



BACTS METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2018-2038

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Executive Summary | |
| 1.0 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 2.0 Demographics | 4 |
| 3.0 Mission Statement, Goals, and Policy Issues | 19 |
| 4.0 Public Transportation | 23 |
| 5.0 Highway Transportation | 42 |
| 6.0 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation | 57 |
| 7.0 Air Transportation..... | 66 |
| 8.0 Rail Transportation | 77 |
| 9.0 Marine Transportation | 84 |
| 10.0 Economic Development and Tourism | 90 |
| 11.0 Land Use, Livability, Sustainability and Environment..... | 97 |
| 12.0 Transportation Performance Management, Measures and Targets..... | 109 |
| 13.0 Financial Issues | 120 |
| 14.0 Recommendations..... | 123 |

APPENDICES

- Appendix A: BACTS Public Participation Schedule and Public Comments
- Appendix B: BACTS Highway Classification, Volumes, and TIP Projects
- Appendix C: Acronyms
- Appendix D: Glossary of Terms

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System (BACTS) was designated in 1982 as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) responsible for continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning in the Greater Bangor Urbanized Area (UZA) and is governed by a Policy Committee. The BACTS Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) includes all of Bangor, Brewer, Penobscot Indian Island, Veazie; and portions of Bradley, Hampden, Hermon, Milford, Old Town, Orono, and Orrington. With the 2010 Decennial Census, the UZA boundaries shifted slightly to include a portion of the Town of Hermon and exclude the Town of Eddington.

As an MPO, BACTS primary responsibility is to develop regional plans that coordinate various elements of transportation networks into one cohesive regional transportation system and identify transportation investment priorities within the region. BACTS evaluates and approves proposed transportation improvement projects; facilitates communication between member communities and local, state and federal transportation agencies; and sponsors and conducts studies to assist in the transportation planning process with the goal of executing a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process in the region. This Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) outlines existing services and conditions, identifies gaps and deficiencies, estimates demand and offers recommendations intended to develop an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

Demographics

The BACTS area is the third largest urban center in the State of Maine. The 11 municipalities that comprise the BACTS region cover a total of 318 square miles with a total population of 84,220, with the urbanized area (UZA) occupying slightly more than $\frac{1}{8}$ of the total area and including nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total population. Bangor, Brewer, Hermon, Orono, and a part of Old Town make up a regional service center cluster. Residents of nearly half the State's area regularly travel into the region for employment, education, health care, government and retail services.

The total population of the BACTS region has decreased inconsequentially; with population growth in the suburb communities offsetting the population decreases in the more urban communities. This is representative of the trend of residents enjoying a more rural lifestyle with accessibility to the benefits and opportunities within the urban/metropolitan area. Overall population in the BACTS region is forecasted to increase slightly through 2040 with the majority of the growth continuing to happen in suburb communities. Maine has the oldest population in the Nation. Although the BACTS region population is younger than that of the State as a whole, the region's population is still aging. The median age in the BACTS region increased from 36.8 in 2000 to 41.7 in 2015. With the baby-boomer generation reaching retirement age, the decline in native births, stagnant in-migration, and the resulting decrease in the available skilled workforce creates the potential for a distressed economic situation. A high dependency ratio strains resources and services needed to care for the aging population, but of even more concern is this situation will make maintaining the current workforce difficult, and create obstacles to attracting development and new business.

Eighty-eight percent of employed individuals living in the BACTS region are also employed within the BACTS region. The number of available jobs to the number of workers is a reflection of the role the area plays as a regional service center for eastern and central Maine. In 2015, there were 2.03 jobs to every employed resident in the cities of Bangor and Brewer. Out of Penobscot County's 25 largest employers,

24 are based in the greater Bangor area importing more than 41,000 employees from outside the region into the BACTS area for work. The average employee residing within the BACTS region spends over 19 minutes traveling to work by single-occupancy vehicle.

