

Waldo Community Action Partners DBA Mid-Coast Public Transportation

Contact Information

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Service Summary

Service area: Waldo County, Knox County, Lincoln County, Sagadahoc County and Brunswick and Harpswell in Cumberland County
Type of service: Flex route, demand response, contract service, volunteers

Mid-Coast Public Transportation Services

Mid-Coast Public Transportation (MCPT) is operated by Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP). Service is provided to residents of Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc County communities on an average of at least twice a week either by bus, van or volunteer driver. Some communities are provided service five days a week on a regular basis.

Regularly scheduled trips are made to Bangor, Rockland, Augusta, and Waterville. MCPT provides trips in Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties for DHHS and DOE - referred clients under contract with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

Specific services include:

- **Rockland DASH.** The Rockland DASH service began in May 2018. This flex route bus service operates two 12+2 busses on a recurring hourly schedule on weekdays between 7:00 AM and 5:00 PM in the Rockland area with 11 stops between Walmart at the Thomaston town line and Pen Bay Medical Center in Rockport. Two buses run in opposite directions.

This service is a pilot project that will run for the next 6 months. The Rockland DASH is based on assumptions from the 2014 transit study. The Rockland DASH may serve as a model for a similar system in Damariscotta at some future time. All services will be marketed the same. There will be a unified ticket system. Demand response will be offered as a companion service.

- **Belfast DASH:** This is a flex route bus run that makes a continuous loop through Belfast on weekdays between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. Passengers may be dropped off and picked up at any medical facility, bus stop, or anywhere on the route. General public riders must pay a \$2.00 one-way fare when boarding the bus. Major stops include Belfast Center, Belfast Square Apartments, Volunteers of America, Midcoast Apartments, Hilltop Birches Apartments, Belfast Birches

Apartments, Ambassador Apartments, Hannaford, Reny's Pizza, Goodwill, Walgreens, Rite Aid, Family Dollar, Belfast Coop, and Belfast Waterfront. The bus schedule and fares are contained on WCAP's website.

- **Demand Response.** Demand response services and routes are set forth in a bus schedule printed by MCPT. Each route is operated on a demand response basis. Routes are run in a general direction but provide flexibility along the way to pick up passengers at their homes. Waldo, Knox, Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties are extremely rural with a limited population base. Belfast, Rockland, Bath and Brunswick are the major destination of most routes. Routes are also run to Bangor, Waterville, Augusta, Rockland, Bath, Lincolnville, Gardiner, and Brunswick on a regular basis so that passengers can avail themselves of services that are unavailable in the region.

MCPT has approximate 10 different sources of money available, each of which has varying requirements. The various contributors are listed in the budget. If there is no subsidy to cover a trip it becomes a general public trip. Documented unfunded trips are now considered general public service.

- **Jefferson/Whitefield area route.** Every Wednesday, this flex route picks up people in the Amish community (this route is available to all members of the public) and brings them to Waterville and Augusta. Ridership varies between three and eight people.
- **Ferry Run.** MCPT provides service from Belfast to the Maine State Ferry Terminal in Lincolnville five days per week, serving high school students travelling to the magnet school on Islesboro. Ridership averages between 10 and 12 people per run. Ridership appears to be increasing. People other than students are also riding the bus.

DHHS sponsored service

- **Low income.** Based on proof of monthly income, customers may be eligible for limited transportation at no cost to a variety of destinations. An application process must be completed and proof of income must be verified.
- **Children and families.** Based on referral from a DHHS caseworker, transportation is provided to a variety of services not covered by MaineCare including supervised visitation.
- **MaineCare Transportation.** MidCoast Public Transportation provides rides for MaineCare members to their medical appointments. The rides are arranged through a separate program of Waldo Community Action Partners called Mid-Coast Connector. Mid-Coast Connector is the MaineCare broker for Region 5 which includes Waldo, Knox Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties, as well as Brunswick and Harpswell in Cumberland County. In some cases, rides may be referred to another transportation provider or a taxi.

