	Actual	Budget	Variance	\$/Rider
Nov 24	FY25	46,265	48,005	-1,740	96%	\$ 1,142,925	\$ 1,125,717	\$ 17,208	\$24.70
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		264,485	267,015	-2,530	96%	6,334,406	6,217,369	99,829	\$23.95
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
FY24 Total		598,428	556,618	41,810	127%	13,051,548	10,882,278	2,169,270	\$21.81

Numbers in red indicate revised budget projection.


Fiscal Year 2025 To Date




2,589



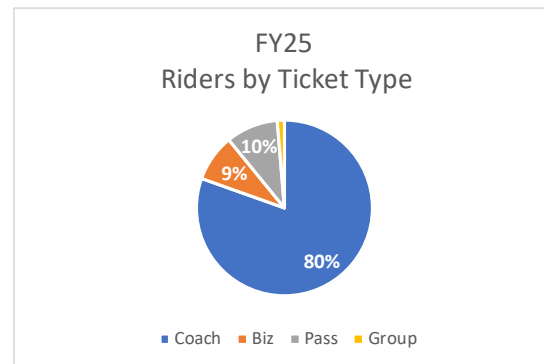
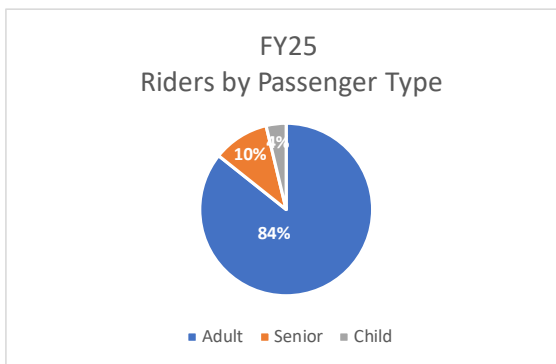
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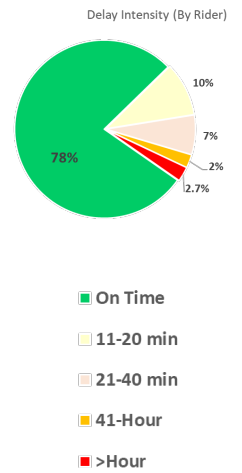
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FY25 Performance Targets				Modified 10/28/24	
Ridership	542,462	Train On Time Performance	75%	Café Cost Recovery	78%
Revenue	\$ 12,639,493	Customer On Time Performance	85%	Café Capture Ratio	17%
Average Fare	\$ 23.30	Overall Customer Satisfaction	90%	Café Check Average	\$10.95
Overall Cost Recovery	47%				

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	
Nov 24	FY25	296	4,047,137	78%	63%	16%	\$ 10.76	87
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		1,486	23,340,685	64%	71%	17%	\$ 10.36	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
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
Nov	654	87.5	87	87	92	75	82	77	77	91	81
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	89.1	86	86	92	75	81	76	76	90	84
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
FY24 Year End	11,292	90.4	88	86	93	83	82	77	74	91	85

NNEPRA Fiscal Year 2025
Operating Budget Variance Report
 July 2024-October 2024

	October-24			Fiscal Year to Date October 2024			
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	%
Operating Revenue							
Amtrak Ticket Revenue	\$ 1,232,802	\$ 1,218,560	\$ 14,242	\$ 5,192,964	\$ 5,091,652	\$ 101,312	2%
Food Service Revenue	\$ 72,270	\$ 92,922	\$ (20,652)	\$ 362,150	\$ 408,321	\$ (46,171)	-11%
Parking Lot Revenue	\$ 67,636	\$ 59,602	\$ 8,034	\$ 221,667	\$ 211,899	\$ 9,768	5%
Interest & Other Revenue	\$ 56,628	\$ 48,157	\$ 8,471	\$ 249,047	\$ 201,588	\$ 47,459	24%
Total Operating Revenue	\$ 1,429,336	\$ 1,419,241	\$ 10,095	\$ 6,025,828	\$ 5,913,459	\$ 112,369	2%
Expenses							
Administration							
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 95,732	\$ 95,000	\$ 732	\$ 378,067	\$ 390,500	\$ (12,433)	-3%
Office Expenses	\$ 10,236	\$ 16,202	\$ (5,966)	\$ 53,545	\$ 70,758	\$ (17,213)	-24%
Professional Services	\$ 7,195	\$ 14,365	\$ (7,170)	\$ 35,733	\$ 88,685	\$ (52,952)	-60%
Insurance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Board Operations	\$ 1,921	\$ 927	\$ 994	\$ 6,749	\$ 2,468	\$ 4,281	173%
Total Admin Expenses	\$ 115,084	\$ 126,494	\$ (11,410)	\$ 490,648	\$ 552,411	\$ (61,763)	-11%
Train Operations							
Amtrak Train Operations	\$ 613,600	\$ 620,475	\$ (6,875)	\$ 2,331,586	\$ 2,570,475	\$ (238,889)	-9%
Amtrak Equipment Maintenance	\$ 730,345	\$ 777,980	\$ (47,635)	\$ 2,774,975	\$ 3,019,012	\$ (244,037)	-8%
Amtrak Support Services	\$ 199,444	\$ 187,416	\$ 12,028	\$ 778,600	\$ 766,903	\$ 11,697	2%
Train Fuel Cost	\$ 181,098	\$ 197,490	\$ (16,392)	\$ 727,439	\$ 879,629	\$ (152,190)	-17%
Other Train Operations	\$ 142,212	\$ 162,409	\$ (20,197)	\$ 604,200	\$ 677,738	\$ (73,538)	-11%
Facilities	\$ 36,323	\$ 66,260	\$ (29,937)	\$ 164,762	\$ 202,915	\$ (38,153)	-19%
FY25 Capital Maintenance	\$ 11,217	\$ 10,000	\$ 1,217	\$ 13,291	\$ 15,000	\$ (1,709)	-11%
FY24 Capital Maintenance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Total Train Operations	\$ 1,914,239	\$ 2,022,030	\$ (107,791)	\$ 7,394,853	\$ 8,131,672	\$ (736,819)	-9%
Station Operations							
Portland Station	\$ 43,052	\$ 42,743	\$ 309	\$ 174,498	\$ 170,252	\$ 4,246	2%
Platform Insurance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Station Platform Leases	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Station Improvements	\$ 24,300	\$ 50,500	\$ (26,200)	\$ 24,326	\$ 101,000	\$ (76,674)	-76%
Total Station Operations	\$ 67,352	\$ 93,243	\$ (25,891)	\$ 198,824	\$ 271,252	\$ (72,428)	-27%
Total Food Service	\$ 92,629	\$ 122,621	\$ (29,992)	\$ 442,021	\$ 492,576	\$ (50,555)	-10%
Total Marketing	\$ 31,435	\$ 43,333	\$ (11,898)	\$ 129,458	\$ 173,333	\$ (43,875)	-25%
Total Expenses	\$ 2,220,739	\$ 2,407,722	\$ (186,983)	\$ 8,655,804	\$ 9,621,245	\$ (965,441)	-10%
Add'l Funding Required	\$ 791,403	\$ 988,481	\$ (197,078)	\$ 2,629,976	\$ 3,707,785	\$ (1,077,809)	-29%
Downeaster Ridership	52,059	52,075	(16)	\$ 218,220	\$ 219,910	(1,690)	
Overall cost recovery	64%	59%		70%	61%		
Café Recovery	78%	76%		82%	83%		