The Bangor Metropolitan Labor Market Area (LMA) includes the 11 BACTS municipalities as well as 35 additional municipalities from Penobscot, Hancock and Waldo Counties. The 2010 total population of the entire LMA was 133,528, nearly two-thirds of which reside within the BACTS region. While the working-age population increased between 2010 and 2015; the number of people in the labor force decreased and the number of people not in the labor force increased. Forecasts show the LMA total civilian workforce will increase by just under 12% from 2016 to 2040. With unemployment rates at 15-year lows, employers are beginning to experience difficulty finding employees to fill vacant and/or new positions.

Employment and population growth in the BACTS region is expected to be modest over the next 20 years. The majority of the growth in population is anticipated outside the urbanized area, while job growth is expected within the urbanized area. This imbalance will accentuate the current trend of increasing numbers of trips originating outside the urban area and will have the most impact on radial routes serving the urban area. The apparent out-migration of the population from the urban areas into their surrounding suburbs is a pattern is not unique to this area, reflecting a widespread desire for a more rural lifestyle, without discarding the benefits of urban opportunities. The low level of expected growth is not likely to cause any significant systemic traffic congestion problems for the region. The potential for workforce shortages is concerning for the State's economic vitality; however, the BACTS region is poised to be an attractive area for economic and business development opportunities if proactive measures are taken to draw in-migration of out of state residents to the region to ensure a skilled and available workforce is able to meet the needs of expanding and/or relocating businesses. To attract highly skilled and entrepreneurial migrants (either native or foreign) to the area, it will be imperative to expand and foster a vibrant, well-connected diverse transportation network that allows for easy and convenient mobility to economic and employment centers.

Mission Statement, Goals and Policy Issues

The BACTS Policy Committee mission statement, specific goals, and priorities for region are consistent with the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) federal goals and the State policy objectives outlined in the Maine Sensible Transportation Policy Act (MSTPA). The mission statement, *"to provide for the safe, economical, efficient, and convenient movement of people and goods over a balanced multimodal transportation system compatible with the socio-economic and environmental characteristics of the region,"* guides the six regional goals and supportive regional priorities of BACTS.

Public Transportation

Community Connector, which is owned and operated by the City of Bangor, is the urban fixed-route transit system in the BACTS region. Community Connector operates 11 routes over a 29-square mile area in the municipalities of Bangor, Brewer, Hampden, Veazie, Orono and Old Town. The bus runs on a flag-stop, pulse system with the majority of routes meeting at the bus depot located at Pickering Square in downtown Bangor. Bus ridership hit its peak in 2013 with 1,016,068 trips and has decreased annually since. The dramatic increases in ridership from 2011 through 2013 can be attributed to the number of monthly bus passes sold for MaineCare transportation riders. Although the number of reported trips in 2015 shows a continuation of the trend in decreasing annual ridership, the total number of trips is similar to that reported prior to the spike caused by the MaineCare bus pass sales. Following MaineCare's switch to a brokerage system in August 2013, the stabilization of fuel prices in 2014, fare increases and the elimination of the

Odlin Road route in 2015, and the suspension of Saturday bus service in Hampden in 2016, all contribute to the decrease in ridership.

Federal funding for transit has been authorized at consistent levels through 2020, but is limited. The amount of money needed to operate the public transit system, increase the number of vehicles running in a state of good repair, increase operating hours and routes exceeds current availability. STIC funding has supplemented the Community Connector federal funding since 2013. It is essential that Community Connector implement strategies to increase ridership and meet the benchmarks required for eligibility in the STIC funding categories. Bus riders have expressed interest, and need, for extended evening hours, additional weekend service, shorter headways and shuttle service in the downtown Bangor area. While these requests are all reasonable, they come at a cost. In order for additional services to be added, it is essential to acquire a sufficient and reliable bus fleet. Some relatively easy to implement and inexpensive strategies for providing a more efficient and reliable service to riders include designating fixed bus stops, providing real-time information (i.e., Google Transit), streamlining routes and schedules in an easy to understand manner, and ensuring buses are inviting to passengers by being clean, reliable and convenient.

