

Aroostook Regional Transportation System, Inc. (ARTS)

Contact Information

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Service Summary

Service area: All of Aroostook County, Danforth in Washington County, and Patten/Stacyville in Penobscot County
Type of service: Demand response, contract service

ARTS Transportation Services

ARTS provides demand-response door to door transportation service for the general public, individuals with disabilities, and the elderly. Services are also provided for Aroostook Area Agency on Aging, Central Aroostook Association, Logisticare (MaineCare) and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services through a contracted rate with no charge to individuals.

The general public is able to access shopping, medical, employment and education (adult education, the University of Maine at Presque Isle, University of Maine at Fort Kent, and Northern Maine Community College) destinations by traveling on one of ARTS' service center buses (Caribou, St John Valley, Houlton, Presque Isle) or, less frequently, on one of ARTS' weekly bus runs between more rural communities and the service centers.

Formal schedules and routes. Formal services and routes are set forth in brochures printed by ARTS which are available by mail or on the website. The formal schedule does not include special runs or the driving that is undertaken to transport clients at times other than those specified in the brochures. The formal schedule is shaped in part by the goal of ARTS' Board of Directors that every town will be served by ARTS at least once a week. Service centers served by ARTS include the following:

- 1. The Caribou Area bus schedule** serves in-town Caribou locations five days per week. Less frequent service is provided between Caribou and the following locations: Fort Fairfield, Easton, Limestone, Colby Siding, New Sweden, Stockholm, Washburn, Wade, Perham, Crouseville, Woodland, Caswell, Westmanland, Jemtland and Presque Isle.
- 2. The St. John Valley schedule** runs four days per week. Less frequent service is provided between Fort Kent and Allagash, St. John, St Francis, Quimby, Winterville, Eagle Lake, Wallagrass, Guerette, Daigle, Soldier Pond, Sinclair, St. Agatha, Frenchville, Madawaska, Portage, Lille, Grand Isle, Van Buren/Keegan, Connor, Stockholm, New Sweden, Colby, Ashland, Mapleton, Presque Isle, and Caribou.

- 3. The Houlton Area bus schedule** serves in-town Houlton locations five days per week. Less frequent service is provided between Houlton and the following locations: Oakfield, Dyer Brook, Cary, Smyrna Mills, Ludlow, Danforth, Hodgdon, Weston, Amity, Littleton, Monticello, Bridgewater, Mars Hill, Presque Isle, Island Falls, Linneus, Sherman, Stacyville, Crystal, Patten, Orient, Haynesville, Wytopotlock, Bancroft, Macwahoc, Molunkus, Mt. Chase, New Limerick, Westfield and Benedicta.
- 4. The Presque Isle Area bus schedule** serves in-town Preque Isle locations five days per week. Less frequent service is provided between Presque Isle and the following locations: Fort Fairfield, Washburn, Crouseville, Perham, Wade, Blaine, Mapleton, Ashland, Portage, Sheridan, Caribou, Mars Hill, Westfield, Bridgewater, Easton, Masardis, Robinson, Oxbow, E Plantation, Monticello, Littleton, and Houlton.

Summary of Service Changes

The service has remained the same. Daily service is provided in four hub communities – Houlton, Presque Isle, Fort Kent and Houlton. In addition, the ARTS bus brings people from surrounding towns to these hubs four to five times per week. The regular fare includes two stops.

ARTS provides door to door service because so many of the riders are elderly and/or disabled. ARTS continues to provide a weekly opportunity for service to every town in the region. Since December of 2017, ridership has increased on the Houlton and Fort Kent areas.

ARTS provides some MaineCare rides through the non-emergency brokerage system, LogistiCare, receiving approximately \$355,000 annually. ARTS also provides contracted child welfare and low income rides for DHHS receiving approximately \$328,000 annually. Under both contracts, ARTS is reimbursed for a base rate and per mile rate. LogistiCare will only pay loaded miles while DHHS pays for unloaded and loaded miles.

ARTS continues to review ridership to the four hub communities to see where additional transportation services are needed. Service to Presque Isle has increased since other hub communities have fewer shopping facilities and medical providers.

