



## Transit Coordination Retreat

# Meeting Report

Thursday, June 25, 2020

by Zoom , 9:00am - 10:30am AND 12:00pm - 1:00pm



Good Group Decisions

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## About the Meeting

### *Purpose*

The primary purpose of this retreat was to clarify roles on responsibilities of key stakeholder organizations going forward with regard to planning and managing regional transportation.

### *Attendance*

- Sherri Clark, Operations Officer, City of Bangor Community Connector
- Laurie Linscott, Bus Superintendent – City of Bangor Community Connector
- Rich Cromwell, Assistant City Manager – City of Bangor
- John Theriault, City Engineer – City of Bangor
- Sophie Wilson, Town Manager – Town of Orono
- Belle Ryder, Assistant City Manager – Town of Orono
- Rob Yerxa, Public Works Director – Town of Orono
- John Rouleau, Public Works Director – City of Old Town
- Sean Currier, Public Works Director – Town of Hampden
- Linda Johns, City Planner – City of Brewer
- Lori Brann, Transit Program Coordinator – Maine DOT
- Tom Reinauer, Director of Public Outreach and Planning – Maine DOT
- Chris Mann, MPO Coordinator – Maine DOT
- Sara Devlin, Executive Director – BACTS
- Connie Reed, Transportation Planner – BACTS
- Craig Freshley, Facilitator, Good Group Decisions
- Marlene Flaherty, Recorder, Good Group Decisions

### *Planned Agendas*

#### Session ONE Agenda

9:00

##### **Opening**

- BACTS Executive Director Sara Devlin will welcome everyone and introduce facilitator Craig Freshley.
- Craig will explain how the meeting will work including a brief overview of the Agenda and some simple Ground Rules.

- We will do some quick introductions to make sure we all know each other.

9:10

**The Current Situation and Benefits of Better Coordination**

- Sara will provide a quick overview of how things work currently, including current federal mandates and cooperative agreements that we are supposed to honor.
- She will also outline benefits to the region of improved coordination, cooperation, and communication.

9:20

**Roles and Responsibilities – Initial Ideas**

- We will begin with a presentation from Craig reflecting what was submitted in advance. Craig will provide a general overview of key themes mentioned in the advance questionnaire responses and also share with us some of the details.
- Depending on what’s submitted in advance, Craig might even offer an actual proposal for us to consider.
- There will be plenty of time for questions, clarifications, and discussion.

10:20

**Summary and Last Comments**

- Craig will summarize discussion themes so far, apparent points of agreement, and apparent points of contention.
- This is also a chance for anyone to make a last comment about the discussion so far, or a hope for Session TWO.

10:30

**Adjourn**

**Session TWO Agenda**

12:00

**Welcome Back!**

- We will do some quick hellos and make sure everyone is connected.

12:05

**Roles and Responsibilities – Conclusions**

- Based on the Session ONE discussion, Craig will propose a set of conclusions for us to consider.
- We will discuss and revise however we see fit.

12:20

**Next Steps**

- Collectively we will make a plan for how to resolve any outstanding issues and how to actually operationalize our conclusions.
- We will also discuss approaches for gathering additional feedback to be included in a possible regional bus system structural evaluation.

- 12:50      **Closing Comments**
- This is a chance for each person to make a brief closing comment; perhaps a reflection about the retreat or hope for going forward.

1:00      **Adjourn**

## *Opening Remarks*

Sara Devlin, Executive Director of BACTS, began the meeting by introducing Craig Freshley as the facilitator and giving some back story.

Starting in January, 2020 Sara began to meet with everyone and started discussing the transit system. The need to get everyone together was identified – with the intention of discussing what was going great and what work needed to be done. Sara had worked with Craig before and felt that he was a good fit to help guide the discussion. She felt he could help the group work toward solutions and common ground.

Sara thanked everyone for participating in a nontraditional way, and for their patience with scheduling.

Facilitator Craig Freshley then introduced himself, Good Group Decisions, and his Associate Marlene Flaherty as note taker. He explained the role of a neutral facilitator. He noted the importance of the advance input and thanked everyone for contributing the input.

Craig then gave an overview of the day’s agenda – highlighting that the meeting would occur in two parts over the course of the day.

## *Ground Rules*

Craig explained the following ground rules; things to keep in mind for an effective meeting:

- **Principles now. Details later.** – With our limited time we need to stay on the high ground.
- **Understanding before judgment** - Be open minded about the process. No one decides until we all decide. Let’s withhold judgement.

