

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Regina Phillips (D3), Chair
Councilor Pious Ali (At-Large)
Councilor Anna Bullett (D4)

Approved Minutes May 14, 2025

Members Present: Mayor Dion, Councilor Phillips, Councilor Bullett, Councilor Ali
Staff Present: Troy Moon, Katie Tims, Kevin Kraft, Nell Donaldson, Zachary Lenhert

Meeting was called to order.

April 9, 2025 Meeting Minutes

The April 9, 2025 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Sustainability Updates

We are pleased to report that the City was awarded a \$180,000 Community Action Grant to support the development of a One Climate Future Risk-Based Asset Management Tool. This project will update the City's Climate Vulnerability Assessment, develop an inventory of coastal typography in Portland and South Portland. The final project will incorporate a broad range of data from public and private sources to create a sophisticated GIS-based tool that will help decision makers prioritize investments in critical infrastructure

Benchmarking reports were due May 1 for Portland buildings with a gross floor area of 20,000 sq ft or more and one tenant utilizing 90% of the space.

We are also hosting three educational webinars with partners at the Falmouth Land Trust, Maine Audubon, and Natural Resources Council of Maine this summer related to sustainable landcare. We also have free "Mow Tall Until Fall" yard signs available to residents

Transportation Updates

Kevin Kraft shares that the City has launched an internal task force on the Vision Zero plan and will be bringing the Quick Action Plan, composed of measures that can be implemented this year and within available resources, will be brought to the S&T Committee in June.

The first public open house on the Reimagining Franklin Street project was held, and the next public engagement sessions will be held at the end of June.

Lastly, regarding the Union Branch Multiuse Pathways, we have our construction bid materials submitted internally. Staff has also drafted the Complete Streets policy update, and we are meeting with bikeped organizations before bringing the update to the committee.

Transit Leaders Forum

Presented by Kevin Kraft and panelists

Together, this panel discussion provided an overview of the current public transportation network serving Greater Portland and the future policy initiatives that may help strengthen Portland's multi-modal transportation system.

Panelists include the following representatives:

- Glenn Fenton, Greater Portland METRO
- John Savage, Biddeford Saco Orchard Beach Transit
- Dale Doughty, Maine Department of Transportation
- Patricia Quinn, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
- Kristina Egan, Andrew Clark and Chris Chop, Greater Portland Council of Governments
- Nick Mavodones, Casco Bay Lines
- Don Libby, Regional Transportation Program

All panelists gave an overview of the systems they operate, the services they provide, and the challenges they face.

Councilor Comments on Transit Leaders Forum

Councilor Bullett notes that the Maine Association of New Americans was missing from the panel. MANA has been facilitating transit for the English learning language community and rides that do not qualify for MaineCare.

Councilor Bullett reminds the Committee that we did build Safe Streets money in our CIP budget this year, further noting that getting to the bus can be less related to the bus frequency than how safe the walk to the bus is.

Councilor Bullett asks Greater Portland METRO, in thinking about the enforcement of cars parked in bus stop areas, while traffic surveillance cameras are illegal in Maine, there is a carveout for school buses. Has Greater Portland METRO ever explored the possibility of putting cameras on buses? *Glenn Fenton responds that we do already have cameras on buses, so the technology is there; it would be more of a question of whether it would stand up in court.*

Councilor Bullett asks Biddeford Saco Orchard Beach Transit if they have an app for their trolley services. *John Savage responds that we use the Dirigo platform (same fare structure and services) and Google Transit to display our services for our passengers.*

Councilor Bullett asks the Regional Transportation Program if there are active partnerships with other organizations that serve the communities. *Don Libby responds that we would entertain any partnerships and are coordinated with child development services and for MaineCare and our drivers are well trained to work with a variety of age groups, disabilities, and other situations. Councilor Bullett asks what language access looks like. We use Language Line, there are cards on the bus, and our drivers are trained for those situations.*

Councilor Bullett asks the Maine Department of Transportation about the transitions between the LAP and METRO or other services. *Dale Doughty responds that they were designed with commuters in mind, and that it has been a full year, and it may be time to review and make adjustments if needed (are the connections efficient and working for people today).*

Councilor Bullett asks Casco Bay Lines about the charging station for the electric ferry. *Nick Mavodones responds that the shore power connection is here and ready for when the boat arrives. It will charge for 10 minutes between each trip.*

