



# Transit Together Project Advisory Group

Meeting #3

April 6, 2022

**GPCOG**  
GREATER PORTLAND  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

**N** NELSON  
NYGAARD

**A S G** PLANNING





# Agenda

- 1 Project Update
- 2 State of Regional Transit
- 3 Key Opportunities
- 4 Discussion
- 5 Service Scenarios Approach
- 6 Public Comment and Next Steps



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SRCO - 008  
BIDDEFORD

2165  
2165  
ELCOMB ROAD  
Operated by Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit  
UNE  
Transit

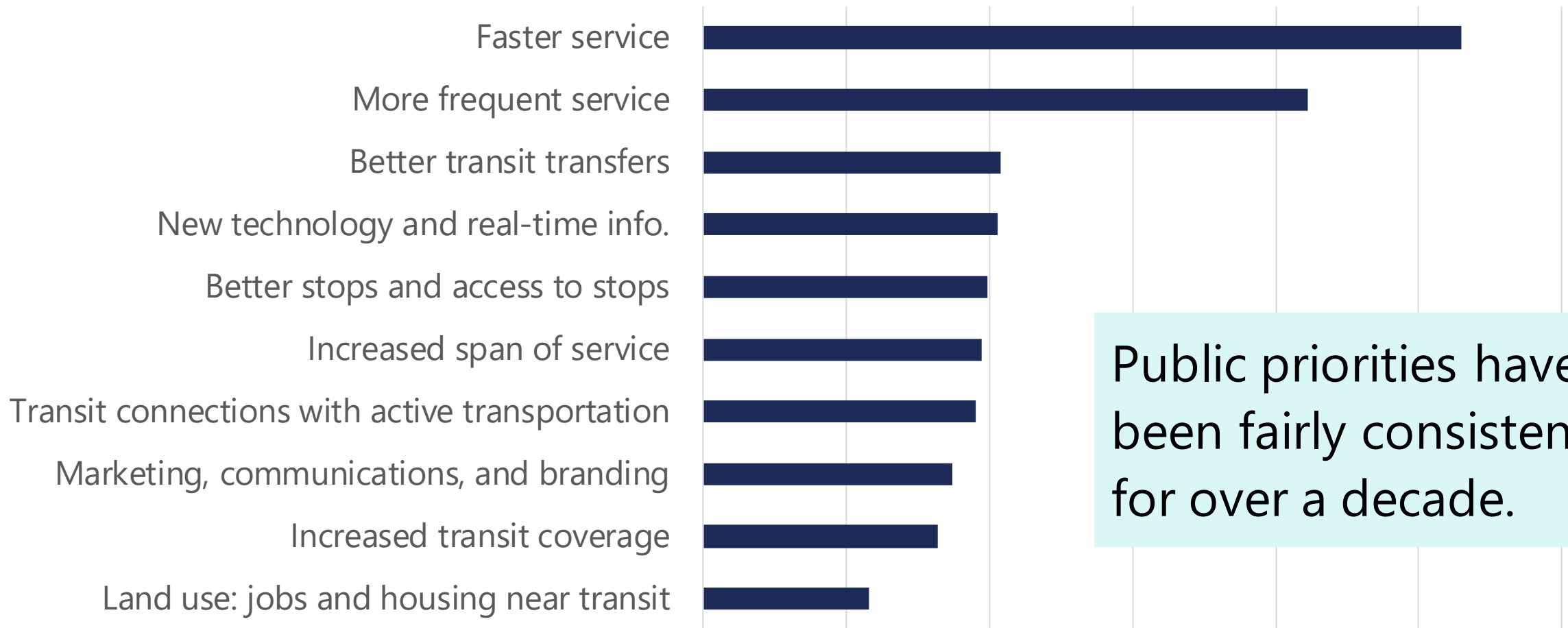
# Project Update

# Project Update

- Market and existing service analysis complete
- Route profiles complete
- Round 1 public outreach underway
  - Public meeting
  - Public input
  - Community Transportation Leaders meeting
- Preparing for agency workshop and service scenario development
- Preparing for microtransit analysis



# Public Priorities Guide Our Work



# Transit Tomorrow Goals



***Goal 1: Make Transit Easier***

***Goal 2: Create Frequent Connections***

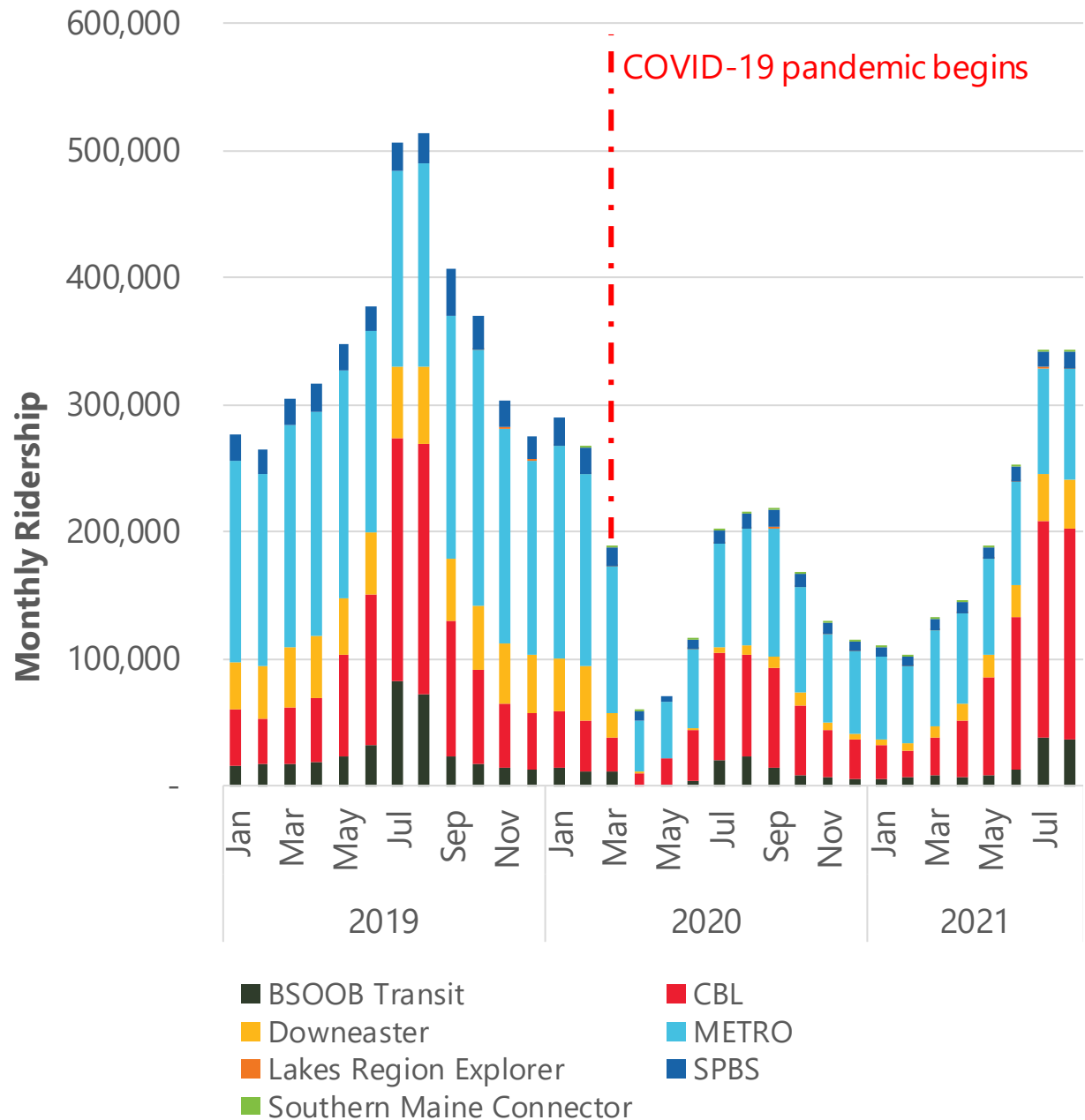
***Goal 3: Improve Rapid Transit***

***Goal 4: Create Transit-Friendly Places***

# COVID Impacts

- Today, ridership in the Greater Portland region is at 67% of pre-pandemic levels

	Aug. 2019	Aug. 2020	Aug. 2021
Average Daily Ridership	16,500	6,900	11,000
Percent Change from 2019		-58%	-33%



# Schedule

**We are here!**

	2021						2022									
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	
Project Start-Up																
Stakeholder and Community Engagement																
Network Design																
Microtransit Feasibility Analysis																
Seamless Transit																
Bringing Us Together																