Summary of Service Changes

- **Service to southern portion of region 5.** In 2016, MCPT began transportation for the southern part of Region 5 previously serviced by Coastal Trans, Inc., specifically Knox, Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties and the towns of Brunswick and Harpswell in Cumberland County.
- **New services.** Mid-Coast Public Transportation has implemented new services including the Rockland DASH route, the Jefferson/Whitefield area route, and the Ferry Run, all of which are summarized above.

Summary of Accomplishments

1. **Ridership growth.** General public ridership has continuously grown from 2013 through 2017. MCPT expects continued growth as it develops the southern part of the region.
2. **Public outreach.** MCPT has been conducting outreach and education with interested parties and community representatives to identify needs. In 2017 MCPT implemented three regional Transportation Advisory Work Groups with broad participation working on funding, communication, coordination and route development matters through monthly meetings in each area.
3. **Municipal meetings.** MCTP has met with all towns in the expanded coverage area. This includes coordination meetings with Rockland, Camden, Belfast and Bath.
4. **Belfast DASH model.** MCPT has reconfigured the Belfast Shopper in hopes of building a Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH) model. This effort includes analyzing the various stops and how the system could better serve the community.
5. **Broker transition.** WCAP, through its Mid-Coast Connector, is the MaineCare broker for Region 5. The agency is funded through a capitated per member per month rate schedule and carries the risk to provide all needed services for the fixed cost. This has involved separating the brokerage from the services provided by Mid-Coast Public Transportation, the preparation of six different agency budgets, and extensive training modules for drivers and other staff members. The biggest accomplishment has been the merging of resources from all of the different programs administered by WCAP.
6. **Internal accounting system.** MCPT has completely reconfigured the entire internal accounting system to accommodate all of its programs including the various transit components.
7. **Driver Hiring and Training Program.** This has been greatly improved. MCPT now uses a three-week long monthly course to train drivers including Defensive Driving, PASS, CPR and First Aid. There are nine performance measures related to drivers.
8. **Administrative improvements.** MCPT has transitioned from a silo model to an entrepreneurial model of staffing in which its staff members perform multiple roles. MCPT has revamped its hiring system to include background checks. The volunteer driver training program has been improved. The ticket system and ride ordering systems have been upgraded. MCPT can now accept credit

cards. MCPT has also invested in a modern vehicle maintenance system. Beginning in the summer of 2018, a new fuel card system from Verizon will allow fuel to be purchased from all fuel suppliers.

9. **Vouchers.** MCTP has expanded Ride with Pride, a half-priced voucher system, into the southern part of the region. The program allows seniors with disabilities to purchase vouchers at half the cost of their face value. The rider makes their own transportation arrangements with entities who have agreed to accept the vouchers.

Future Priorities

Short term 2018/2019 priorities include expansion of flexible capacity through expansion of the volunteer network and expansion of sponsor and other funding programs. Five year priorities include the creating of a regional transit facility and increased interconnectivity between regional hubs (cities) and other regions.

Plans and Studies

Planning is being undertaken by advisory groups in each county. The advisory groups in Waldo County and Knox/Lincoln counties were instrumental in the development and success of the DASH programs. The advisory group in Sagadahoc County is on hold for now.

Ridership

MaineCare ridership is relatively flat. MCPT receives 1200 to 1500 MaineCare calls per week. The growth in general public ridership is due to MCPT outreach. Most of the growth is in areas not previously served by MCPT, but there has been ridership growth in Waldo County as well. Ridership generally declines in winter. MCPT has not undertaken any customer satisfaction surveys in the past year, but does distribute surveys at various events that staff members attend.