- **Speak for yourself** - Speak for yourself. I will not say who said what in the advanced responses, but you can claim your own comments. I encourage you to claim your comments and speak for yourself.
- **One at a time. Raise hands** - Please raise your hand visually on the screen and speak one at a time.
- **Chat on the side.** Raising your hand and saying things out loud is the official way to contribute, not the chat. You will see notes on the screen and a full report.
- **Yield to blue** - If you see the blue card I'd like to interrupt you. It's not about you, but wanting to be efficient for the entire group. It is challenging to interrupt on Zoom, please yield to the blue card.
- **Neutral facilitation.**
- **Notes now and later** - We are taking notes and will be sharing a report later.

## The Current Situation and Benefits of Better Coordination

Sara gave a brief introductory presentation, outlining the current situation and benefits of better coordination.

### Summary

Craig shared his high-level notes from Sara's presentation on the screen (see below) and asked for any reactions or questions from the group. Craig then looked back to the planning notes, to see if there were any other important notes to add. He added that better collaboration can better position everyone for funding in the future. Craig thanked Sara for setting the stage.

- This is a great opportunity
- We all have federal mandates and requirements
- We should seek opportunities to work together to meet our mandates
- We can all probably do better
- We want to make transit the best we can for the region
- The MPO receives money for planning and that can be better maximized
- To better serve citizens in the region
- Let's build on our good foundation

## Details

Sara began the presentation on The Current Situation and Benefits of Better Coordination by saying that this is an opportunity. She asked that the group please be grounded in some things that they all had to remember. She noted that they all have federal mandates and requirements, she encouraged the group to look at opportunities to help one another meet these mandates and requirements. She added that there was room to do better in this communication and coordination.

Sara added that the discussion was “focused on one thing- making transit the best it can be in this region. And we can all be a part of this.”

Sara concluded her presentation by stating that this was a really good opportunity to talk about the ways the group could reach this goal. She added that the group wanted to build on the foundation, and maximize on it. She stated that she was glad that the group members were all there and that they were having the discussion.

## Advance Survey Findings

Craig shared the advance survey findings on the screen. He reminded everyone that they had submitted responses, and that everyone had been sent the survey document in advance. Seven of the nine organizations who were asked for input submitted responses.

## Craig’s Presentation

### Federally Required Plans and Programs

- Most agree that the MPO should have decision making responsibility for developing and updating federally required plans and programs
  - With input from the Transit Operator, DOT, and the Municipalities
  - And that the MPO should be responsible for communications to the Transit Operator, DOT, and the Municipalities
    - And a couple respondents think that communications should also go to riders
  - Some think that decision making should be shared
    - One respondent thinks Municipalities should have decision making authority
    - One respondent thinks that the Transit Operator should have decision making authority
- There are mixed opinions on who should be responsible for implementing federal plans and programs

- 3 – Transit Operator
- 2 – MPO
- 2 – Shared

## **Financial Planning and Information Sharing**

- Most agree that the Transit Operator should have decision making responsibility for financial planning
  - With input from the MPO, DOT, and the Municipalities
  - And that the Transit Operator should be responsible for communications to the MPO, DOT, and the Municipalities
- One respondent thinks that the MPO should have decision making responsibility for financial planning
- One respondent thinks that decision making responsibility should be shared
- All but one agree that the Transit Operator should be responsible for implementing financial plans

## **Operations, Systems, Service Planning**

- All agree that the Transit Operator should have decision making responsibility and implementation responsibility for operations, systems, and service planning
  - With input from the MPO, DOT, and the Municipalities
    - Although one thinks that no input is required
  - And that the Transit Operator should be responsible for communications to the MPO, DOT, and the Municipalities
    - And 4 respondents think that communications should also go to the public and other stakeholders
- 4 respondents think decision making should be shared with municipalities and 3 of these respondents think responsibility should be shared also with the MPO
- 3 respondents think that implementation should be shared in limited instances with the municipalities and/or the MPO

## *Clarifications and Comments*

### **Highlights**

- Orono
  - Would like more input into how financial decisions are being made
  - Example: Recent CARES funding
  - Would also like input on capital planning
    - Especially where the municipalities are being asked to put up match for grants
    - This would help the municipalities plan better



