

citylink/Lewiston-Auburn Transit Committee

Contact Information

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Service Summary

Service area: Lewiston and Auburn
Type of service: Fixed route/ADA complementary paratransit

citylink Public Bus Service

The Lewiston-Auburn Transit Committee (LATC) provides public fixed route transit service (citylink) within the greater Lewiston-Auburn urbanized area. LATC was established in 1976 by an interlocal agreement between the City of Lewiston and the City of Auburn. It is staffed by the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments. LATC contracts with a transit operator, Western Maine Transportation Services (WMTS), headquartered in Auburn, to operate and maintain its public transportation system.

LATC provides the buses, two bus stations, radios, fare boxes, bus stop signs and shelters. LATC is responsible for overseeing system marketing, setting fares, planning and scheduling, maintaining the bus stations, and most other policy matters.

citylink operates Monday through Friday along nine routes originating from a two-hub system that is connected by a downtown shuttle route. Saturday service is offered on several of the routes. ADA Complementary Paratransit services are provided on a contract basis by WMTS.

citylink's routes include the following:

- 1. Main Street:** Begins and ends at the Oak Street bus station in Lewiston. Bus stops include CMMC, Market Place Mall, Career Center, Maine Motel, Geiger School, Career Center, Marden's, River Valley Village, Canal Plaza and Hampton Inn.
- 2. Sabattus Street.** Begins and ends at the Oak Street bus station in Lewiston. Bus stops include St. Mary's Hospital, Hannaford, Hill View, Grove & Pond, and Montello School.
- 3. Lisbon Street.** Begins and ends at the Oak Street bus station in Lewiston. Bus stops include Save-A-Lot, Shaw's, Staples, South Avenue, VA Clinic, Motel 6, and L.A. College.
- 4. New Auburn.** Begins and ends at the Downtown Auburn Transportation Center in Auburn. Bus stops include Spring Street Hannaford, Barker Arms, South Main & Cook Street, Walton School, Dunn & 2nd Street, and Roak Block.

5. **Minot Avenue.** Begins and ends at the Downtown Auburn Transportation Center in Auburn. Bus stops include Spring Street Hannaford, Minot & Western, Western & Court, ELHS, Bedard's/Minot & Poland, and Health South.
6. **College Street.** Begins and ends at the Oak Street bus station in Lewiston. Bus stops include Bates College and Wal-Mart.
7. **Auburn Malls.** Begins and ends at the Downtown Auburn Transportation Center in Auburn. Bus stops include Webster School, Towne House Apartments, Auburn Mall Apartments, and Wal-Mart.
8. **Mall Shuttle.** Begins and ends at Wal-Mart in Auburn. Bus stops include Wal-Mart, Auburn Mall, Shaw's, K-Mart, Auburn Plaza, St. Mary's Center (for physical rehabilitation) and CMCC.
9. **Downtown Shuttle.** Begins and ends at the Downtown Auburn Transportation Center in Auburn. Bus stops include Spring Street Hannaford and Roak Block in Auburn, and Oak Street bus station and CMMC in Lewiston.

Summary of Service Changes

There was one recent major change to services in Auburn in 2016. That year a reduction in local funding support from the city of Auburn resulted in the elimination of one bus from service (approximately 10 hours of service per weekday) and a corresponding reduction in ridership. There have been several unsuccessful attempts to restore funding since that time. There were also several minor route changes resulting from a short-term transit study that was completed in 2016.

LATC also implemented a fare on the downtown shuttle which was previously free. It was decided that charging a small fare would make services more equitable.

Accomplishments

1. **WMTS Contract.** LATC entered into a new three-year contract with WMTS for operation and maintenance of fixed route and ADA service for FY 2017-FY 2019.
2. **Bus station.** In October 2016, LATC opened a new bus station at Great Falls Plaza, Auburn. LATC worked with MaineDOT and the Federal Transit Administration for several years to complete construction of the station. The station is approximately 1,500 sq. ft., provides amenities for passengers, and a breakroom and restroom facilities for the drivers. The bus station serves as a hub for the Auburn portion of the fixed route system, but it is not staffed.
3. **Tablets.** Beginning in May 2018, tablets are being used on all citylink buses for electronic data collection purposes including boardings, bus locations and arrival times at bus stops, and automated announcements of bus stops. The automated announcement system is not yet fully operational.

4. **Bus shelters.** LATC installed four new bus shelters in Auburn in 2016. The new shelters provide an opportunity for advertising. The shelters were purchased by the City of Auburn.
5. **Short range transit study.** LATC, with consultant Main Street Connections, completed a short-range transit study in March 2016. LATC has been able to institute some of the study recommendations but overall, it was not very helpful.