PAG meeting

Stakeholder workshop

Public meeting period

Final deliverable due

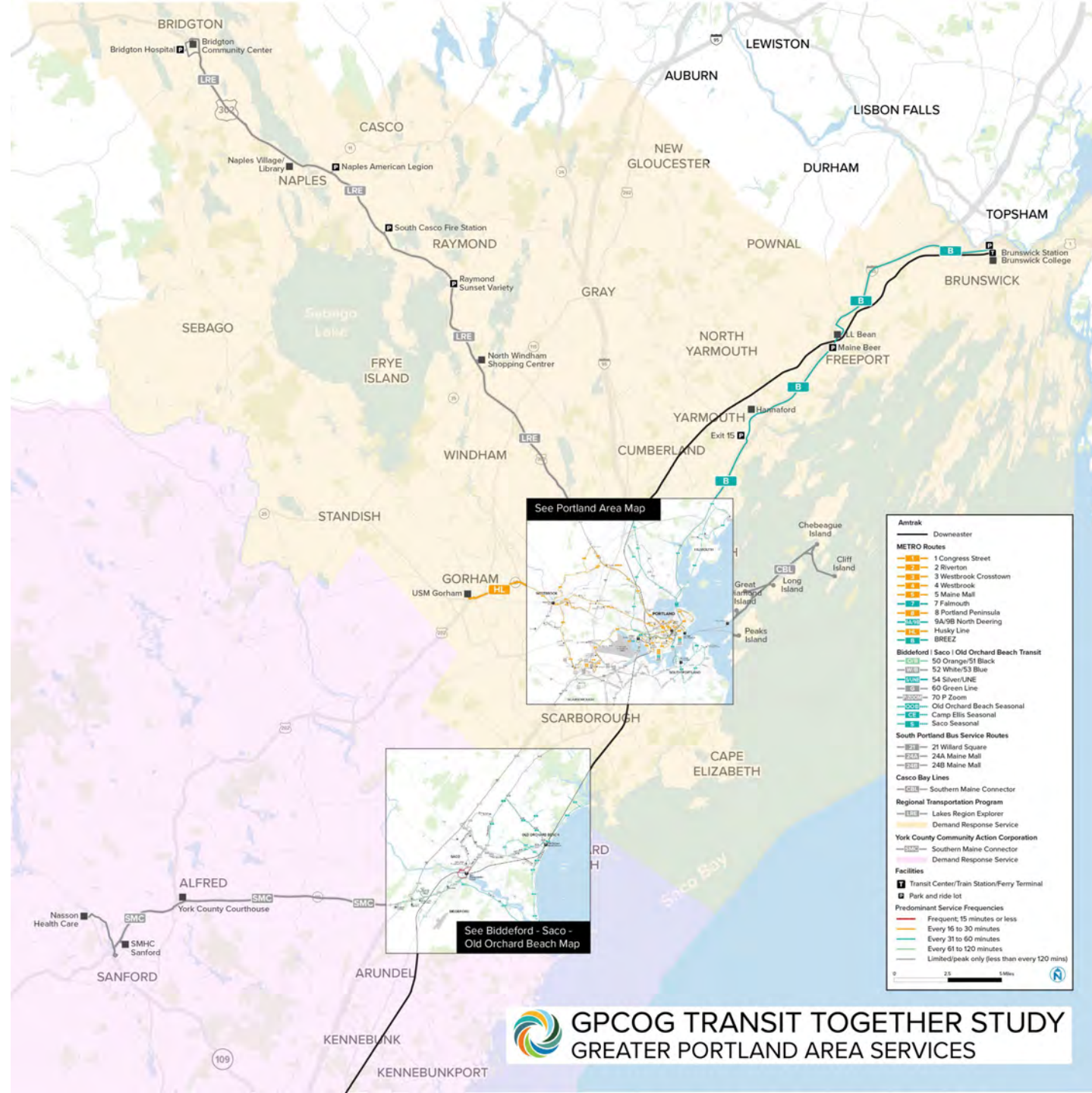




# State of Regional Transit Summary

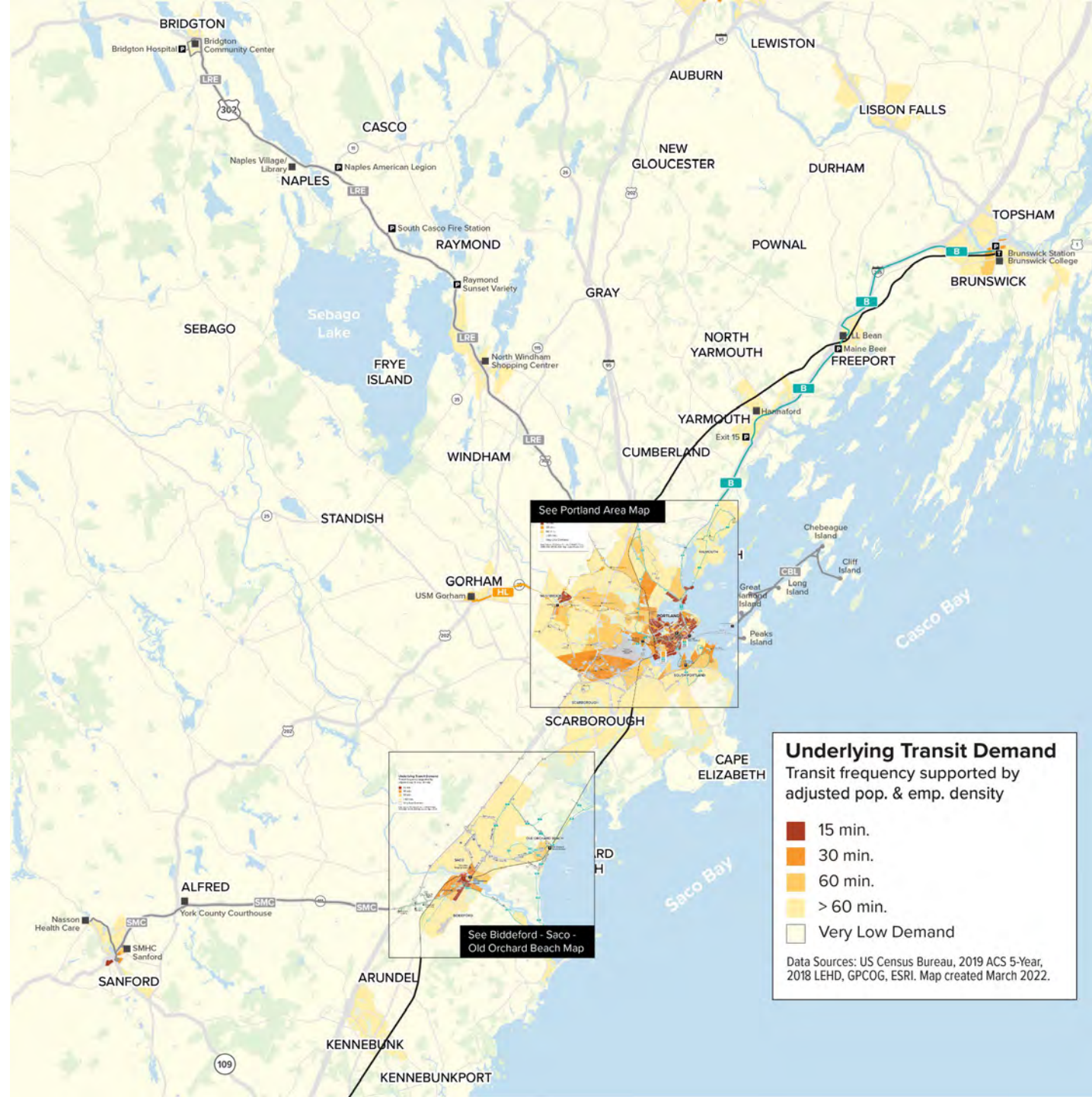
# The Network

- Seven public providers
- 25 routes
- Four major transit centers
- ~940 stops
- 16,500 daily passenger trips (pre-pandemic)
- 33% drop in ridership (pandemic)