- This would help with stability
- Brewer
  - It would be better to have a bigger role
  - A more formal input channel
  - Our residents are demanding accountability
- Orono
  - We want to be able to better allocate resources to support things that Community Connector wants to do
  - We could more actively plan for and support Community Connector activities
- Hampden
  - Agree with what has been said
  - Thanks to Community Connector
  - We need to do 5-10-year capital planning
- From the City of Bangor's perspective, it will be challenging to find time and resources to ramp up communications and collaboration
- Clarified that there is not currently a Board that governs Community Connector
  - There is a BACTS transit committee, but it only meets quarterly and doesn't have decision making authority
- Perhaps the model in Saco-Biddeford seems to be a good example
  - They meet monthly
  - Get updates
  - They approve the yearly budget
- The MPO can help with administrative burden
  - We receive funding for transportation planning and could use some of that money for planning and administration of Community Connector
- CARES Act Example
  - Getting input could have been done by BACTS
- Clarified the MPO staff does not make any decisions but always gives recommendations to the BACTS Policy Committee
- Let's find out how other transit agencies do this

## Details

Craig pointed out that this is a collaborative group – even though certain organizations hold different levels of decision-making responsibility.

He noted that there are subtleties and some differing in the results, but overall – the general sense among respondents is that BACTS should have lead decision-making responsibility for planning and that Community Connector should have lead decision-making authority for implementing.

Craig asked for reactions or questions to his summary.

### Reactions

- Curious about digging into this more. Wanting to understand what the group wants and what they are not getting right now in regards to running the transit system.
  - Are we actually doing these things? Do we have gaps in communication and policy making?
  - Are there things that should be being done differently than they are now?
    - Orono would like to have more input to how financial decisions are made. For example, the CARES funding went directly to the City of Bangor and there was no outreach to other partners about the use of these funds. We would like an opportunity to provide our input.
      - Craig noted that in this example, there is not a question of authority, but instead a request to be able to give more input.
    - Another example is capital planning. Municipalities often have to match grants (the city has done a good job trying to find match funds), but it feels like we are not always looking at long-term capital plans, but instead are making short term decisions based on the grants available. We would like more stability in terms of long-term planning.
    - Brewer agrees with the points made by Orono. It's not that the system is not working right now. But if the municipalities had more input or a formal advisory on when fiscal decisions are being made. This will help us plan better and have more stability.
  - Craig asked why this was so important?
    - People want to have a say in how funds are handled. Our residents want to have more knowledge or advisory on how their money is being spent.
    - We are going in to a tough time financially, and we will not be able to fund everything that we want to. Residents will ask questions and there is accountability.
    - The town needs to better allocate resources so that they can be prepared for times that they are needed to match funds. We need a more proactive flow of information. A larger more comprehensive plan. A more consistent flow of communication. This would help us be more supportive of the Community Connector and support the things that they want to do. This would help us have the funds available.
    - Agree with what has been said, and want to thank Community Connector for all of their hard work. I have been asked to make a long-term plan. 5-10-year Capital Planning. Need more advance notice about what Community Connector has planned, to inform this plan.

Craig then asked the City of Bangor and Community Connector if there are any downsides to providing more advanced and formalized communications and channels for input to the municipalities?

### Responses

- Don't think there is a down side, but I'm unsure how to provide all of this information consistently all of the time. We are often reacting to what is occurring in the community – so future planning can be hard. It just comes down to time – to be able to provide these things. I understand how the partners may feel like they get last minute information. It is helpful for me to hear this feedback, and it has been heard before. Partners want to know more, and in a timely fashion. It is hard for us to figure out how to do these two things.
  - Craig pointed out that collaboration is hard, it takes time and it takes resources.

Craig then asked, if we could design a way for the municipalities to have more input and a more formalized communication channel, would the City of Bangor be open to this?

### Responses

- Is there a board for Community Connector that meets regularly?
  - No, it's a municipal partners meeting hosted by BACTS in regards to transit. This occurs on a quarterly basis, originally was on a monthly basis
  - Craig points out that this group is not a governing board and is not solely responsible for Community Connector. Not a recognized decision making board by MPO.
  - Craig asked if this is a feasible request to have more communications and input in a formalized way? Cueing to the Saco/Biddeford model.
  - Craig asked how does the voting work in this model? Does each municipality get one vote?
    - Unsure, have not looked at bylaws in a long time, but they are the oversight board.