MCPT Demand Response Trips					
	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
MaineCare	73,450	39,005	42,708	45,279	54,433
General Public	4,250	4,827	7,011	5,156	19,713
DHHS other	4,757	7,635	8,680	12,375	2,958
Other	6,681	2,522	1,446	2,787	5,892
Total	89,138	53,989	59,845	65,597	82,996

Fares

Fare	General Public: One way \$3.00 to \$12.00 depending on where you live. DASH (ROCKLAND AND BELFAST) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One way \$2.00 • Day Pass \$5.00 • 12-punch \$20.00 • Monthly \$50 MaineCare, DHHS service, other social service transportation: no fare
Exact Fare Required?	Yes
Electronic Fare?	No
Senior/disabled Half fare available?	DASH \$1.00 one way for seniors over 60 and children up to the age of 17; \$3.00 day pass; \$30 monthly pass – General Public demand response mileage rate at 50% for medical appointments.
Senior/disabled half fare pass required?	For DASH - Yes
Other discounts?	DASH \$1.00 one way children up to age of 17; \$3.00 day pass; \$30 monthly pass
Multi-ride prepayment?	yes
Monthly pass prepayment?	yes
Passes available from:	Central office

Buses/Facilities

- 1. Routes.** Transit service to Belfast is currently available to every town in the region once per week. A similar service is not yet available in other counties, but MCPT is holding outreach meetings for the purpose of expanding transit service to other counties. Most of these outreach meetings are attended by agency staff people. The seasonal Belfast Shopper route is being redesigned.
- 2. Bus maintenance.** MCPT utilizes a network of local shops and 10 vendors to maintain its buses, but most of the work is done at three privately owned garages. WMTS has offered to help MCPT with maintenance.
- 3. Condition.** A number of MCPT's buses, especially the 16+2s, do not meet federal standards. MCPT will need to replace the green buses formerly owned by Coastal Trans. There is a need to replace approximately 50% of the buses. New buses will need to have bike racks.
- 4. Cleanliness.** Buses are washed under agreements with three vendors in Belfast, Camden, and Rockland. Drivers are responsible for cleaning the insides of their buses. There is a need to find a central place to clean them.
- 5. Other.** MCPT operates a central office in Belfast and two satellite offices in Rockland and Bath respectively. MCPT is currently looking at three different fare collection systems, and plans to have credit card capacity. For its demand response services, MCPT will try phones rather than tablets.

Agency Volunteers

MCPT has about 16 volunteers who use their own vehicles to provide service, primarily MaineCare trips.

Volunteer-Based Transportation Groups

MCPT refers people to several groups when needed, especially in the peninsulas. These groups include Neighbor to Neighbor, operating out of St. George, Lincoln County Fish operating out of Bristol, Boothbay Fish, operating out of Boothbay, and Rides in Neighbors' Cars, operating out of the Bowdoin/Bowdoinham/Richmond areas. The goal is to get people to major routes served by providers.

Coordination/Outreach/Partnerships/Unmet Needs

Much of MCPT's coordination occurs through various advisory groups and through its MaineCare connections with major employers and hospitals. MCPT has placed a premium on building relationships with businesses, organizations and the general public throughout its service area. MCPT has partnered with four taxi companies to accept MCPT transportation vouchers.

Innovations/Creative Approaches

MCPT would like to see faster replacement of rolling stock, greater coordination among all agencies and service providers, and education, particularly at the local level where the planning process doesn't include a consideration of public transportation. Transit is not on the radar in local communities.

Major Challenges

- Funding is the major challenge and the greatest barrier to providing more transit to the general public.
- The Belfast Shopper continues to have low ridership. MCPT is analyzing the feasibility of route and schedule revisions.
- MCPT continues to struggle with recruitment of drivers not only for the expanded service area, but also the western region of Waldo County.
- Funding to purchase vouchers remains a challenge and restriction to the scope of the program.

Public Participation Summary

MCPT values the important role that the public plays in ensuring that general public transit services continue to support the economic and social fabric of the communities they serve. The following highlights major public participation milestones.

1. MCTP reached out to every municipality in Region 5 to open the conversation about transportation needs.
2. MCTP hosted the November 14, 2016 Transportation Workshop where future priorities and projects were identified and progress made or not.
3. MCPT currently holds public Transportation Advisory Work Group meetings in Waldo and Knox/Lincoln counties on a monthly basis.
4. MCTP meets with community stakeholders to gather feedback on available transportation resources and potential future needs. Stakeholders include but are not limited to:
 - o Senior groups
 - o Low Income groups
 - o Civic groups
 - o Local employers
 - o Health and mental health providers
 - o Members of the general public