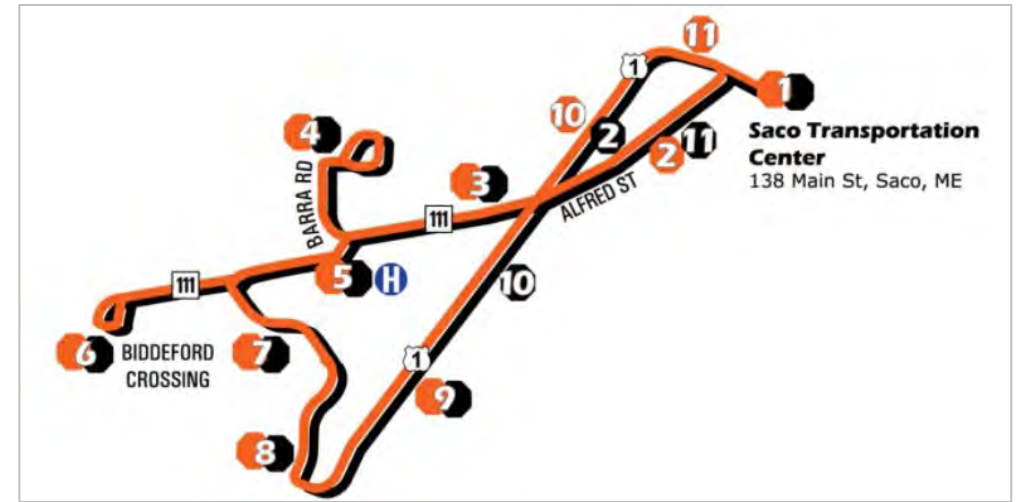
# Transit Demand

- Demand for transit is greatest in and around Portland and downtown Biddeford
- Smaller pockets of demand in Brunswick, Freeport, Old Orchard Beach, and Gorham
- Demand is very low in many parts of the region



# Network Design

- Large proportion of services designed to maximize geographic coverage, i.e., provide service to as many places as possible
- This is done by making routes circuitous and through deviations from the main alignment
- These practices make service inconvenient and increase travel times



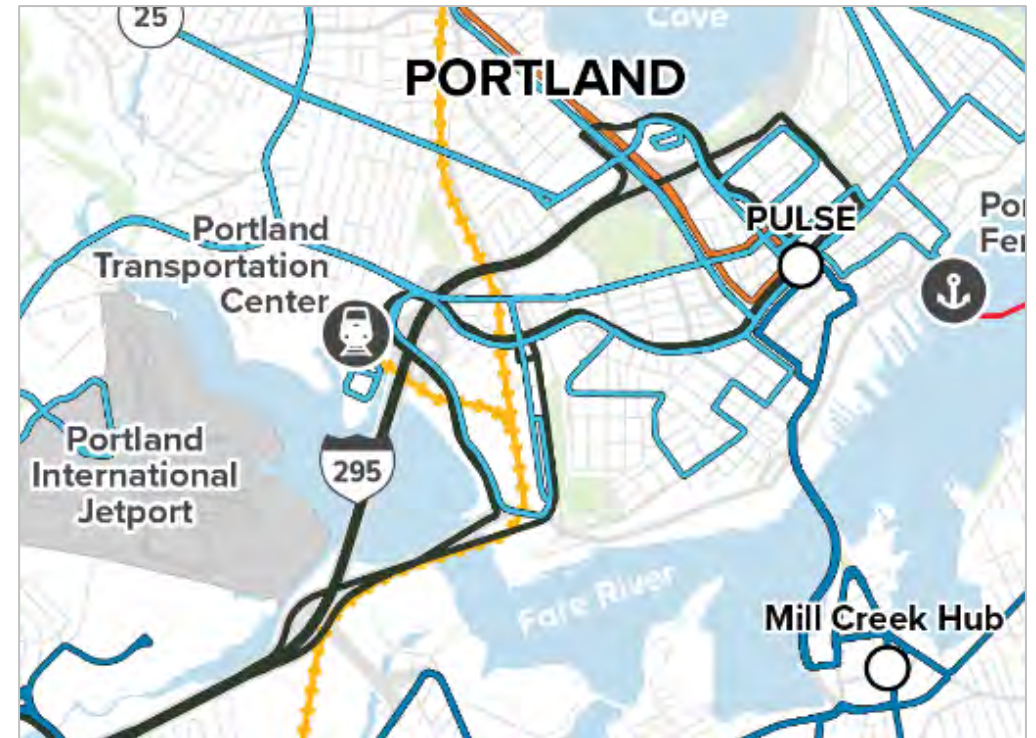
# Network Design

- Region has four major transfer points:
  - METRO PULSE in Portland
  - Saco Transportation Center
  - Mill Creek Transit Hub in South Portland
  - Portland Transportation Center
- Transfers possible at many other locations but with much lower volumes:
  - Maine Mall
  - Portland Ferry Terminal
- Major issue with connections is long wait times due to infrequent service



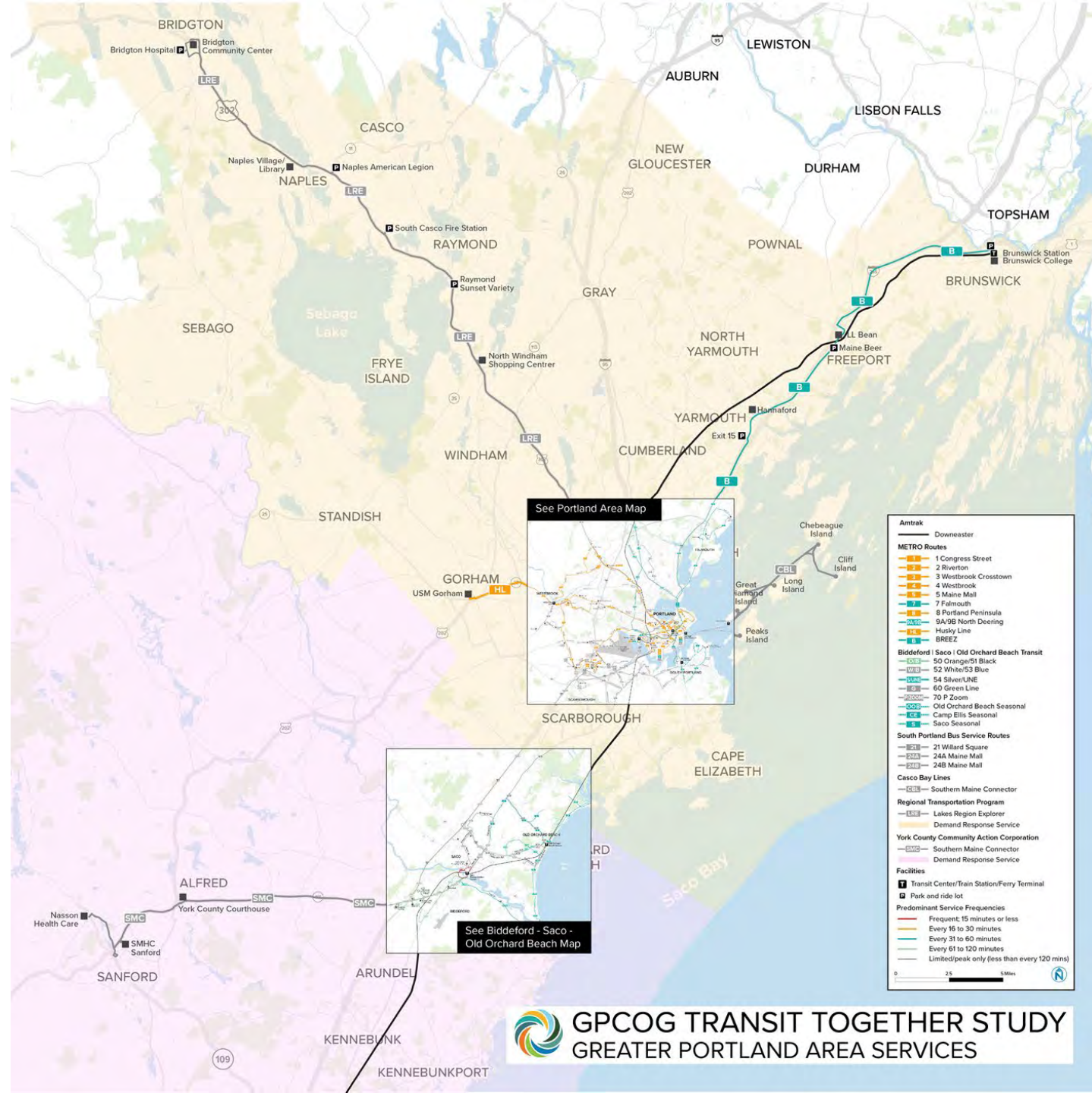
# Network Design

- Connections between some major destinations are difficult:
  - Ferry Terminal ↔ Portland Transp. Center
  - Portland Transp. Center ↔ Jetport
  - Jetport ↔ Downtown Portland
  - South Portland ↔ Portland Transp. Center
- Demand for these connections is difficult to determine but they have regional importance, particularly for visitors



# Frequency

- Service is infrequent
- METRO is most frequent, but best is still only every 30 mins
- Much of SPBS and BSOOB Transit service less than every 60 mins
- Lakes Region Explorer and Southern Maine Connector very infrequent
- Infrequent service deters people from using transit