Craig asked the group for other suggestions of how to meet the needs of both the municipalities and the City of Bangor?

### Reponses

- The MPO is aligned to provide this type of assistance. We receive a large sum of funding each year and have in house staff that could provide more of this support.
- One caveat to this is that “we don't know, what we don't know” – so we would need information directly from the Community Connector and could disseminate this information.
- The MPO is an untapped resource.
- It all boils down to a gap in communication. Community Connector working with BACTS could help fill this gap.

- Example, CARES funding – could have been better communicated to BACTS and therefore municipal partners to compile input and gather information for the Community Connector to have. Even if this feedback is not implemented, it could make municipal partners feel like they are engaged.
- Clarifying role of MPO staff, does not make any decisions – instead provides options to the policy committee. When we ask questions, it is to develop these options and provide a clearer picture to the policy committee.
- In favor of not reinventing the wheel. What are other public transit systems doing? What are the pros and cons to these different systems? This could help us decide what we should do.
  - Biddeford/Saco appears to be an independent organization. We have the challenge that the Community Connector is a City of Bangor department. I appreciate Bangor’s position, but other municipalities want to have input too. Because it is a city department – on one hand the city should be able to determine how it operates, but on the other hand the other partner communities should have a say on where their dollars are being spent.

## Options for Going Forward

Based on everything discussed so far, Craig summarized that there seemed to be 5 different potential ways to go forward. He noted that the group was not concluding any of these.

### *Top Options in Brief*

1. Community Connector becomes an independent organization with a board that has representatives from all municipalities
2. Community Connector relies heavily on BACTS to gather input
  - a. Perhaps this is a short-term or “bridge” solution (low hanging fruit)
  - b. For this to happen, BACTS will need better access to information from Community Connector
    - i. This has been a challenge in the past
3. BACTS becomes the Community Connector Oversight agency
  - a. One idea: BACTS could establish a transit sub-committee
  - b. A sub-committee could also cover other transit providers too
4. Create a transit district
  - a. Like METRO in Portland and/or other models and other forms
  - b. Established in state statute
    - i. Even the membership position needs legislative authority

- c. Municipalities appoint representatives
  - d. Votes are distributed (roughly) according to population
5. Let's learn more
- a. What
    - i. About how other systems work
    - ii. About costs
      - 1. How much the City of Bangor is currently providing?
      - 2. Increased costs and benefits of a new system
    - iii. Pros and cons of each of the above-named options
  - b. How
    - i. Engage professionals to do a study
    - ii. Concerns raised about the costs of such a study
      - 1. BACTS, in collaboration with DOT, could support such a study
        - a. Perhaps with some match from municipalities
          - i. Clarified that municipal budgets are pretty much locked in for the current year

## *Discussion of Options*

Craig then asked if these options were all on the table, or did they need to be changed? Were they all worth looking at?

Craig also noted that Option "3" was his idea, not said by anyone or discussed with anyone before the meeting, although the idea seems like a logical extension of opinions expressed.

### Reactions

- Any of these options are viable IF
  - A new option results in the continuing growth of transit in the region and improved quality of life for area residents
  - It's more cost effective than the current option
    - This could be a challenge because currently, the City of Bangor absorbs costs
- Discussion of governing body – role of BACTS policy committee, want to be clear that we would need to look into pros and cons of different types of committee structures.
- These are all viable options, as we want to see growth in the transit and connectivity. These options could be a catalyst to this, but we would need to look in to legality and best practices for our area. These could be viable if the new system results in things being better for the residents of the area.
- Agree that these options are viable, but they all probably come with a cost. So, we would need to examine cost effectiveness and financial feasibility.