In December 2017, ARTS had a personnel change in the Executive Director position and Operation Manager position. The new Executive Director has 33 years of experience in the financial and operations sections of the organization.

Summary of Accomplishments

- 1. Aroostook Agency on Aging.** ARTS continues to work with Aroostook Agency on Aging with a MeFAF grant to identify and develop solutions for assisting seniors who are non-MaineCare clients to get to medical appointments.
- 2. Non-Traditional Riders.** ARTS has provided an increase in transportation for non-traditional riders within Region 1 including include Amish communities and non-traditional riders travelling from town to town.

- 3. Helping Other Agencies.** ARTS works with other agencies to help them meet their transportation needs. Examples: when ACAP had no driver available, ARTS assisted by providing a licensed driver so ACAP could continue to transport their pre-k/daycare clients to their programs; ARTS worked with Cary Medical Center L’Acadia (intermediate care facility) and Maine Veterans Association when their vehicles are unable to transport clients; and worked with Pines Health Services to get their clients that were non-MaineCare eligible to medical appointments.

Future Priorities

- Apply for RTAP funds to improve route schedule information, and continue to provide training to employees as needed.
- Apply for 5310 funds to purchase vehicles to replace vehicles that are past their useful life.
- Expand transportation service hours in Houlton.
- Continue to collaborate with AAA to recruit volunteers.
- Continue to educate the public about transit.
- Look for future grants to help support transportation.
- Look for ways to increase funding levels to improve employee retention by offering competitive salaries/wages.

Plans, Studies and Customer Satisfaction Surveys

ARTS surveys its riders once per year in either August or September to gauge overall satisfaction with bus service. Approximately 200 surveys are provided to riders as they are getting on the bus. Riders can mail it in, or put it in an envelope and return it to the driver. The return rate is about 13%-14%.

Ridership

As shown in the table below, ridership decreased dramatically when the brokerage system was implemented.

ARTS Demand Response Trips					
	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
General Public	41,694	34,693	34,711	30,193	27,918
MaineCare	174,204	0	0	0	0
DHHS Other	6,940	8,340	7,034	10,377	11,830
Other Contracts	14,644	32,836	28,607	27,528	25,177
Total	237,484	75,869	70,352	68,098	64,925

Summer ridership is a lot different than winter ridership due to clients driving in the summer and storing their vehicles in the winter. Ridership variation also depends on whether it is the beginning or the end of the month when clients receive their SSI/Social Security checks, food stamps, and TANF funds. Either time period can change ridership by 50 to 100 trips per day.

Fares

Client Fare	In-town fares service centers (Caribou, St John Valley, Presque Isle, Houlton) \$1.25/stop for general public at designated stops; \$2.50 for two stops for elderly and disabled with home pick-up; Round trip fares to hub community will range from \$3.75 to \$5.00 for elderly/disabled and range from \$6.30 - \$10.00 for general public. LogistiCare (MaineCare) and DHHS services: no fare from the client.
Exact Fare Required?	Yes
Electronic Fare?	No
Senior/disabled Half fare available?	Yes
Senior/disabled half fare pass required?	n/a
Other discounts?	Children under 12 pay half fare
Multi-ride prepayment?	Book tickets (10 tickets for \$20)
Monthly pass prepayment?	No
Passes available from:	ARTS office

Buses/Facilities

All bus maintenance is undertaken by ARTS mechanic at the ARTS headquarter building in Presque Isle. All buses are stored at the ARTS headquarter building except for one bus that is stored at the MaineDOT garage in Fort Kent and two vehicles that are stored at the Houlton Fire Station. The Thomas buses are not very user-friendly or comfortable, especially for seniors, and have not been as reliable as other brands. However, they are not yet past their useful lives so remain in service. Glaval Titan II will be considered in future for replacements. Drivers are responsible for cleaning their buses inside and out.

MaineDOT owns the building that is leased to ARTS; it is in very good condition. ARTS covers all routine maintenance. Capital needs are reported to the MaineDOT rural grant manager. ARTS has recently acquired a number of new vehicles. These vehicles have replaced units that were past their useful life. ARTS submits a yearly 5310 application in July to purchase vehicles that replace vehicles that are past their useful lives.