Opportunities for better connectivity between public transportation providers servicing the greater Bangor area exist. Coordination between operators to assist passengers in determining how, when and where to switch from one provider to the other could encourage increased use of public transportation within and beyond the BACTS region. It is difficult for visitors to the region to determine which, or whether, public transportation options are available when arriving in the Bangor area. As a regional service center, individuals from nearly half the State make their way into Bangor on a daily basis to obtain employment, healthcare, and retail services. In addition to providing connectivity for residents and employees in the region, there exists an opportunity to assist visitors making their way to and from the Bangor region via airplane or bus.

Public transit is an essential part of the region's transportation system and should be planned for and incorporated into municipal and regional project and development processes, policies and plans. It is essential that municipal planners, engineers, economic development staff, planning boards and/or city and town councils understand the importance of fully considering, reviewing and planning for the physical and infrastructure requirements for a transit bus to maneuver in and around developments to safely drop off and pick up passengers. In addition to the physical infrastructure and design considerations, it is critical to consider resources, identify whether or not the proposed development is within an already established bus route, or take early and proactive steps to work with the transit provider to determine whether or not the public transportation system has the financial and/or human resources to extend a route which could service the area of the development.

Highway Network

The highway network is the largest and most developed transportation system in the BACTS area. The overwhelming majority of people and goods are transported over the region's 183 miles of collector and arterial roadways.

Since 2004, there has been no new alignment construction using federal or state funding in the BACTS region. Maine DOT has completed two major transportation studies in the BACTS area since that time.

An I-95 study in Bangor was completed in January 2011. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the long-term needs of the I-95 Corridor in Bangor and to identify a set of recommendations to provide safe and efficient transportation service through the year 2030. Recommendations from this Study included

increasing acceleration and/or deceleration lengths at interchange ramp junctions, improving intersections near interchanges, modifying lane use signing,

Environmental studies for a potential route from the end of I-395 near the Brewer/Holden line to Route 9 have been ongoing since 2000. In 2015, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was completed and in June 2016, FHWA issued the Record of Decision identifying “Alternative 2B-2 as the preferred alternative. This completion of the NEPA process allowed MaineDOT to begin final design and the right-of-way process. Survey and preliminary design have begun and final design is estimated to be complete in 2020 with possible construction complete in the 2023 to 2025 timeframe.

A review of past traffic counts from 2003 to 2014 indicated that volume of traffic has decreased or remained level except for a few local corridors. The decreases occurred during an economic recession and increased fuel costs. As the economy improves and fuel prices remain relatively steady, we can expect a slight increase in volumes. BACTS will continue to monitor traffic volumes to analyze any significant trends.

BACTS’ major trucking companies have seen a dramatic drop in employment and output due to massive closures of the paper industry in this area. Total employment at trucking firms in Penobscot County dropped more than 29% between 2007 and 2016, from 1,763 to 1,245. The industry’s total Bangor region output shrank more than 17% between 2007 and 2014, from \$128 million to \$106 million. This has forced many of these companies to shift their business south to survive.

In 2011, the U.S. House and Senate passed a transportation bill that included allowing trucks weighing up to 100,000 pounds on the Maine Interstate system for the next 20 years. This change will allow heavy trucks on the Interstate rather than on Maine’s secondary roads.

In 2014, Maine experienced its lowest number of fatalities (131) since 1996. Unfortunately, the next year the number of fatalities rose to 156

Each year, MaineDOT publishes a list summarizing the previous three years' worth of crash data and identifies high-crash locations statewide. According to the 2014-2016 edition, there were 82 high-crash locations on BACTS roads in six of the ten BACTS municipalities: 63 in Bangor, 5 in Brewer, 3 in Old Town, 8 in Orono, 2 in Milford, and 1 in Hampden.

Active Transportation

Active transportation is an integral component of an efficient transportation network. A transportation network that facilitates fast and efficient movement of vehicles from origin to destination point is essential for growing the economy and supporting mobility to connect the region to the rest of the world. However, transportation networks in urbanized areas require a more multifunctional design to accommodate and provide connectivity with other modes of transportation. Effective bicycle and pedestrian accommodations enhance quality of life and health, strengthen communities, increase safety for all modes of transportation, reduce congestion, offer recreational benefits, and benefit the environment.