# Spans of Service

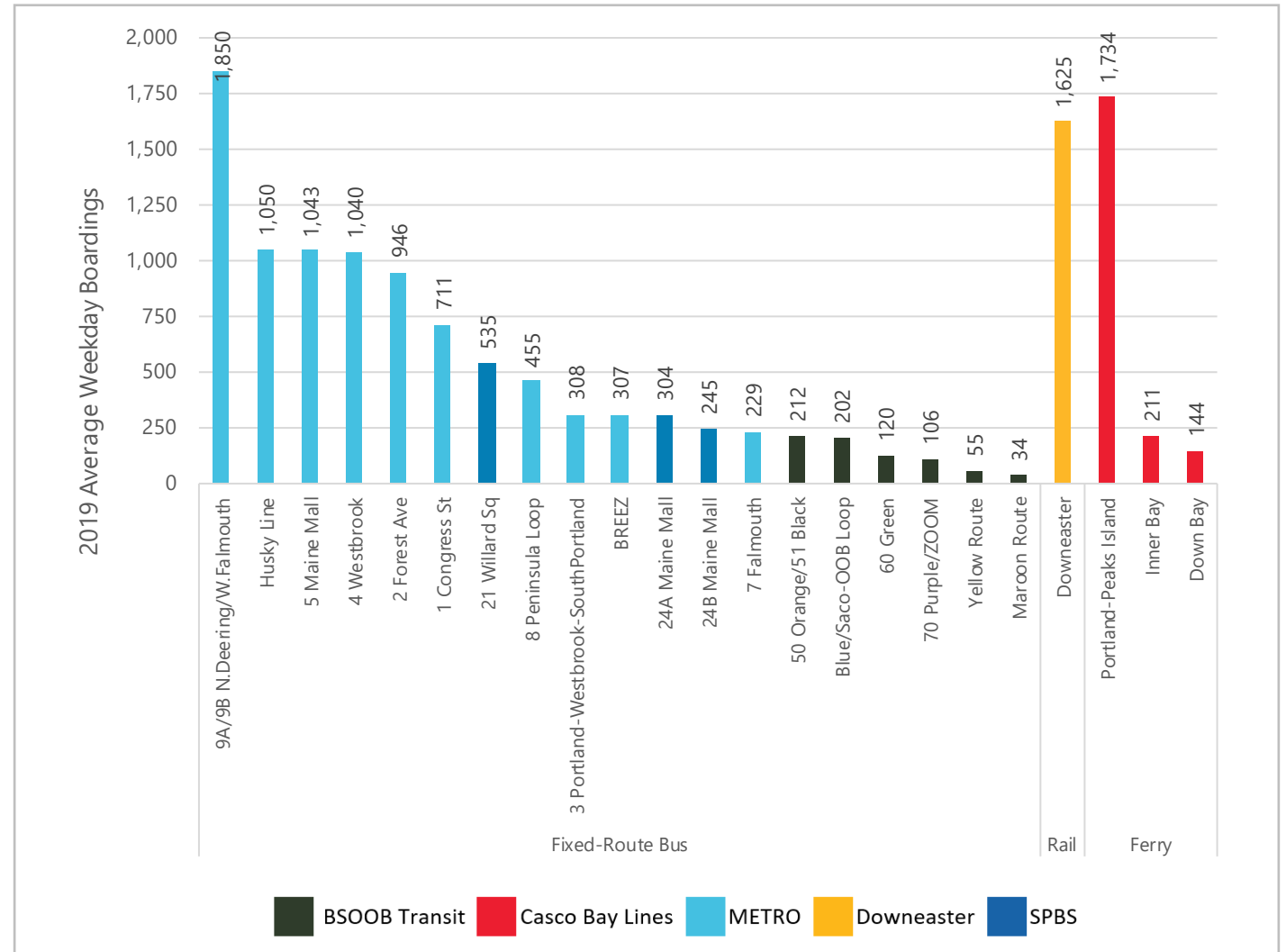
- Weekday and Saturday spans of service are generally good
- Sunday spans are much more limited





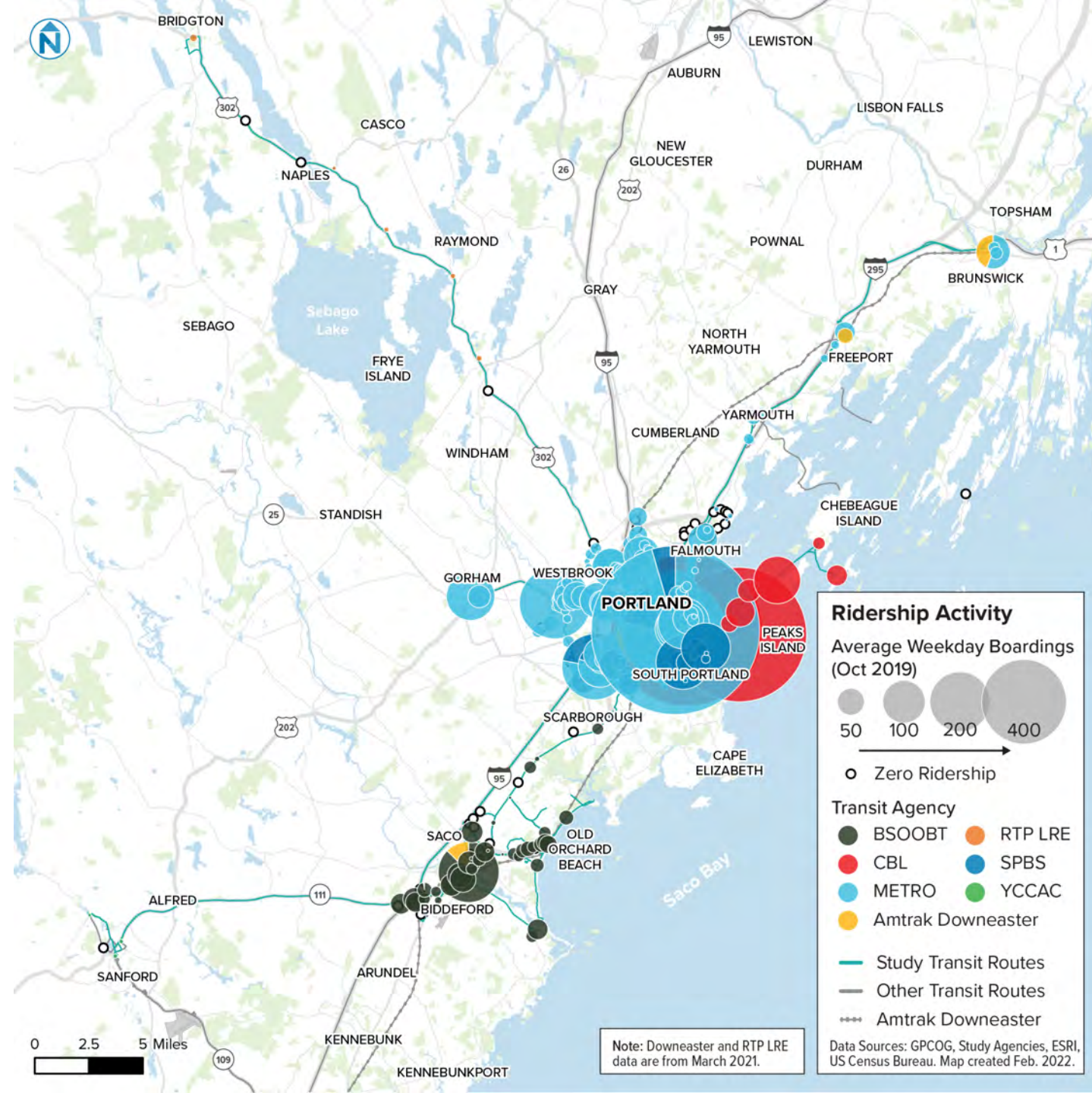
# Ridership by Route

- Large differences across routes
- METRO Route 9A/9B, Downeaster, and Casco Bay Lines' Peaks Island ferry at over 1,500 weekday riders in 2019
- RTP Lakes Region Explorer and YCCAC Southern Maine Connector at fewer than 15 average weekday daily boardings in 2021