Future Priorities

1. **Cameras.** Install cameras at both bus stations.
2. **Restore funding.** Continue to work to restore local funding to better serve people in Auburn who need bus service.
3. **Connections to regional system.** Work with Western Maine Transportation Services (WMTS) to develop linkages between citylink and the regional transportation system being developed by WMTS.
4. **New buses.** Upgrade the fleet with the addition of four new buses in 2019.

Plans and Studies

In December 2015, LATC conducted a ridership survey to determine who is riding the bus and where they are going. The study documented that ridership had changed over the years. Depending on the route, fewer commuters but more shoppers were riding the buses. The age of the riders remained the same – roughly people ages 35 to 50. A large number of passengers are going to Central Maine Community College (CMCC) in Auburn.

LATC is planning to work with WMTS to evaluate how best to interface with WMTS' evolving regional systems aimed at connecting rural communities to the Lewiston/Auburn area. It has not yet been determined if this will be a formal study.

LATC may undertake another short-range study of its system within the next five years.

Ridership

LATC saw a steady increase in ridership from 2013 and 2014, peaking in 2015. Ridership in 2016 experienced a slight decline which continued through 2017 and into 2018. The ridership decline in 2017 is attributed to the reduction in service. There has been an increase in ridership to CMCC resulting in part from an increase in course offerings.

LATC/citylink Fixed Route Trips					
	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
General Public	352,923	372,864	424,652	381,080	359,528
ADA	10,616	10,314	8,149	12,594	14,270
Total	363,539	383,178	432,801	393,674	373,798

Fares

Fare	Regular fare \$1.50 single ride, 6/\$7.50 multi-ride, \$36 monthly
Exact Fare Required?	Yes
Electronic Fare?	No
Senior/disabled Half fare available?	Seniors/disabled \$0.75, 11/\$7.50, \$18 monthly
Senior/disabled half fare pass required?	Medicare card or picture ID required for single ride
Other discounts?	H.S. students \$1.25 single ride, \$18 monthly Picture ID required for single ride
Multi-ride prepayment?	Yes
Monthly pass prepayment?	Yes
Passes available from:	Greyhound ticket counter, Lewiston bus station, Auburn City Hall Tax Office, Lewiston City Hall Clerk's Office, WMTS, Shaw's Auburn and Lewiston, Hannaford Auburn & Lewiston, Wal-Mart Auburn, Central Maine Community College (CMCC students only), USM (free bus passes available for registered students at USM's Lewiston campus), River Valley Village office.

Buses/Facilities

LATC's buses are maintained, cleaned and stored at the WMTS headquarters/maintenance facility on Merrow Road in Auburn. WMTS' maintenance has the ability to rebuild some major systems, but due to time constraints the focus is on preventative maintenance, preventing system failures and extending the useful life of all vehicle systems in the most cost-effective manner. Drivers are responsible for cleaning the insides of their buses, while the WMTS bus wash bay is used to clean bus exteriors.

LATC has adhered to the bus replacement schedule set forth in the capital plan for the years 2017 through 2021.

Coordination/Outreach/Partnerships/Unmet Needs

- 1. Developers seeking MSHA funding.** Developers continue to work with WMTS to locate their projects on the transit system so they can get Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) transit credits on their applications for MSHA funding.

2. **Concord Coach.** LATC coordinates with Concord Coach to provide seamless transportation between the two systems at the Auburn Bus Station.
3. **Fedcap transportation.** LATC works with Fedcap to provide employment transportation for Fedcap clients. Fedcap ambassadors ride citylink with clients at no charge for the purpose of familiarizing them with transit. Fedcap Rehabilitation Services is a not-for-profit organization that provides vocational training and employment resources for those who face barriers to employment. Fedcap provides services formally provided by Aspire.
4. **St. Mary's Hospital.** LATC works with St. Mary's on immigrant outreach for health clinics served by citylink including the New Auburn B Street Center in Lewiston.

Unmet needs. There are a number of service gaps in citylink service:

- A number of geographic areas in Lewiston and Auburn are not served by citylink
- The Auburn routes don't start early enough to serve commuters
- 2nd shift workers are not served
- Saturday service is not complete
- citylink does not operate during evening hours
- citylink does not serve the Auburn-Lewiston Airport

Innovations/Creative Approaches

Tablets. Beginning in May 2018, tablets are being used on all citylink buses for electronic data collection purposes including boardings, bus locations and arrival times at bus stops, and automated announcements of bus stops. The automated announcement system is still in the test phase of development.