Residents of the BACTS region are becoming increasingly conscious of the importance of creating more livable and sustainable communities by improving mobility. A higher percentage of residents in the BACTS area use active transportation as a primary means of commuting to and from work than Penobscot County and the State as a whole, emphasizing the importance and necessity for a well-designed, safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle network and associated facilities to be incorporated into transportation projects and plans in the area. The BACTS region has a higher percentage of workers using active

transportation as a means of commuting to work than Penobscot County and the State. The percentage of workers from the Town of Orono using active transportation is exceeded by only one other municipality in the State, Bar Harbor. BACTS is committed to developing a multi-modal transportation system which includes well-used, safe, and accessible facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists, encouraging municipalities to adopt a Complete Streets approach.

Throughout the State, the number of crashes and resulting fatalities involving pedestrians and bicyclists is cause for great concern and increased scrutiny. Together, pedestrian and bicycle fatalities are increasing as a share of total traffic deaths. An evaluation of the crash data shows that there is no identifiable single common factor contributing to these crashes, making it difficult to identify priorities for focusing efforts and implementing mitigation strategies. Because of this, the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) is spearheading a project to increase awareness and engage municipal leaders and the public in programs and initiatives designed to mitigate hazards and reduce the number of bicycle and pedestrian crashes and fatalities on Maine roadways.

To ensure active transportation facilities are adequately inventoried, gaps identified and priorities established, BACTS will develop a stand-alone Regional Active Transportation Plan that will update the current Bicycle and Pedestrian Study developed in June 2009 by Broadreach Planning & Design and Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.

Freight Transportation

Maine's freight system is multifaceted and multimodal, consisting of seaports, airports, border-crossings, intermodal facilities, distribution centers, and a network of rail and road connections. The largest and most important component of Maine's transportation system is its highway network. Factors that contribute to determining which mode of freight transportation is most effective and efficient include size, weight, and resource of the product and location of both customer and seller. However, the primary factors that determine the transportation decisions are how much it costs to get freight from origin to destination, reliability and consistency of the arrival/departure of freight and the amount of time it takes to get from origin to destination.

The majority of Maine's freight tonnage is carried by commercial vehicle on Maine's Interstate Highway system. Trucks are the most common mode used to move imports and exports between international gateways and inland locations. This trend is expected to continue with tonnage of international trade forecast to grow at a rate of 3.4 percent per year through 2040. Trucks are, and will likely continue to be, the most dominant freight carrier mode in Maine. The primary Maine truck route, as measured by truck annual average daily traffic (AADT), is the I-95 and I-295 north-south corridor between Bangor and Kittery. Other major truck routes, with significantly lower AADT, include I-95 between Bangor and Houlton, U.S. Route 1 between Houlton and Presque Isle, Maine Route 9 between Calais and Brewer, U.S. Route 2 between Newport and Farmington, and Maine Route 4 between Farmington and Auburn.

Interstate 95 passes through more states than any other Interstate highway, running 1,919 miles starting in Miami and ending in Houlton at the Canadian International Border. Interstate 395, the Bangor Industrial spur, is approximately 5 miles long running from Bangor International Airport (BGR), U.S. Route 2 (Hammond Street) and I-95 east to Brewer and U.S. Route 1A (Wilson Street), providing access to downtown Bangor, the center of Brewer, and the trucking corridor east to U.S. Route 1A and State Route 9.

The Back Winterport Road has become a de facto bypass for commuters and trucks seeking to avoid congestion along U.S. Route 1A in Hampden. State Route 15 between Bucksport and Bangor is a minor

arterial roadway that connects the commercial, business, tourism and residential activities of the coastal communities south and east of Bucksport to Bangor. State Route 9 is a major east-west corridor connecting I-95 and the greater Bangor area to the west and Washington County and the Canadian Maritime Provinces to the east. U.S. Routes 1 and 1A, and SR 15, are all-purpose routes that cater to the access and mobility needs of abutters and longer-distance travelers as well. The routes are not congested, except for short durations at peak times in the more urban areas of Bangor, Brewer, and Hampden.