# Ridership by Stop

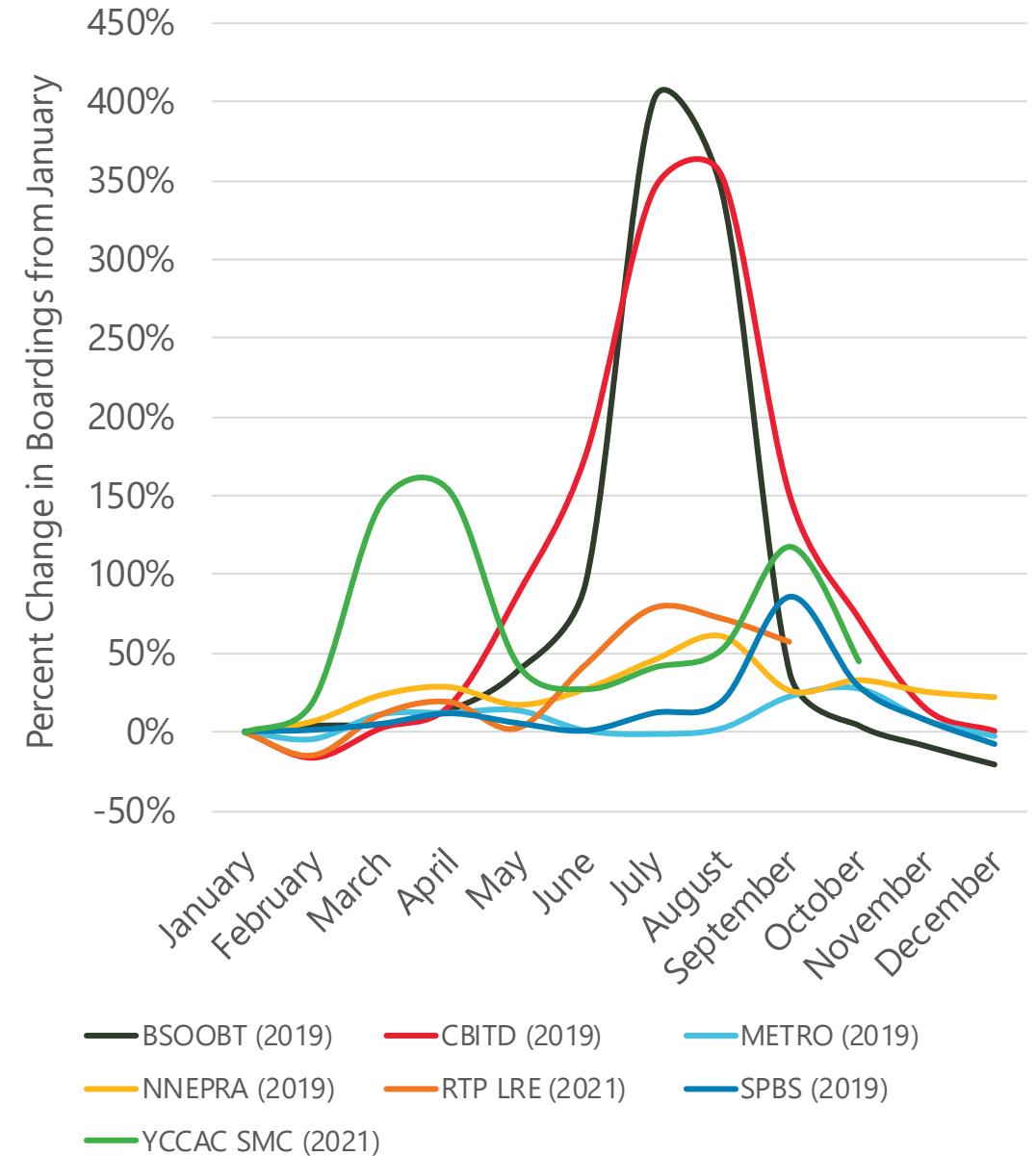
- Ridership highest in Portland metro area:
  - More densely developed areas
  - Peaks Island
  - USM Gorham
- Also at Saco Transportation Center
- Ridership lowest in low-density areas and on routes designed primarily to provide coverage



Note: BSOOB Transit ridership data shows ridership by segment. Bubbles indicate ridership occurring on segment near bubble location.

# Seasonal Ridership

- Most services experience seasonal variations in ridership
- BSOOB Transit and Casco Bay Lines have about four times as many riders in summer as in January—the most dramatic fluctuations



# Branding

- Greater Portland region has many providers for a small urban area
- Different system names and individual service names make service difficult to learn and understand

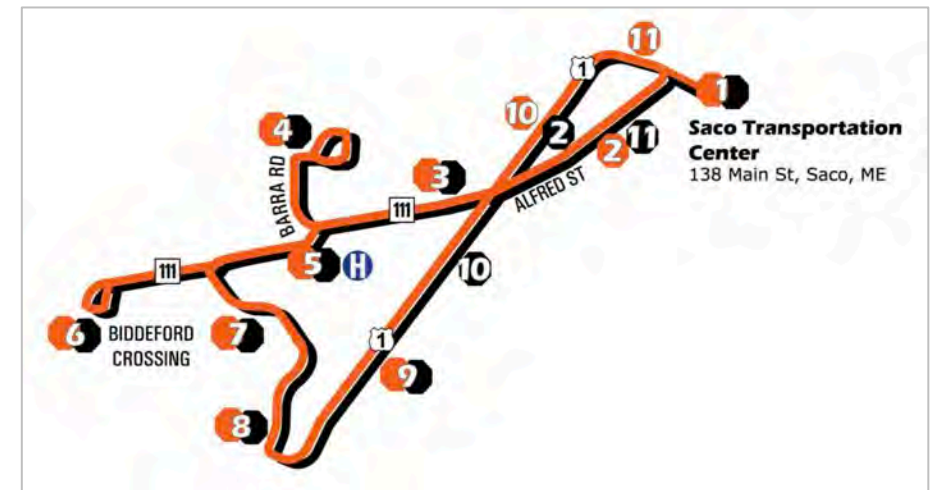


## SOUTHERN MAINE CONNECTOR



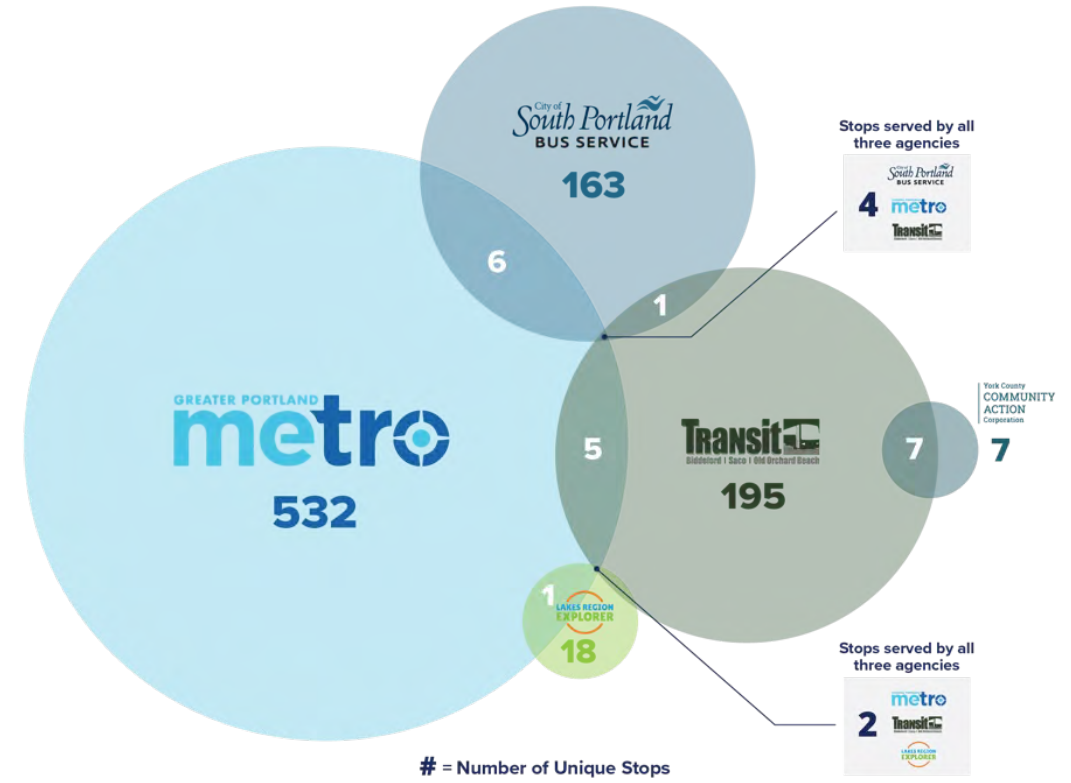
# Customer Information

- All agencies provide their own information in different ways and in different formats
- Most—but not all—publish GTFS files
- Some—but not all—use Southern Maine Transit Tracker to provide real-time information
- The quality of information varies greatly
- It is difficult to understand the system as a whole and some rider information is difficult to interpret



# Stops

- There are about 940 stops in Greater Portland
- Most stops are very basic
- The information at stops varies greatly
- Better stops could make waits more comfortable and service easier to use





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South Portland Bus Service

South 21

# Key Opportunities

# Key Opportunities

- 1 Provide more frequent service
- 2 Increase focus on high-demand areas
- 3 Make service faster/reduce travel times
- 4 Make service easier to use and understand/more seamless
- 5 Improve network design and connections
- 6 Improve stops
- 7 Plan together/work together