- Right now, the city absorbs some of these costs. Such as legal counsel and other services.
- Services provided that we provide right now are probably more cost effective than having someone else run it, although having another organization run it with additional cost may be worth it if it provides better results and better transit. It is a tough balance between fitting our needs and fitting our checkbooks.
- Observations, in general this options list reads a little like a scope for a study. Could BACTS fund a study done by an independent organization to assess these questions? We would need to have strong professional opinions and results from a study to take to each of our municipalities and their councils.
  - Maybe BACTS takes a more proactive role in communicating with members, and the City of Bangor takes a more active role in funneling information? It could be this simple of a solution.
  - Or, we could do a larger study to grow the system and make it more valuable.
- Another option is creating a transit district – which is allowed under state law. An example of this is metro in Portland.
  - Craig asked for more information about how this might work?
    - Multiple municipalities can decide to create a transportation district under this law, not certain of all of the details about establishing this.
    - Metro is legislatively mandated. When municipalities join, they have to be approved at the state level.
      - It has a board of directors, where number of votes are based on level of service
- If we had professional help come in to do a study, there are some things that could happen in the meantime, such as increased communication to the municipalities.
- If we had a transit subcommittee, it could be a good venue for getting things done collaboratively.
- The only way for BACTS to play a larger role, is that we must be provided information by Community Connector. We can't make the information up, it must be provided to us. Can only play this role, as well as we are supported by Community Connector.
  - In the past we have asked for information to provide to members, and have received delayed or incomplete information.
  - BACTS could be better about being more thoughtful and intentional about what information we are asking for, but the information that we receive needs to be more complete. This hasn't always happened.

Craig noted that there were about 20 minutes left in Session ONE. He asked what kind of proposal did the group want to see for the afternoon? He asked the group to guide him and add any refinements. He asked if the group had concerns about the direction they were heading?

## Reactions

- Concerned about the extent and cost of this potential study. Don't want us to commit to something we cannot fund. Have seen this happen before.
  - Noting that BACTS does have some resources that could go towards the study. Such as staff time and providing other support. Could work with the State DOT as well.
  - Craig asked, if the municipalities would have to contribute to fund such a study? Or could BACTS and the Maine DOT support it?
    - There may be an in-kind match, or a monetary match – but not a lot.
  - Are there other options to look at for districts other than Portland Metro?
  - This proposal is not something that we are coming to terms with today, it is something that we will look at and determine later what we move forward with – after more future dialogue.
    - Correct, we are not here to decide as a group on any particular proposal. We are working to get consensus that then translates into formal decision making in future sessions.
      - On June 25, those of us gathered thought that these were good ideas.
  - Will the proposal include next steps? Both near-term and long-term?
    - This will be the focus of Session TWO of today's meeting.

Craig asked if anyone who had not contributed yet would like to add anything? He noted that they wanted to have a real positive consensus from everybody.

## Comments

- Would want more detail before getting into the “internal weeds on this.”
- Craig asked the group to speak now, otherwise it appeared that we were all onboard with the general direction.

## Conclusions

Craig began the afternoon session by welcoming everyone back and stating that the purpose of the afternoon was to come to conclusions about roles and responsibilities. Craig then initiated a discussion about some conclusions he drafted over the break, based on the morning discussion. Results of that discussion are as follows.

## *Commission a Study*

**There was general agreement with the following words that everyone reviewed on the screen:**

Commission a study to evaluate the current system, explore relevant best practices, and make recommendations for how to improve the planning and governance of regional transit.

Evaluation will cover:

- Current and potential institutional arrangements for how Community Connector is governed and managed
- Current and potential roles of the MPO in planning and governance of regional transit
- Current and potential ways in which other transit providers could be better supported

Exploration will include looking at:

- Other regional transit systems in Maine and elsewhere that are relevant to our situation
- The pros and cons for establishing a regional transit district

Recommendations will to aim to:

- Improve administration (including looking at results of the previous study) and potentially expand the regional transit system and improve quality of life for residents of the region
- Improve formal mechanisms for contributing municipalities and entities to influence planning and policy decisions. This will:
  - Help municipalities with their own capital planning
  - Help communities better contribute via match and other means to regional transit
  - Provide greater accountability to municipal residents which is being demanded in return for financial contributions
- Improve cost effectiveness of delivering regional transit

Recommendations may include, but need not be limited to, one or more of the following:

- Maintain institutional arrangements as they are
- Community Connector becomes an independent organization (no longer exclusively under the City of Bangor) with a board that has representatives from all municipalities
- BACTS (the regional MPO) becomes the Community Connector oversight agency
  - BACTS could establish a transit sub-committee that oversees Community Connector (and perhaps other transit providers/programs)



- Establish a state sanctioned Transit District to govern and manage Community Connector (and perhaps other regional transit providers/programs)

The study will be supported by funding and staff resources from BACTS and MDOT and perhaps match contributions from municipalities if needed (perhaps from CARES Act if available).

Designing the study, selecting contractors, and overseeing the work of the study will be done by the BACTS Policy Committee.

Between now and when study recommendations are implemented, BACTS will coordinate with Community Connector to communicate to municipalities and gather input from municipalities regarding the planning and activities of Community Connector.

