



Transit Together Study

State of Regional Transit Part 2: Existing Service

September 2022

GPCOG
GREATER PORTLAND
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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1 INTRODUCTION

TRANSIT TOGETHER

In early 2021, the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) completed *Transit Tomorrow*, a 30-year strategic transit plan for the region. *Transit Tomorrow* outlines a four-part strategy to achieve its vision:

- Making transit **easier** for riders
- Creating **frequent** connections
- Investing in **rapid** transit
- Creating **transit-friendly places**

Transit Together is a follow-up GPCOG study to identify opportunities for increased coordination and integration in the region's transit network to improve efficiency and cultivate a cohesive and integrated system. It will apply the vision and goals of *Transit Tomorrow* by designing a transit network that is more easily shared, understood, and used by riders, and that improves region-wide mobility.

This Existing Service Report is one of three parts of the *Transit Together State of Regional Transit* report.

- **Part 1 – Market Analysis:** This document assesses transit demand in the Greater Portland region.
- **Part 2 – Existing Service:** This document describes the current condition of the regional transit system.
- **Part 3 – Regional Service Delivery and Coordination:** This document describes the individual transit agencies in the Greater Portland region, their past and ongoing coordination efforts, and common challenges and opportunities.



THE EXISTING SERVICE REPORT

The purpose of this Existing Service Report is to document the transit service currently provided in the Greater Portland region and these services' performance. This information is important context for service planning recommendations that will be made later in the Transit Together study. The Existing Service Report has three chapters:

- **System Characteristics:** Describes the transit service currently provided in the study area, including what service is operated, who operates it, and when and where it operates.
- **Ridership:** Documents transit ridership and productivity at the route and service level, for fixed-route and demand-response service.
- **Passenger Facilities:** Documents the key passenger facilities currently serving the regional transit network.

KEY FINDINGS

This Existing Service Report produces several key findings that will inform service planning performed as part of the Transit Together study.

System Characteristics

- There are seven transit agencies in the Transit Together study and at least four additional private transit providers not included in the study.
- There are four primary transit hubs in the study area: the PULSE, Casco Bay Ferry Terminal, Portland Transportation Center, and Saco Transportation Center. There are three additional secondary transfer points: the Mill Creek Transit Hub, the Westbrook Hub, and the Maine Mall.
- Study agencies operate several service types in the region: local bus, express bus, deviated fixed-route bus, passenger rail, passenger/freight/vehicle ferry, and demand-response service.
- Service in the Greater Portland region is mostly infrequent; the most frequent service is concentrated in Portland and the municipalities immediately surrounding it. Some routes have headways of two hours or more.
- The span of service available on fixed routes is robust, with most bus service operating until about 10:00 p.m.
- METRO and NNEPRA are the only study agencies to collect on-time performance (OTP) data. Neither the Downeaster nor any METRO routes meet their OTP targets.



- There are nearly 1,000 bus stops in the Greater Portland region, about 25 of which are served by multiple agencies. The quality of these stops varies dramatically.

Ridership

- Ridership on regional transit services in summer 2021 was 34% lower than pre-pandemic levels.
- There are several corridors in the study area with relatively high transit ridership. In Portland, these corridors are Brighton Avenue (which becomes Main Street in Westbrook), Forest Avenue, Congress Street, Washington Avenue, and Stevens Avenue. In South Portland, Broadway also has relatively high ridership. In Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach, these corridors are Alfred Street (Route 111) and Ocean Park Road/Saco Avenue (Route 5). Several of these corridors were identified in Transit Tomorrow as potential future rapid transit corridors.
- The Downeaster and Casco Bay Lines (CBL) are the most productive services in Greater Portland. Among local bus routes, those that serve several key destinations are the most productive, such as METRO routes 9A/9B, Husky Line, and 5. The least productive routes are long-distance express services or those that are indirect and/or infrequent, such as BSOOB Transit Route 50 Orange/51 Black.
- Transit ridership in the study area is highly seasonal for some agencies, especially Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach (BSOOB) Transit and CBL, which see 300% to 400% increases in summer tourist ridership.

Passenger Facilities

- There are six key passenger facilities in the region: The PULSE, the Portland Transportation Center, the Saco Transportation Center, the Casco Bay Ferry Terminal, the Westbrook Hub, and the Mill Creek Transit Hub.
- Rail-to-ferry connections in Portland are difficult to make by transit, and the current Portland Transportation Center is not located near major transit trip generators.
- South Portland Bus Service (SPBS) and BSOOB Transit do not serve the Portland Transportation Center.
- Intercity bus service is disconnected from most major transit facilities in the Greater Portland area.

Note: This document discusses 'transit' at large but is generally focused on bus transit. The Greater Portland region's ferry and rail services, while critical, are inherently different from bus transit and should be considered as such.



2 SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter of the report describes the basic characteristics of transit in the Greater Portland region. It explains who operates transit, where it operates, what types of transit are available, and when and how often fixed routes are available.

TRANSIT OPERATORS

Greater Portland is served by seven primary public transit providers operating bus, rail, and ferry service:



BSOOB Transit: Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach (BSOOB) Transit operates fixed-route bus service in its namesake member communities, and some service connecting with Scarborough, South Portland, and Portland. In the summer, BSOOB Transit operates tourist trolley service in and around Old Orchard Beach.



CBL: The Casco Bay Island Transit District, which is also known as Casco Bay Lines (CBL), operates year-round scheduled passenger, vehicle, and freight ferry service between Portland and six Casco Bay islands.



METRO: The Greater Portland Transit District operates fixed-route bus service in the Greater Portland region.



NNEPRA: The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) oversees Amtrak Downeaster service, which operates between Brunswick and Boston, with five stations in the study area.