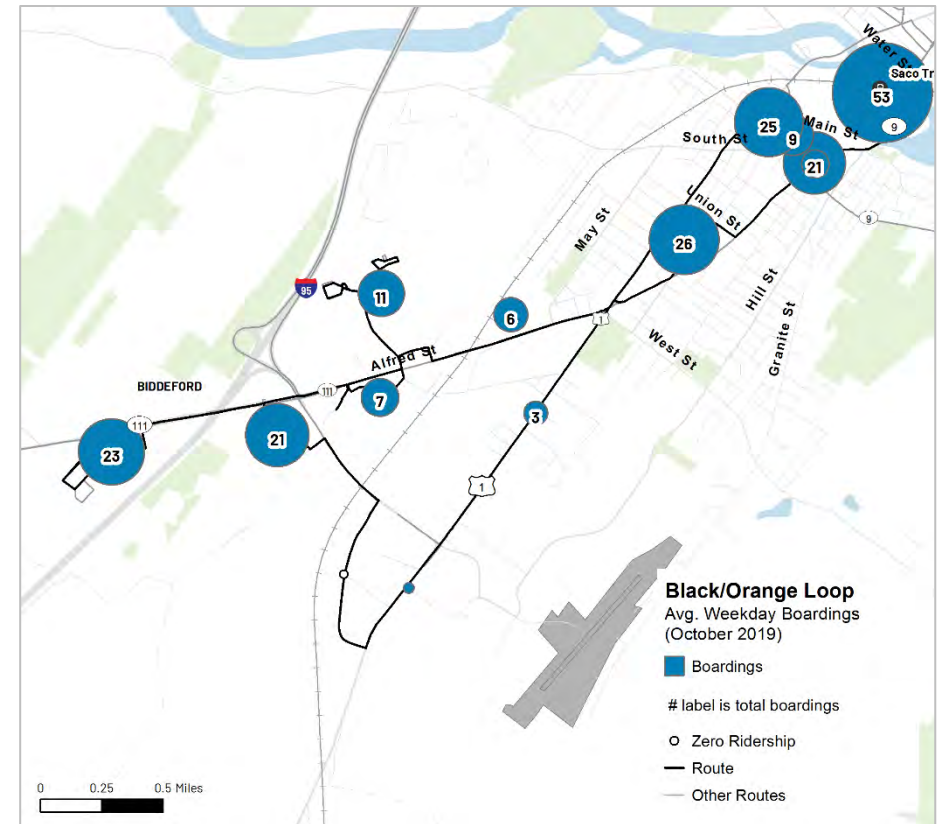
# 1 Provide More Frequent Service

- Passengers want more frequent service
- Improve frequencies where demand warrants
- Adopt minimum frequency standards (i.e., at least every 60 minutes)
- Would increase ridership and reduce wait time for transfers
- Question:** Is it better to operate fewer routes that carry more riders or more routes that carry fewer riders?

Route	Service Frequencies (minutes)				
	EARLY AM	AM PEAK	MIDDAY	PM PEAK	NIGHT
<b>METRO</b>					
BREEZ	60	50	98	53	52
Husky Line		30	30	30	46
1 Congress Street	32	30	30	30	37
2 Forest Avenue	30	30	30	30	63
3 Portland - Westbrook - South Portland		30	30	36	62
4 Westbrook	60	30	30	30	53
5 Maine Mall	40	30	30	30	44
7 Falmouth		60	60	60	60
8 Peninsula Loop		30	31	31	31
9A/9B North Deering/West Falmouth	30	30	60	35	45
<b>South Portland Bus Service</b>					
21 Willard Square		45	60	60	36
24A Maine Mall	100	117	130	122	95
24B Maine Mall		120	125	130	87
<b>Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach Transit</b>					
50 Orange/51 Black	45	75	75	75	75
52 White/53 Blue	45	75	75	75	75
54 Silver		27	23	30	28
54 UNE		68	78	60	70
60 Green		150	150	150	150
70 Purple/ZOOM		38	38	43	43
<b>Casco Bay Lines</b>					
Portland-Peaks Island	60	82	86	80	65
Inner Bay	165	67	100	110	85
Down Bay	180	120	150	165	160
<b>Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority</b>					
Amtrak Downeaster	160	230	202	207	320
<b>Regional Transportation Program</b>					
Lakes Region Explorer		190	395	205	70
<b>York County Community Action Corporation</b>					
Southern Maine Connector		157	171	171	

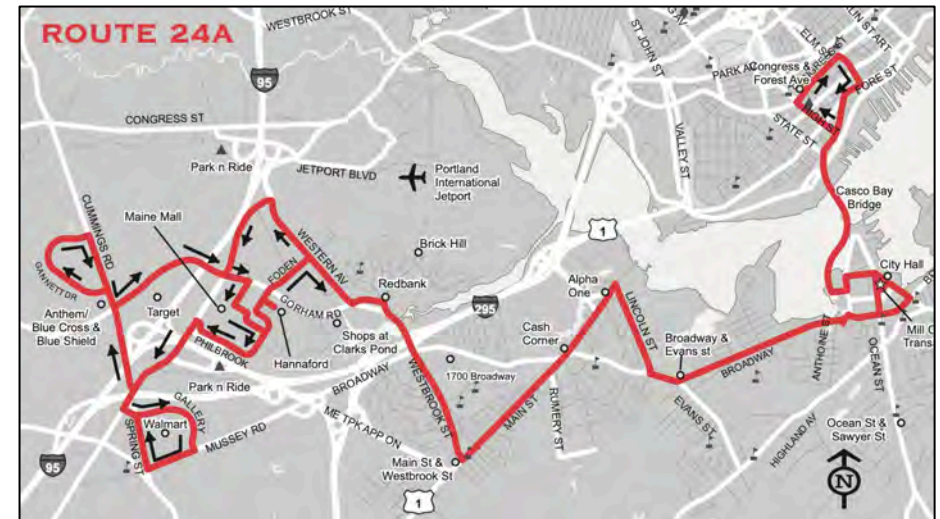
## 2 Increase Focus on High-Demand Areas

- Greater focus on routes that serve more people
- Less focus on fixed routes that serve more land but few people
- Microtransit in critical areas with few riders
- Adjust spans of service based on demand (i.e., more Sunday service on some routes)
- **Similar question:** Is it better to operate fewer routes that carry more riders or more routes that carry fewer riders?



### 3 Make Service Faster/ Reduce Travel Times

- Make service more direct
- Discontinue low-ridership variants
- Develop priority transit corridors
- Implement targeted transit priority measures
- **Question:** Is it better to serve fewer areas where demand is higher or more areas where demand is lower?



## 4 Make Service Easier to Use and Understand/More Seamless

- Unified branding
- Better information
  - Improved materials
  - Single website
  - GTFS-RT for all systems
  - Real-time info across the region
- Regional route numbering and naming convention
- Use of Dirigo on all systems

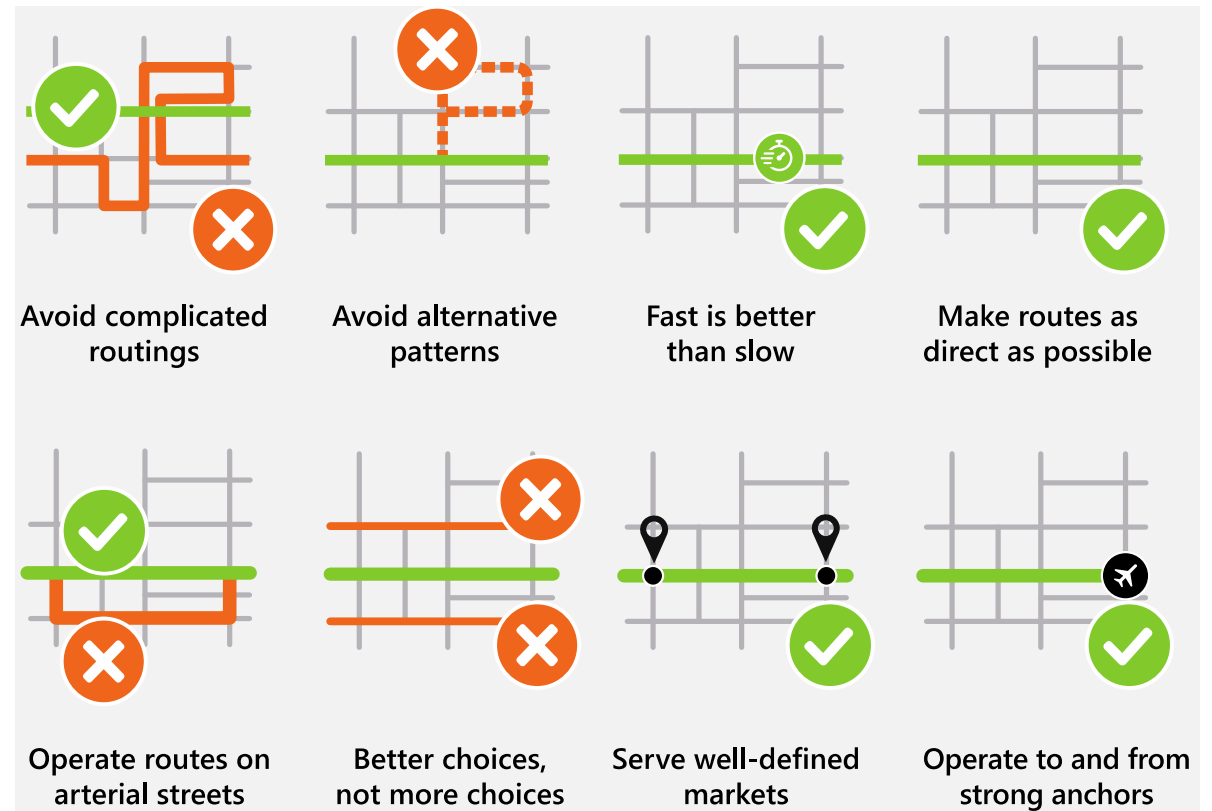
*Kansas City, North Carolina, and Phoenix are Examples of areas with multiple providers that use common branding*