Major Challenges

- Insufficient local funding
- Loss of federal Small Transit Intensive Cities (STIC) funding
- Driver recruitment and retention
- Federal regulations which do not differentiate between small urban systems like citylink and large metropolitan systems

Public Participation Summary

Lewiston High School – Functional Life Skill Program. Karen Gaetani, Lewiston High School Ed Tech Teacher, works with special needs students teaching them life skills. Students in the curriculum are super-Seniors and Senior's, and will be going into the adult world at the end of the school year. Part of the program this fall includes preparing them for the workplace and how to get to a job. In addition to doing a citylink 101, Marsha Bennett provided the program with 6-ride bus passes. The teachers will use the passes to teach the students how to use public transit, specifically citylink. In return for the passes, a report is to be sent to LATC letting them know how many trips and people used the passes.

September 5, 2017, 11:30 AM - A citylink 101 presentation was made to six students and four faculty members at Lewiston High School.

Boys and Girls Club – (Summer 2017: June 26-August 18, 2017). This is the fifth year that LATC partnered with the Lewiston-Auburn Boys and Girls Club to sponsor a summer program. The BGC purchases 11 monthly passes at a reduced rate for an 8-week program where the kids ride citylink to go to activities and events within the community. This is their most popular summer program for the older kids.

Community Clinical Services - St. Mary's. Staff (Marsha Bennett) has been working with St. Mary's (Joan Churchill) to improve transit access to primarily Lewiston's immigrant population. St. Mary's provides medical and dental services that are paid for through MaineCare, but the transportation provided through the MaineCare contractor does not meet the needs of the immigrant community – scheduling children's appointments during school hours, do not provide transit for additional children if the covered child has siblings that the parent is caring for, trips are late, etc. St. Mary's would like to improve transit options for immigrants for all of their transit needs. Immigrants, especially the women, have a fear about going out in public, have language barriers so makes communicating/asking questions difficult. AVCOG staff developed a meeting notice flyer and St. Mary's distributed about 400 either through postings or direct mail. Two citylink 101 sessions were established. Both sessions were held at the B Street Community Center.

August 11, 2017, 1:00-3:00PM – A total of 12 people participated in the full citylink 101 presentation (bus ride and presentation) – 3 staff (Marsha Bennett, LATC; Joan Churchill, St. Mary's; Lerry Holloman, WMTS); 7 women; and, two interpreters. Two additional people participated in the Q&A discussion at the end. The bus ride consisted of boarding the in-bound bus Lisbon Street bus at the B Street Community Center stop; transferring onto the Sabattus Street bus at the Oak Street bus station; riding the entire Sabattus Street route back to the bus station; transferring onto the Lisbon Street bus; and debarking at the B Street Community Center. The participants were given a handout that presented the bus ride experience in "picture" presentation to help with explaining the service and to assist the language barrier. All participants received two 6-ride passes to encourage them to learn and ride citylink.

August 23, 2017, 1:00-3:00 – A total of 25 individuals participated in a citylink 101 presentation, of which 18 went on the bus ride (14 participants, 2 interpreters and 2 staff), and an additional five people and one interpreter attended the presentation/Q&A discussion. The bus ride was the same as that made on August 11. The participants were given a handout that presented the bus ride experience in "picture" presentation to help with explaining the service and to assist the language barrier. All participants received two 6-ride passes to encourage them to learn and ride citylink.

September 27, 2017, 12:30-2:30 – A citylink 101 presentation was held at the B Street Community Center to assist residents, primarily new immigrants, in learning how to ride the citylink system. Four individuals attended the presentation, of which two of the four attend the Looking Ahead Club House program and had specific questions relating to citylink. The other two attendees were Somali immigrants. Three staff members from St. Mary’s Community Clinical Services also attended – Joan Churchill, and Abdi Abdalla and Fowsia Musse, both translators. Attendees received citylink 6-ride bus passes.

Fedcap - Staff, along with WMTS, is working with Fedcap, a non-profit company aimed at creating opportunities for people with barriers to economic well-being. Fedcap offers services in four areas: education, workforce development, occupational health and economic development. Transportation has been identified as a barrier for people that are trying to improve their education and/or employment opportunities. Discussions are on-going.

Auburn School Department – (December 2, 2016). The Auburn School Department worked with LATC to transport two elementary school classrooms to Bates College to attend a “college for me” program. A total of 48 children and teachers from Washburn Elementary and Sherwood Heights Elementary experienced riding public transit and making transfers. LATC has a policy to provide a reduced fare for student related activities. The school was charged \$1.00 per person, a 20% discount.

Alternative Services Incorporated – Northeast – (November 22, 2016). ASI-NE is a non-profit organization that supports adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and individuals with mental illness through residential, case management, and in-home support programs. Three residents and five staff people attended a citylink 101 presentation at their facility located at 30 Sacred Heart Place, Auburn. The facility will accommodate up to five residents.