Border crossings are potential bottlenecks in the freight transportation network. The FHWA monitors truck crossing times at 15 U.S./Canadian border crossings. Three of these borders are located in Maine, including the border crossing at the terminus of U.S. I-95 in Houlton. The border crossings in Maine are among those that have the swiftest crossing time.

Maine has over 3,500 miles of coastline with 12 significant ports and harbors. Five of these ports: Portland, Searsport, Eastport, Bucksport, and Bangor are well-suited to handle the requirement of most modern cargo vessels. The remaining ports serve local commercial fisherman and recreational activities. Over the last several years, there has been a decline in commercial marine traffic upstream of the Bucksport area, with the movement of fuel, raw materials and products moving away from Maine's coast and inland rivers to trucks, rail lines, and pipelines.

The Penobscot River corridor extends from Searsport to Bangor on the west side of the river, and from Verona Island to Brewer on the east side. The corridor includes several highways, the Penobscot River, the Bangor International Airport (BGR), two rail lines, and commercial port facilities at Searsport, Bucksport, and Brewer. It also includes facilities such as the Maritimes and Northeast pipeline, which crosses the Penobscot River at Orrington. Although there has been minimal commercial marine transportation north of Bucksport, other than occasional asphalt and petroleum barge shipments; large components being manufactured in Brewer are being shipped by barge at a deep water facility in Brewer.

The State of Maine's three ports of Eastport, Portland and Searsport have shown steady, consistent growth. The three ports collectively handle over 1.5 million tons of dry cargo annually and Portland and Searsport also handle roughly 125 million barrels of petroleum products.

Freight rail service is primarily privately owned, operated and maintained and infrastructure investment is related to market forces and business cycle with little to no influence by governmental policy or priority. Unlike much of the rest of the United States in which rail systems were established to connect regions to the rest of the country, many of Maine's rail lines were designed to link the state and its ports to Montréal and the Great Lakes. Maine's freight rail system consists of two Class II railroads, six Class III railroads, and one terminal and switching operation. Of the 1,197 miles of total serviceable lines, 94 percent (1,130 miles) are currently active freight lines connected to the North American rail system. The remaining 6 percent (67 miles) are operational track segments that are not currently providing freight service.

The freight rail service operating in the BACTS region is Central Maine & Québec Railway (CMQ), a [Class III freight railroad](#). CMQ provides rail freight transportation between Montréal and the Atlantic coast of Maine primarily transporting forest and paper products, construction materials, chemicals and fertilizers, grains and feeds, and energy products and fuels. CMQ offers the shortest, most-direct rail link between northern Maine, Saint John, New Brunswick and Montréal. In addition, CMQ provides access to the port facilities at Searsport. Northern Maine Junction in Hermon is the only rail yard located within the BACTS region. Interchange volume and the yard's active tracks have reduced significantly over the last few years. Interchange usage at the yard is limited and is now primarily used to support local industry established within and near the yard.

Air freight is a small yet critical component of the freight system in Maine. Air freight is especially important for the transportation of low-weight/high-value commodities such as semiconductors, and of perishable commodities, such as seafood. These two commodities are important components of the Maine economy and rely on air cargo services for shipment to inland and overseas destinations. The BACTS region is home to Bangor International Airport (BGR), one of the two airports in Maine which handles the majority of air cargo activity in the State. BGR is owned and operated by the City of Bangor and is classified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as a commercial service, primary, small hub airport. BGR accommodates a wide variety of both civilian and military aviation activity and is capable of handling any commercial cargo carrier presently flying. Commodities commonly transported via air cargo from BGR include seafood, seasonal berries, textiles, semiconductors and other computer components, and bank documents. A variety of U.S. and foreign all-cargo carriers fly into Bangor. BGR is also served by a number of domestic and international charter/on-demand cargo carriers that operate large aircraft. The majority of large cargo (vs. small packages and mail) is outbound and typically is enplaned at BGR and flown out of the county. In addition to the all-cargo carriers, the three passenger airlines also carry belly cargo, although it represents a small share of the total cargo. The airport's location allows for air freight to be conveniently transferred by truck and connected to rail and/or deep-water port freight service within an hour.

Intermodal transportation involves moving freight between points of origin and destination using two or more modes. Intermodal connectors are critical components of the Maine freight system which provide access between major intermodal facilities, such as ports and truck/pipeline terminals, and the highway. BGR is the only Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) designated intermodal connector in the BACTS region. It is located along highway routes to the northeast metropolitan areas and eastern Canada with immediate access to the Interstate which provides direct access to northern and eastern Maine, the Atlantic Provinces of Canada, northern New England, Quebec and upstate New York.

The BACTS region is in a strategic location which serves as an uncongested transportation gateway to Canada, the Northeast and the Atlantic Seaboard. It is located along highway routes to the northeast metropolitan areas and eastern Canada with immediate access to the Interstate 95.

In May 2016, the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce, MaineDOT and BACTS sponsored an FHWA Roundtable to advance the dialogue on the freight economy and support smart solutions for freight under the FAST Act and beyond where key members of the freight industry identified challenges specific to the region. In this process, FHWA prepared projections of the region's freight transportation through 2045. It is anticipated that freight demand in Maine will grow from 78.6 million tons in 2012 to 128 million tons in 2045, with slight decrease in truck mode of transporting and increase in pipeline transport. It is projected that the types of commodities shipped from Maine will remain the same and top trading partners will continue to be the New England states and Canada through 2045.

Passenger Transportation

Passenger transportation is facilitated by one of four modes - road, air, rail, and waterway. The vast majority of passenger travel in the BACTS region occurs on the road network by passenger vehicle.

As discussed in the Public Transportation section, local fixed-route bus service is available to passengers in the urban areas of Bangor, Brewer, Veazie, Orono and Old Town. In addition, regularly scheduled regional and inter-city bus services located in the BACTS area provide passengers with service to destinations within and outside of the State. Cyr Bus Lines, headquartered in Old Town, offers passengers daily service between Bangor and Caribou and connects with Concord Coach and Greyhound bus lines in Bangor and Hermon, respectively. The Concord Coach transportation center is located in Bangor and

provides various service with stops within the State, as well as service to Boston. The Greyhound terminal is located in Hermon and also offers service with stops within the State and out of state. Taxi and ride services are often used by public transportation dependent persons for trips at times when public transportation (fixed-route or on-demand) is not available, and for those destinations not served. The importance of the role played by ride service, for all riders, is likely to grow in the future.

Regularly scheduled commercial passenger air service in the BACTS region is available through Bangor International Airport (BGR) located in Bangor. It is a full-service regional airport offering non-stop domestic service through four airlines, and serves as a transit point for commercial and international flights, as it is the closest full-service airport to Europe with fuel and customs services available 24-hours a day, seven days a week and all-weather access. BGR is capable of processing 1,000 passengers per hour and provides service to just under a half-million passengers per year. Commercial passenger service accounts for approximately one-third of the Airport's daily operations. DeWitt Field (OLD) located in Old Town is a general aviation airport with no scheduled passenger service, but accommodates a variety of private jets and offers air taxi and charter services. Aircraft based at OLD include 30 single-engine airplanes, 1 multi-engine airplane, 6 helicopters and 1 ultralight.