### *Improve Short Term Communications*

We focused discussion on how to improve communications in the short term, before the study is completed and/or recommendations are acted on. Following are highlights of that conversation as jotted on the screen by Craig.

- We should not continue municipal partnership meetings the way they are, where people feel on the spot or don't have adequate information
- Expectations of municipalities have been different from what Bangor has been able to provide
  - We (municipalities) have had to rely on BACTS
- Municipalities, if there is information you need: call or email Rich
  - He will do his best but it's confusing and the City doesn't have optimal reporting software
  - Rich wants to hear from municipal partners directly
- BACTS can help with FTA jargon and simplifying complex information
- BACTS and Community Connector staff need to commit to communicate better with each other
  - We need to establish consistent formats for conveying information
- When municipalities are not happy with information they are receiving, BACTS and Community Connector need to be unified and not blame each other
- It would be good if municipal partners could receive regular (quarterly) basic information
  - What
    - Ridership
    - Expenses
    - Recent activities

- Future plans
  - How
    - In whatever way Community Connector and the City of Bangor decides is best
    - Rich would like to work with a small group to design a standard report
- Concern that some municipal officials are very involved in transit policy but not on the BACTS Policy Committee
  - We need to be mindful of that
- The Community Connector capital plan should be workshopped with the municipal partners
- The City of Bangor needs to better understand what level the municipal partners want to be involved
- We really appreciate all that the City of Bangor does, and we don't want to get involved in the details of Community Connector, but we have been asking for simple things for two years, such as the following:
  - Why we are getting charged what we are getting charged
  - Advance notice of increases
  - Plans for future route stops
  - Technology

### *Discussion of the Study and How to Improve Communications*

- The study should focus on how transit system is administered, versus the system itself. We would not need to analyze the current system, but rather how it is administered.
  - Agree – it is more about how we administer it, but that needs to lead to conclusions about change and an end result that allows for the system to expand at some point.
  - In the back of our mind, if we change how we run this, it needs to cater to potential expansion in the future that would increase connectivity.
- We need to best implement the studies that we have already had done. There are many recommendations in these previously conducted studies. We often get bogged down in the details. It would be great to leave the institutional arrangements the same, but improve the implementation of these recommendations.
  - Agree – it is about implementing the studies that we already have, to improve and enhance the system.
    - The previous studies should be foundational to this potential new study.
- In regards to the transit district piece, wanting to be sensitive to the language we use because we have a community action program that does a lot more than transportation.

- Focus on transit agencies that receive funding in the urbanized areas – and their administration.
- There is a connection between what the Community Connector does and other agencies, but we don't want to lump the other organizations in.
- Funding, it is important to note that when we are looking at how this is going to be funded, is there any CARES Act funding remaining? If we used those funds, it would reduce the burden on local municipalities.
- Transit grouping and potential sub committees. In the future there may be more than one transit provider in the area, do we need to consider this?
  - Craig states that the document allows for the possibility of exploring these other things too.
- We need to dig down into what coordinate means. Because this is the part that is going to happen now and the next few months. We need to focus on this.
- Craig asked the group that if they could write these next steps what would they be?
  - Don't want to continue with quarterly meetings where people feel put on the spot, or feel like they are lacking information to have meaningful conversations. If BACTS is going to be the conduit of information, we need to be clear on what that means and what it doesn't mean.
- How can BACTS be more helpful in the interim?
  - Expectations on the municipality side for what information we would be provided has not been met by the City of Bangor. We have relied on BACTS to carry our message of what we are looking for. For example, a financial report that the municipalities want, but may take additional work from the City. We need to determine how to get the information that the municipalities need without putting a burden on the City.
  - Municipalities could reach out to the City of Bangor, with a phone call or direct communication to express what information that they do need before we hold our meetings. There is a challenge because we don't have reporting systems and software, and also because often things are not simple answers. There are often multi-layer questions at the meetings that require multiple layer answers.
    - Noting that people have been frustrated, but that the City would benefit from a direct expression of what municipalities need (through a phone call).
  - Appreciate that the jargon is not easy to understand or weed through, this is something that BACTS can help with. We can pull out key parts that will help people make decisions.
  - If we are going to move forward with this interim plan, we need a plan for how information will be communicated. Once we have this format, it will be easier. People will know what to look for.
    - Example: changing format of agendas at BACTS for staff reports
    - This will take some back and forth between organizations
    - Craig noted that BACTS thinks that this coordinated effort could work, and that there is optimism around it.