## 5 Improve Network Design and Connections

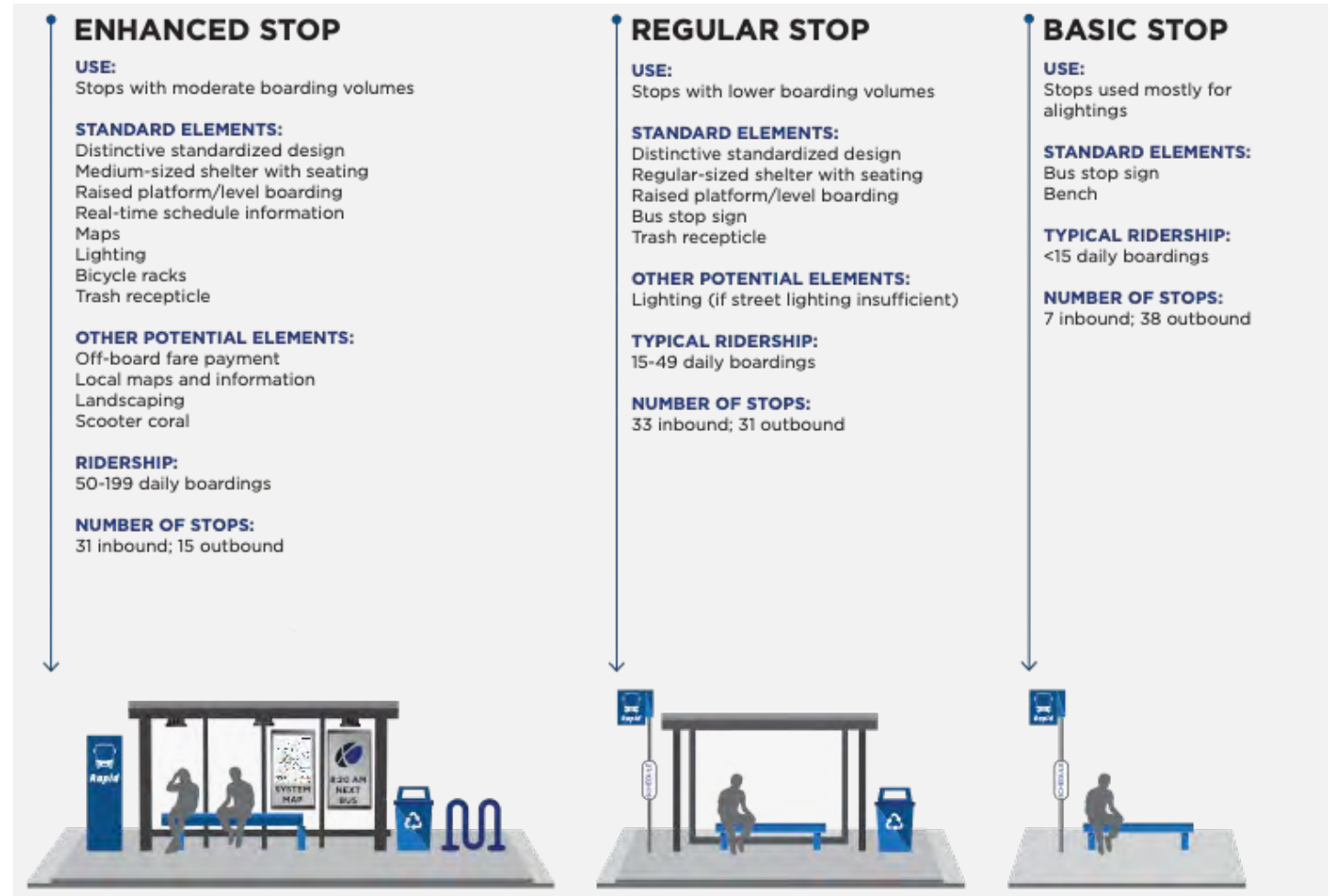
- Redesign based on service-design best practices
- Use a 'family of services' approach
- Develop microtransit services
- Improve intermodal connections
- Examine Portland Station relocation
- Implement vehicle and/or cost sharing for 'cross-border' routes

### Service Design Principles



## 6 Improve Stops

- Stops are the 'front door' to transit
- Strengthen Transit Stop Access Project to:
  - Develop a hierarchy of stops based on boarding levels and other factors
  - Define the specific elements that should be implemented at each type of stop
  - Provide clear, consistent information



## 7 Plan Together/Work Together

- Make transit more seamless for riders
- Develop regional approaches to:
  - Inform regional standards and priorities for service and investment
  - Develop consistency among facilities, equipment, and technologies
  - Service standards (including minimum service frequencies)
  - Microtransit implementation
- Develop/strengthen collaborative efforts:
  - Periodic joint board meetings
  - Better define respective roles of GPCOG, PACTS Policy Board, transit providers, and others



# Discussion



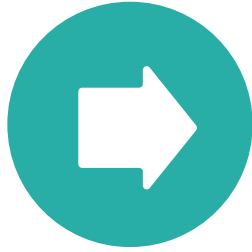
# Opportunities

- 1 Provide more frequent service
- 2 Increase focus on high-demand areas
- 3 Make service faster/reduce travel times
- 4 Make service easier to use and understand/more seamless
- 5 Improve network design and connections
- 6 Improve stops
- 7 Plan together/work together

## Breakout Rooms

1. Which of these opportunities are most important?
2. Within each opportunity, what ideas are most important?

# Breakout Room Opportunity Prompts (1 of 2)



## More Frequent Service

- Increase service frequencies where demand warrants
- Adopt minimum frequency guidelines (i.e., every 60 minutes)



## Increase Focus on High-Demand Areas

- Greater focus on routes that serve more people
- Less focus on fixed routes that serve very few people
- Microtransit in critical areas with few riders
- Increase Sunday spans of service



## Make Service Faster

- Make service more direct
- Develop priority transit corridors
- Targeted transit priority measures

# Breakout Room Opportunity Prompts (2 of 2)



## Make Service More Seamless

- Regionwide Dirigo adoption
- Unified branding
- Improved rider materials, single website, GTFS-RT for all systems
- Regional route numbering and naming convention



## Improve Network Design and Connections

- Comprehensive service changes
- Better intermodal connections
- Shared routes (vehicle and/or cost-sharing)
- Establish family of services



## Improve Stops

- Implement regionwide bus stop improvement program
- Consistent facility quality throughout region



## Plan Together/ Work Together

- Consistency among facilities, equipment, and technologies
- Service standards
- Role of GPCOG
- Role of transit working group
- Microtransit implementation

# Opportunities

1 Provide more frequent service

2 Increase focus on high-demand areas

3 Make service

4 Make service

5 Improve

6 Improve

7 Plan together/work together

## Breakout Rooms

1. Which of these opportunities are most important?

2. Within each breakout room, discuss what ideas are most important?

## Report-Out on Discussions

- Recap of ideas discussed
- Any new suggestions?
- What were the priorities identified?