Councillor Ali notes that the federal funding uncertainty may impact the many regional transportation projects highlighted by the panel and asks how organizations are preparing for the impacts of funding loss. *Nick Mavodones shares that transit leaders across the country are concerned about the uncertainty, and if funding were to go away, we may have to downsize operations and/or eliminate staff. Dale Doughty shares that it has been difficult because of the continued legislative timelines and deadlines and lack of re-appropriation of funds, but we will continue our services until we are redirected. Glenn Fenton shares Dale's concerns and risk management strategy. Kristina Egan shares that GPCOG has lost multiple grants, but does feel like transportation is a little bit safer, and there are several transportation agencies trying to preserve funding.*

Councilor Phillips asks a question related to the funding that comes into the state. *50 million for the state, but 30 million of that is distributed through PACTS. That money is now distributed based on performance rather than a long discussion, and this coordinated efficiency between organizations has helped money go further.*

Mayor Dion asks what we can anticipate as a potential timeline for a decision around the question of the construction and siting of the train station. *Kristina Egan notes the Transit Oriented Development work being done throughout the region for years, particularly reflected through ReCode, and that GPCOG and others still have remaining questions as to whether the site that NNEPRA has identified is the best and highest return on investment. Where the site ends up, it should interact with the other transit investments and housing opportunities available. Patricia Quinn notes that the reason the station is colocated with the bus station is because NNEPRA and Maine DOT were not successful in reaching an agreement on the location, and a public-private partnership with Concord Coach Lines was created. 25 years later, the service has expanded north of Portland. We are hoping to site a location that can support future rail service.* Mayor Dion hopes we can find a mutual agreement between these analyses and move forward. City staff and the Council will begin a process to

Councilor Phillips asks Maine DOT if the LAP pilot will continue to function as a program after its "pilot". Dale Doughty notes that the pilot started last July and it was planned as a two-year pilot. If it is successful and growing, we may run it longer - dependent on costs, ridership, growth, promotion by the municipalities it serves, and the potential to locate a long-term operator.

Consideration of Amendments to Chapter 30 Regarding Golf Carts on Peaks Island

Presented by Zachary Lenhert, Licensing Manager

Zachary Lenhert gave an overview of Sec. 30-110 of City Code regarding the regulation of golf cart rentals. Specifically, this proposal would remove the cap on golf cart operators and establish a wait list for rental golf cart licenses. Troy Moon notes that Assistant City Manager Dena Libner has been in communication with the Peaks Island Council and Peaks Island stakeholders, and they are all aware that this item has been raised. Zachary Lenhert notes that this conversation precipitated because we reached the cap on the number of golf cart operators (two operators).

Councilor Bullett asks if there are any safety concerns or issues related to the topic. *Zachary Lenhert notes that this ordinance has been in place since 2019 to regulate the number of golf carts on the island and prevent them from unnecessarily proliferating. There is a Portland safety officer who regulates the maintenance and registration of all the carts, rental and private.*

Councilor Phillips asks a clarifying question about the ordinance language regarding license renewal. Mayor Dion also notes that the safety officer on Peaks is well informed and encourages voluntary compliance to deal with this issue.

Public Comment on Consideration of Amendments to Chapter 30

There was no public comment.

Motion to approve the Consideration of Amendments to Chapter 30

The motion was moved by Councilor Ali and seconded by Councilor Bullett.

The motion was accepted unanimously and will move forward to full City Council.

Policy Review of Taxi Fares

Presented by Troy Moon and Zachary Lenhert

Troy Moon reviews aspects of the existing ordinance governing taxi rates in Portland. The goal of this review is to determine if staff should perform additional analysis and present recommended changes to rates. Aspects reviewed include taxi fares, reregistration of taxi company licenses, and reregistration and inspection of taxi vehicles.

Councilor Comments on the Policy Review of Taxi Fares

Councilor Ali asks why you register the taxi company separately from the driver. *In the past, there were taxi companies that had many drivers working for them. Can drivers move between cab companies? No language restricts that; it would just be reported in the taxi company registration.*

Councilor Ali asks if Uber and Lyft go through this registration process? *No, there is a state law that prevents municipalities from regulating ride-sharing organizations.*

Mayor Dion would support an amendment to update the ordinance regarding taxi wages.

Councilor Bullett would also support an update to the ordinance regarding taxi wages.

Councilor Ali is in communication with taxi drivers and will ensure they are represented when we discuss the amendment.

Motion to Adjourn

The motion was moved by Councilor Bullett and seconded by Councilor Ali.

The motion was accepted unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned