

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

Contact Information

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Service Summary

Service area: Southern Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts
Type of service: Passenger Rail Service

Passenger Rail Service

The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) is a public transportation authority created in 1995 by the Maine State Legislature to develop and provide passenger rail service between Maine and Boston. NNEPRA is engaged in planning for the future and collaborating with its partners on system improvements. NNEPRA also develops marketing strategies that build brand awareness, monitors operations and manages a number of capital projects in collaboration with MaineDOT, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to support continued improvement and growth of the system.

Amtrak operates the Downeaster under contract to NNEPRA along the 143-mile corridor of track owned by MaineDOT, Pan Am Railways and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The Amtrak Downeaster makes five trips daily between Boston and Brunswick, serving 12 communities in three states. Maine communities directly served include Wells, Saco, Old Orchard Beach, Portland, Freeport and Brunswick. In FY 2018, the Amtrak Downeaster transported 551,000 riders.

The Amtrak Downeaster operates with three train sets which are wheelchair accessible and have seating capacity for up to 306 passengers. Each Amtrak train is staffed by three Amtrak crew members and one NexDine Café attendant. Ticket agents are available in Portland and Boston, and most stations have self-service Quik-Trak ticketing kiosks and volunteer and/or paid staff provided by the community. Reservation, ticketing and passenger information is provided through Amtrak's national network.

Most Downeaster stations are owned and operated by the municipalities in which they are located. The Portland Transportation Center is owned by Concord Coach Lines and staffed by Amtrak personnel. Volunteer Train Hosts, sponsored by TrainRiders Northeast, are often on board to provide information to passengers.

The Discover Maine Rail Pass was launched in June, 2018. The pass provides 10 one-way trips during a seven-day period for \$19. It was developed to encourage visitors and residents to use the Downeaster for travel within Maine, as well as travel to Boston.

Fares

Brunswick/Boston: \$30 one way; \$60 round trip

Portland/Boston: \$29 one-way; \$58 round-trip

Portland/Wells: \$10 one-way; \$20 round trip

Portland/Brunswick: \$8 one-way; \$16 roundtrip

Lesser amounts for travel between stops along the way.

Tickets can be purchased online, or at all Downeaster stations.

Discounts

Seniors and disabled persons are entitled to a 50% discount on most trains; only 10% discount on trains 685, and 695.

Discover Maine Rail Pass valid for 10 one-way trips between any Maine station within a 7-day period \$19/person

Kids Ride Free on Sundays – kids 2-12 ride free when accompanied by full-fare paying adult

College 6 Tix pass - 6 one-way trips between any two stations, valid for 1 year, college ID required for \$86 for travel between any stations

Ten-ride ticket within 45-day period: \$79 Portland/Brunswick; \$135 Wells/Brunswick; \$187 Portland/Boston

Monthly ticket – unlimited rides during calendar month: \$99 Portland/Brunswick; \$179 Wells/Brunswick; \$319 Brunswick/Boston

Military discount – 10% for active military personnel, their spouses and dependents with valid active duty US Armed Forces identification card

Future Priorities

Future initiatives for FY 2019 and beyond, all of which are dependent on funding, include:

- 1. Portland area improvements.** NNEPRA is exploring alternatives which will improve Downeaster connectivity to and within the greater Portland region by reducing overall travel time and improving transit connectivity to the Downeaster in Portland. One of the alternatives is identifying an appropriate site for a new Portland station. The Portland Transportation Center is on a branch line, which requires time-consuming backing in and/or out to collect and discharge passengers. Relocating the station to the main line closer to ultimate destinations could improve service in Portland and reduce the travel time between Portland and Brunswick to be more competitive with taking one's automobile. Wherever the station is located, improved last mile connections must be created.
- 2. Inbound commuter service from Southern Maine.** The Wells siding project, which is currently in the design phase, will support the creation of a 6th round trip – a morning inbound Downeaster train from Wells to Saco, Portland, Freeport and Brunswick. Currently, there is only one platform in Wells. This project will create a second platform to help maintain reliability of service. With this improvement, people in Southern Maine will be able to travel to work in Portland by 8:00 am, and leave by 5:00 pm.
- 3. Portland/Westbrook rail shuttle.** In partnership with private developers, NNEPRA is exploring the feasibility of a rail shuttle on an existing rail line between Westbrook and Portland. This would connect Commercial Street in Portland with high density developments at Thompson's Point, Rock Row and other transit services. It would require investment to improve the track and related infrastructure.
- 4. Lewiston/Auburn rail plan.** A plan for passenger rail service between Lewiston/Auburn and Portland is currently underway and will be complete in FY2019.
- 5. Amtrak Downeaster Coastal Connection.** NNEPRA is exploring a pilot project in 2019 that introduces seasonal weekend service to Bath, Wiscasset, Newcastle and Rockland. The chief limiting factor to this initiative will be the deteriorated condition and resultant safety status of several rail bridges over rivers on the Rockland Branch.