# Service Scenarios Approach

Image source: Nelson\Nygaard

# What is a Scenario?

- Scenarios show bundles of changes that illustrate different approaches to service design
- Transit Together will have two cost-neutral scenarios
- Scenarios **are not a 'choose one' exercise**; feedback on each scenario is collected and a new, 'preferred scenario' of recommendations is designed based on what works best

## Scenario 1



## Scenario 2



Public engagement results

Recommendations



# How Do Opportunities Become Scenarios and then Recommendations?

## PAG Meeting #3

Key scenario opportunities identified

*Input on key opportunities from PAG Meeting #3 is used to develop draft scenarios.*

## PAG Meeting #4

Scenarios approved for public outreach

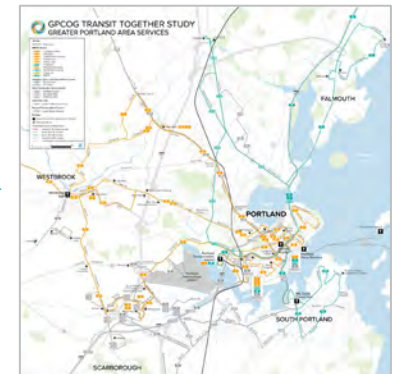
*Scenarios are refined based on agency workshop and presented to PAG for approval.*

**Public Engagement**  
Public provides feedback on what they do and do not like in each scenario

*Public feedback and additional agency input is used to develop preferred scenario, which recommends service changes.*

**Agency Workshop**  
Scenarios are improved through consideration of service and operational details

## Recommendations



# Scenario Next Steps

- Feedback on key opportunities received at this PAG meeting will be incorporated into two draft scenarios
  - E.g., if breakout rooms prioritize weekday service over weekend service, a draft scenario may prioritize weekday service.
- Draft scenarios will be changed and refined at transit agency workshop
  - E.g., if agency staff identify a turn that isn't reliably safe, that turn may be removed from a scenario.







# Public Comment & Next Steps

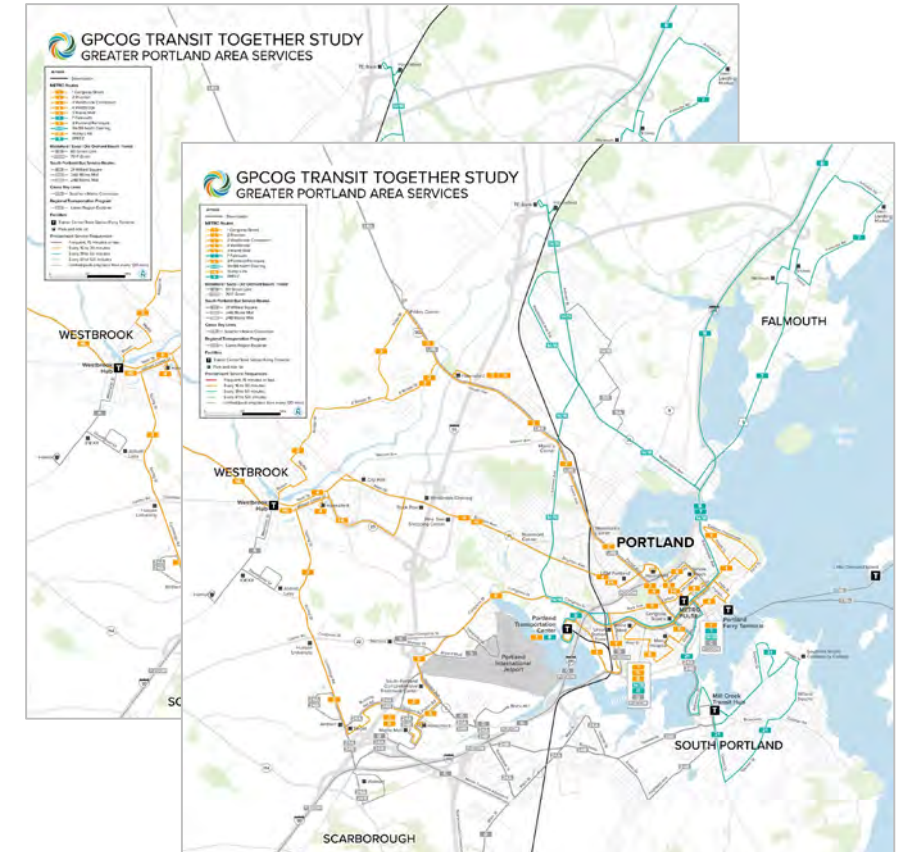
# Public Comment



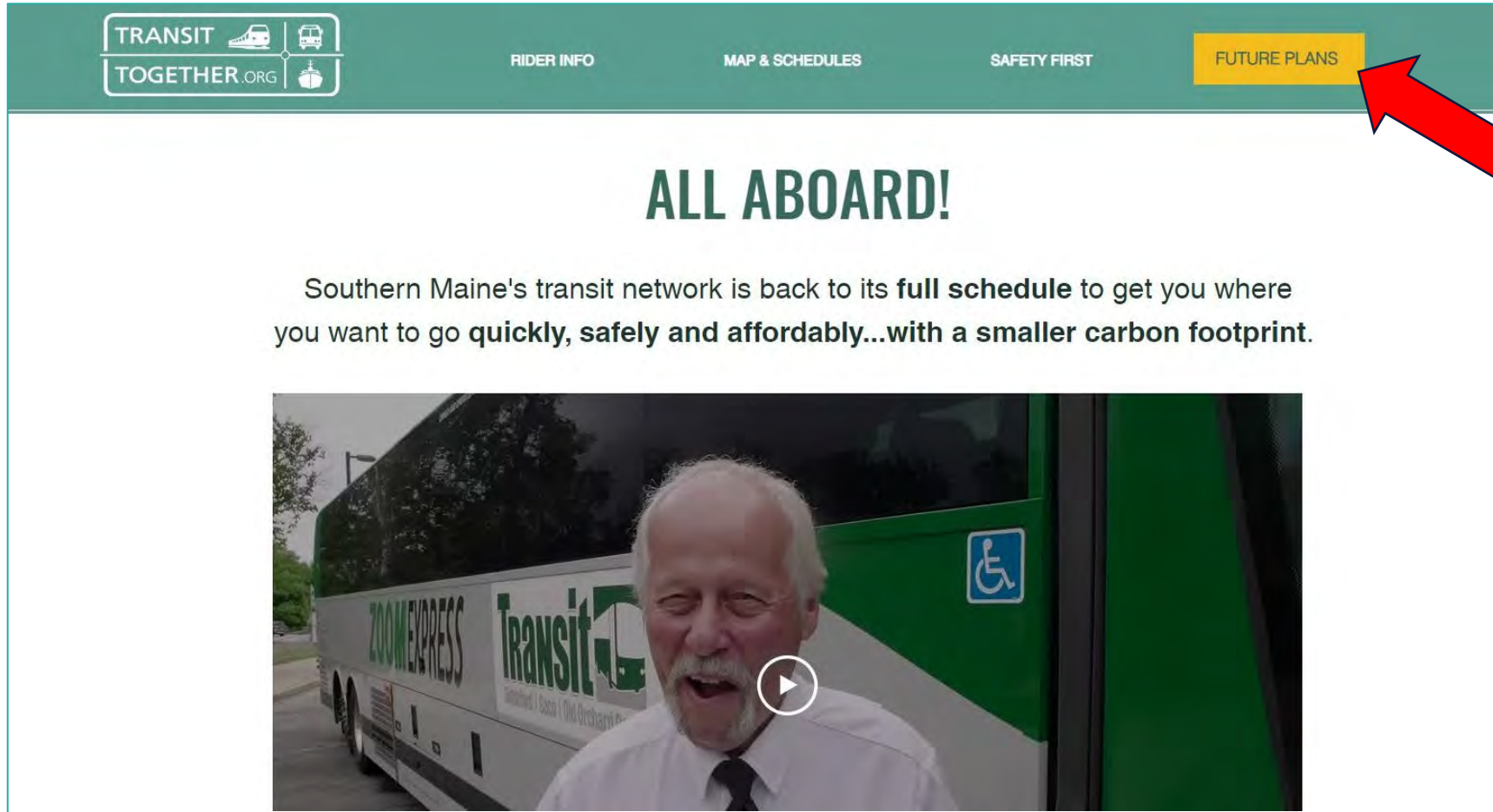
# Next Steps

- Encourage public input!
- Agency workshop
  - Develop service scenarios
  - Discuss coordination in key areas
- Next PAG meeting anticipated for June
  - Review service scenarios
  - Prepare for public outreach

## Scenario Development



# Visit/Promote TransitTogether.org



TRANSIT TOGETHER.ORG

RIDER INFO MAP & SCHEDULES SAFETY FIRST FUTURE PLANS

## ALL ABOARD!

Southern Maine's transit network is back to its **full schedule** to get you where you want to go **quickly, safely and affordably...with a smaller carbon footprint.**

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- **View route profiles**
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# Advisory Group Discussion



# Thank you!

## Contacts:

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