There are no passenger rail services located in or serving the BACTS region; however, residents of the greater Bangor area can connect from Concord Coach to Amtrak Downeaster service either at the Portland Transportation Center via the Bangor, Augusta & L-A to Portland, Boston & Logan Airport route or at the Brunswick Visitors Center via the Midcoast Maine to Portland, Boston & Logan Airport route. Although there has been interest expressed and initiatives to gather support for bringing passenger rail service to the Bangor area, attempts to secure funding and resources required to conduct the required feasibility studies have not been successful. To implement new services, capital investments to existing railroad infrastructure will be required to achieve passenger operating standards, expand capacity to protect ongoing freight needs, and to develop station locations **Note: After completion of this plan update, it was announced that the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NEPRA) is actively exploring extending Downeaster service north, with seasonal and weekend-only service, to Rockland from Brunswick.**

There are no passenger marine services in the BACTS region; however, recreational marine traffic is increasing. Bangor and Brewer are both implementing waterfront redevelopment plans that are improving opportunities for recreational boating and passenger ferry opportunities. The Bangor Landing is open throughout the fresh water boating season and offers two public docks able to accommodate private vessels of virtually all sizes. Turtle Head Marina in Hampden includes two boat launch ramps and a marina facility leased to privately-owned Hamlin Marina, providing seasonal dockage. Dock rental is limited and reserved for customers who purchase boats at Hamlin's Marina, but mooring facilities are available to the general public.

Opportunities exist to improve intermodal connectivity for workers coming into the BACTS region for employment, patients and clients accessing services in the area living outside the region, as well as visitors and tourists arriving and leaving from the BACTS region to enjoy the tourist attractions in the area, as well as those located in eastern and northern Maine.

Economic Development and Tourism

One of the most important issues facing metropolitan areas is ensuring economic competitiveness in a global economy. Businesses rely on an efficient and dependable transportation system to move people, products and services. Highway accessibility was ranked the number two site selection factor behind only the availability of skilled labor in a 2015 survey of corporate executives by Area Development Magazine.

With the decline in population segments making up the available workforce, the region will have to implement strategies to attract an in-migration of skilled individuals to provide the needed workforce – including those that consider walkable neighborhoods with good transit access and safe streets for pedestrian and bicycle travel. Providing convenient, safe and affordable transportation options is going to be essential in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce.

Maine’s tourism industry depends on a reliable, safe transportation system. Overnight visitors and day travelers, whose principle mode of travel is the highway system, account for 27 million trips and directly spend a total of \$4.9 billion annually. The condition and reliability of the region’s transportation system impacts the accessibility of activities and stimulates economic activity. The region’s proximity to mountains, lakes, and the coast attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. According to 2016 statistics from the Maine Office of Tourism, Tourism is one of Maine’s largest industries, providing approximately one out of every six jobs in the State with a total economic impact estimated at \$9 billion.

Land Use, Livability, Sustainability and Environment

Transportation and land use planning are strongly connected. Transportation systems impact important local land use decisions, which ultimately influence a region’s connectivity and economic vitality. If land uses are not appropriately designed to ensure the most effective and efficient use of public infrastructure, facilities and systems, the transportation system will not work well and may impede economic growth, feasibility of expansion and opportunity. Urban sprawl and segregation of land uses, creating gaps between housing from commercial and retail uses has created localized traffic congestion, created challenges in providing convenient and efficient transit, and ultimately reduces the accessibility of jobs. The impact of expanding rural residential development is already being felt by transportation and social service providers in the region. Aging residents living in relatively remote rural homes are creating a challenge for transit and paratransit providers and will require creative solutions to effectively serve an increasingly dispersed elderly and disabled population.

The most successful, and desirable, transportation systems result from planned land use designed with attention to density, diversity and distance between land uses, and design which preserves the character of the community or region. Creating livable communities through a “Complete Streets” approach and redefining the transportation network may require changes to planning, design, maintenance and funding decisions but can lead to cost savings and improved safety for all users. The concept of designing livable communities in the region which encourage neighborhoods and easy access to public transit and safe and convenient infrastructure and facilities for active modes of transportation is a noble goal with tangible benefits. However, the BACTS region includes communities which are predominantly rural serving populations with diverse needs. Even those who regularly commute by modes other than automobile may require use of an automobile from time to time. Having ready access to an affordable, convenient and reliable automobile when needed provides security to individuals. Car sharing services may provide that alternative; however, there are no car sharing services currently available within the BACTS region. Car sharing is a relatively new concept, allowing for hourly and daily shared use of a vehicle.