- How should the chain of information operate? Call Richard? Call BACTS? Looking for clarity on this.
  - We are relying on BACTS to carry our message to Bangor. A single point of contact. Does the city want a different mode of communication? It could be easier if BACTS collected information from all four municipalities and then disseminated this to the City of Bangor.
  - Responsibilities in regards to transit differ among the organizations. We were trying to send the information to the organizations that had the largest focus on transit (Community Connector and BACTS).
  - Rich has asked BACTS to have the municipalities directly contact him.
    - And feels like they have not been, so he assumed no one was reaching out.
- If this is going to be a partnership – Community Connector and BACTS needs to be working together as a team in this effort. So, we can avoid the frustration of information not getting to the right people.
- If municipalities could receive some basic information on a regular basis (whatever seems reasonable, quarterly?). Such as ridership information and a report on expenses. This would help us understand where expenses are. Providing a general summary in this manner would help municipalities to feel informed and would answer a lot of our questions.
  - Craig asked who would be responsible for this type of report?
    - Community Connector could use BACTS as a resource to provide this report
    - There could be meetings with municipal partners quarterly
    - Resources are tight, so what would be the best use of Community Connectors time?
    - Agree, working on a periodic report would be a logical thing to do and would help the municipalities to stay up to date
- The contact person “in charge” will be based on what the study develops.
- Caution about certain positions that are involved in transit, but are not part of the BACTS policy committee. Example: Town Finance Chairs

Craig stated that he heard general agreement that the municipalities and the City of Bangor do want to work together to improve communications. He noted that the current proposal does not focus on involving municipalities in future planning in a major way. He asked if this was okay?

### Reactions

- The way the system is set up currently, has had issues with municipalities being informed on the status of Capital Plans and other long-term planning. If we got quarterly updates on these plans, we would have a better idea along the way.
- Municipalities feel like they can sometimes provide feedback, but then there have not been status updates.

- What are the groups thoughts about Capital Planning? Why is this not workshopped with the entire municipal partnership group? Why is this not part of this committees' work?
  - The Community Connector Capital Plan should be workshopped with the municipal partners.
    - Why haven't municipal partners been involved?
      - Glad we are having this discussion now, but it would have been helpful to hear this feedback before.
      - City of Bangor needs to better understand the level of involvement that municipal partners want to have.
      - It is hard to look at dual roles – the details that the City/Community Connector has to handle.
      - If municipalities want greater input, express that.
- Appreciate all that the City of Bangor does, we know this is a monumental task. Don't have desire to get involved with the daily operations, but do want simple things like “how much we need to budget” – this has caused issues when we pay based on estimates and then get hit with a larger sum. We need to understand why and what we are being charged, and for it to be consistent.
  - Have a project in my community to plot the stops for the Community Connector, but this keeps getting put off because of other priorities like marketing the Community Connector.
  - Want to figure out how the towns can interact in a way that is not a fight, it feels like a fight right now.

## Closing Comments

Craig offered a chance for each person to make a closing comment; such as something they learned or were hopeful about. He added that there would also be a post-meeting survey where members of the group could express their evaluation of the meeting.

Closing comments were as follows:

- In general, we are quite happy with the bus service and how it is provided. The budget estimate is a challenge. If we could get these numbers earlier in the year it would be critical.
- Appreciate everyone's input. There is always room for improvement. Looking forward to long-term improvements. Thank you!
- Make sure that everyone understands that the town of Orono appreciates the Community Connector and the City of Bangor. Hope that we can make our meetings more efficient and allow for better flow for communications. Hope that BACTS can help alleviate the pressure from the City.
- Thank you, Craig. Hope these communication lines can stay open.

- Thank you everyone for attending and for your comments.
- Thank you for including Maine DOT. We are always here to help.
- Thank you, Community Connector. The more input the municipalities have the better. And increased communications around budget is especially helpful.
- Appreciate the healthy discussion. We can move forward right away with things that will help us all.
- Thank you, City of Bangor, for coming to the table for this productive conversation. We hope that BACTS can become a resource as municipal budgets continue to tighten.
- I feel encouraged by this conversation and discussion. We have work to do and we are committed to this work. Thanks for participating in a Zoom Workshop. And thank you Craig.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00pm.