ARTS has been using EasyRides software for about 13 years. The one-time cost of this software was \$8,000. Entering data is time-consuming as it requires many keystrokes, but the software delivers quick reports.

Due to the remote nature of much of Aroostook County, ARTS uses two-way radios to communicate with its drivers. It does not foresee a need to change its on-bus technology in the near future.

Agency Volunteers

ARTS has about 5 volunteers, although this number fluctuates over time. Some of the volunteer drivers will only transport DHHS clients and some of the volunteer drivers will drive both the DHHS and LogistiCare (MaineCare) clients.

Coordination/Outreach/Partnerships/Unmet Needs

ARTS provides transportation for Logisticare clients only when transportation can be provided within ARTS' existing demand response system. A DHHS representative serves on the board, which is helpful for coordination and cross-understanding of what each agency needs to make arrangements work. The representative is not involved in any contract discussions. DHHS provides about \$330,000 to support general low income and the child welfare riders. This contract pays for both loaded and deadhead miles. LogistiCare reimbursement only covers loaded miles.

ARTS works closely with Aroostook Area on Aging (AAA) to provide service. AAA's volunteer drivers have received training by an ARTS PASS trainer to help assist and secure passengers in the vehicle. Last year, this program provided 3,020 one-way trips to and/or from medical appointments. ARTS and AAA continue to work together to recruit volunteers throughout Aroostook County.

ARTS has participated in annual "expos" for elderly people in Presque Isle for the past six years which are aimed at helping people become familiar with riding the bus. Another expo was held with the Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians in June 2018 at their Health Fair. ARTS is currently working with the Micmacs on plans to provide bus service for the elderly/disabled living at their housing development in the New Sweden, Caribou and Presque Isle areas.

The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians has drivers and vans traveling from Littleton to Houlton and Presque Isle supported with FTA funding. While primarily serving tribal members, this service is open to the general public, but is not well advertised or coordinated with ARTS.

There currently are no employers making contributions to the bus service. ARTS had approached both UMPI and UMFK about providing services for students and employees but no interest has been shown.

ARTS works with Downeast Community Partners to provide transportation in Danforth and from Marshfield to Houlton, and with Penquis to coordinate transportation from Patten to Lincoln. In both cases, coordination is undertaken through DHHS contracts - one for low income and the other for child welfare. ARTS will refer clients to Cyr Bus Line and/or angel flight if transportation is needed downstate which is covered under a contract.

Innovations/Creative Approaches

ARTS has promoted service to a broader community which includes non-traditional riders such as the Amish population. This promotion has increased ridership from Fort Fairfield to Caribou/Presque Isle and Smyrna/Sherman to Houlton.

ARTS supports new riders by providing a free first ride to both the rider and a caregiver.

Major Challenges

1. **Drivers.** Finding and retaining drivers has been a challenge.
2. **Buses.** The Thomas buses have had reliability problems and are not very comfortable for riders.

Public Participation Summary

1. Talked with SAGE representative regarding transportation for seniors going to college. (April 2018)
2. Talked with Parish of Precious Catholic Church to see if we can transport seniors to church sessions during the day. (April 2018)
3. Talked with Houlton Higher Education to see if we can transport students to Adult Ed. (April 2018)
4. Met with Aroostook Bad of MicMacs and Community Transportaiton Association of America regarding MicMac eligibility for a transportation grant. (April 2018)
5. Participated in a yearly senior expo put on by Aroostook Agency on Aging that includes discussions of elderly transportation needs (May 2018).
6. Attended monthly meetings with a Thriving in Place group to discuss senior problems and solutions including transportation options (May 2015-2018).
7. Participated in an Inclusive Planning Impact Framework grant with Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) and Aroostook Agency on Aging. (May 2018)
8. Met with Aroostook Area on Aging regarding having a Mobility Manager within Aroostook County. (June 2018).
9. Talked with Presque Isle Recreation Department about transporting children to summer programs. (June 2018)
10. Participated in a yearly MicMac Service Unit Annual Health Fair that includes discussions on transportation needs. (June 2018)
11. Talked with FedCap about helping TANF clients get to work. (July 2018)