BACTS promotes the development of transportation options that support livability and sustainability by including non-automobile modes in its evaluation of potential highway projects for the BACTS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Through the TIP project evaluation criteria and project scoring, projects that support alternative modes and their integration into the transportation system score higher and are more likely to be funded. BACTS has developed some transportation system management and operations strategies in the planning process designed to optimize the performance of the transportation system and allow for a more immediate response to traveler concerns than capacity projects offer while improving the reliability, security, and safety of the multimodal transportation system.

Regional stakeholder groups are cooperating to develop regional plans which address traffic incident management issues in each region in a coordinated and thorough way.

Electric vehicles (EV) are the most common alternative fuel vehicle utilized in Maine. Although usage of alternative fuel vehicles is increasing and becoming more mainstream, readily available public facilities and infrastructure for these vehicles is concentrated in the southern part of the State. In the greater Bangor area, availability is severely limited and the only EV charging station north of the BACTS region is located in Millinocket at Baxter State Park. In addition to the four EV charging locations, there are two liquid propane gas stations in the BACTS area.

Transportation Performance Management, Measures and Targets

Performance management requirements are intended to promote the most efficient investment of Federal transportation funds, increase accountability and transparency of the Federal-aid highway program and provide a framework to support improved investment decision-making through a focus on performance outcomes for key national transportation goals. MPOs are required to establish regional targets for all applicable measures and document the strategies and investments used to achieve the targets in new and existing plans and programs; as well as report on progress toward meeting the targets through new and existing mechanisms. MPOs must integrate performance-based goals, objectives, measures and targets, directly or by reference, in the metropolitan transportation planning process. This requirement includes integration of and reporting of plans required as part of a performance-based program to be developed by the State Department of Transportation and public transportation providers.

BACTS will either support the MaineDOT performance target or establish a separate quantifiable regional target for each applicable FHWA performance measure within 180 days of the established State target. The Safety performance targets will be set by BACTS on or before February 27, 2018 and included in all new, updated or amended metropolitan transportation plans, programs and processes on or before May 28, 2018. The Pavement, Bridge and System performance targets will be established by BACTS following MaineDOT performance target development which is due on or before May 20, 2018. These performance measures and related targets will be included in all new, updated or amended metropolitan transportation plans, programs and processes on or before May 28, 2019.

BACTS Transit Asset Management State of Good Repair (SGR) targets have been established for fiscal year 2018 and incorporated into this document. Community Connector will provide the public transit established SGR targets to BACTS on or before October 31 each year in conjunction with the required reporting to the National Transit Database (NTD). Public Transit Providers must complete the initial Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan due on or before October 1, 2018 at which time, BACTS is required to include, directly or by reference, Community Connector's TAM plan and performance targets in regional metropolitan transportation plans, programs and processes, as well as track performance in meeting those targets and. Transit Safety Performance Management is pending final regulation. Once published, Transit Providers will have one year to establish a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan, including development of agency performance targets. The MPO will be required to establish regional performance targets 180 days after the date of the final rule plus one year.

Financial Issues

Metropolitan Transportation Plans must be fiscally constrained so that it proposes only projects that have a chance of receiving funding based on projected revenues over the next twenty years.

BACTS Policy Committee gets to choose some of the STP/NHS projects in each TIP using a predetermined allocation. The projects are titled MPO Sponsored in the BACTS TIP.

The amount of funding allocated by MaineDOT to BACTS over the past sixteen years is approximately 39 percent of the costs of projects submitted by the municipalities for consideration in each TIP. The municipal list of essential projects would be much greater if more funding were available. The municipalities submit only those projects that are most in need of repair and have a chance of rating high enough for possible selection for funding. Projects that go unfunded either: 1) continue to deteriorate further, resulting in even higher construction/maintenance costs; or 2) force municipalities to pay a much higher percent of the construction costs instead of typical local match amount of 10 or 20 percent needed for state and federally funded projects. The process of prioritizing important projects becomes increasingly difficult with flat or declining funding levels. This trend is not likely to change.