RTP: The Regional Transportation Program (RTP) provides demand-response service in Cumberland County and operates a deviated fixed-route bus connecting the Lakes Region and Portland. RTP provides paratransit for METRO and SPBS.

SPBS: South Portland Bus Service (SPBS) operates fixed-route service in South Portland, with connections to Portland and Scarborough.

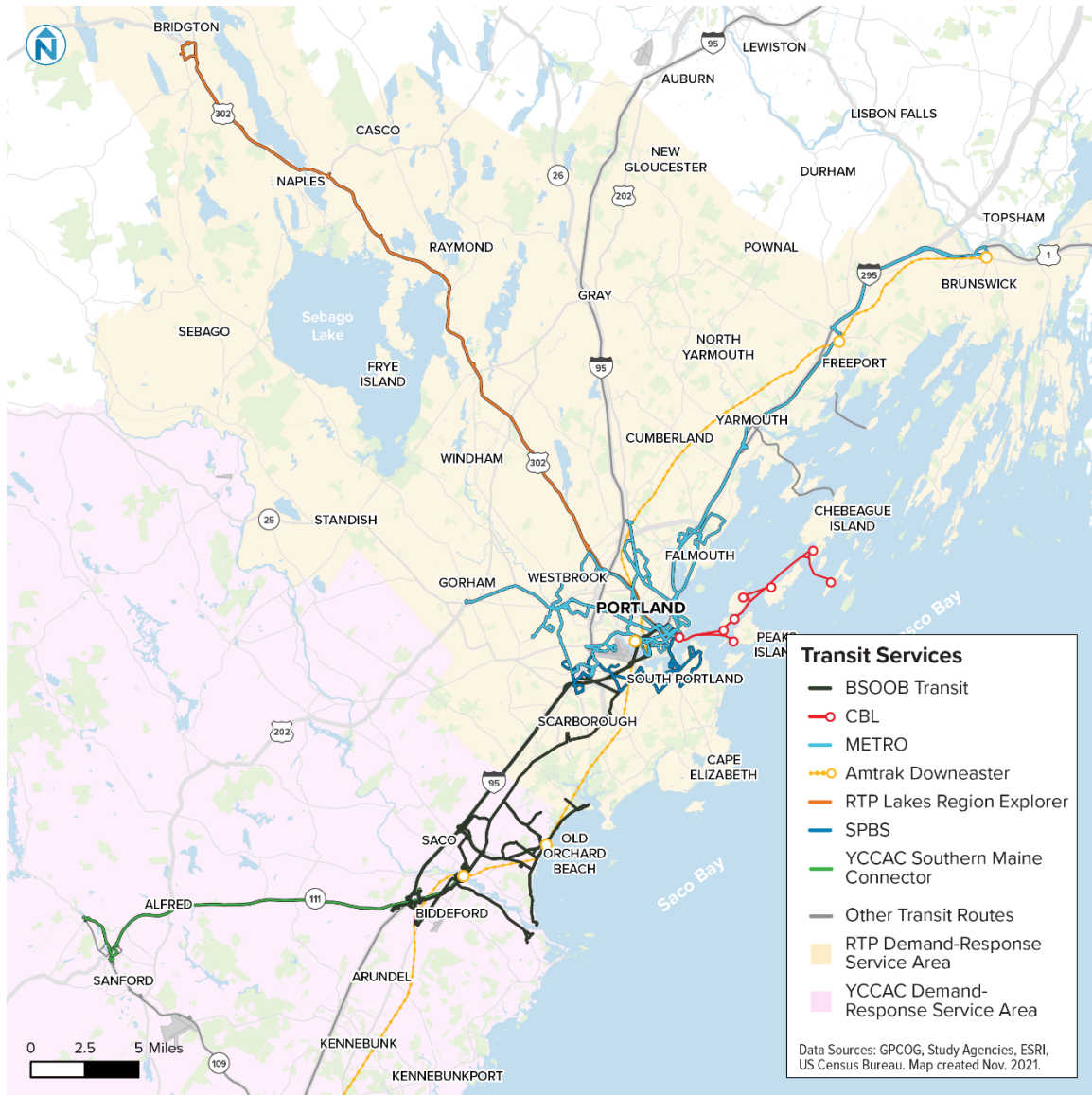
YCCAC: York County Community Action Corporation (YCCAC) is a social service agency providing accessible on-demand services and deviated fixed-routes, including the Southern Maine Connector route connecting Sanford and Biddeford-Saco.

SERVICE AREA

The Transit Together study area includes Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS) member communities, as well as communities served by fixed-route bus or ferry service with at least one stop in a PACTS member community (Figure 2-1). This study area includes all of Cumberland County and some of York County.



Figure 2-1 Map of Transit Services Operated in Greater Portland Region





Portland is home to the most transit in the Greater Portland region; all the study agencies, except for YCCAC, operate at least some service within Portland's municipal boundaries (Figure 2-2). Three of the primary transit hubs in the study area are in Portland, and one is in Saco:

- **Downtown Transportation Center/PULSE:** This is the downtown Portland hub for fixed-route bus service in Greater Portland. Together with nearby stops on Congress Street, the PULSE is served by BSOOB Transit, METRO, RTP, and SPBS fixed routes.
- **Casco Bay Ferry Terminal:** This is the hub for ferry service in Casco Bay. It is served by CBL ferries and METRO Route 8.
- **Portland Transportation Center:** This is the hub for rail and intercity bus service in Portland. It is served by the Downeaster, two METRO bus routes, and Concord Coach Lines.
- **Saco Transportation Center:** This is the transportation hub for the Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach area. It is served by the Downeaster, BSOOB Transit, and YCCAC Southern Maine Connector.



Figure 2-2 Map of Transit Services Operated in Greater Portland Area

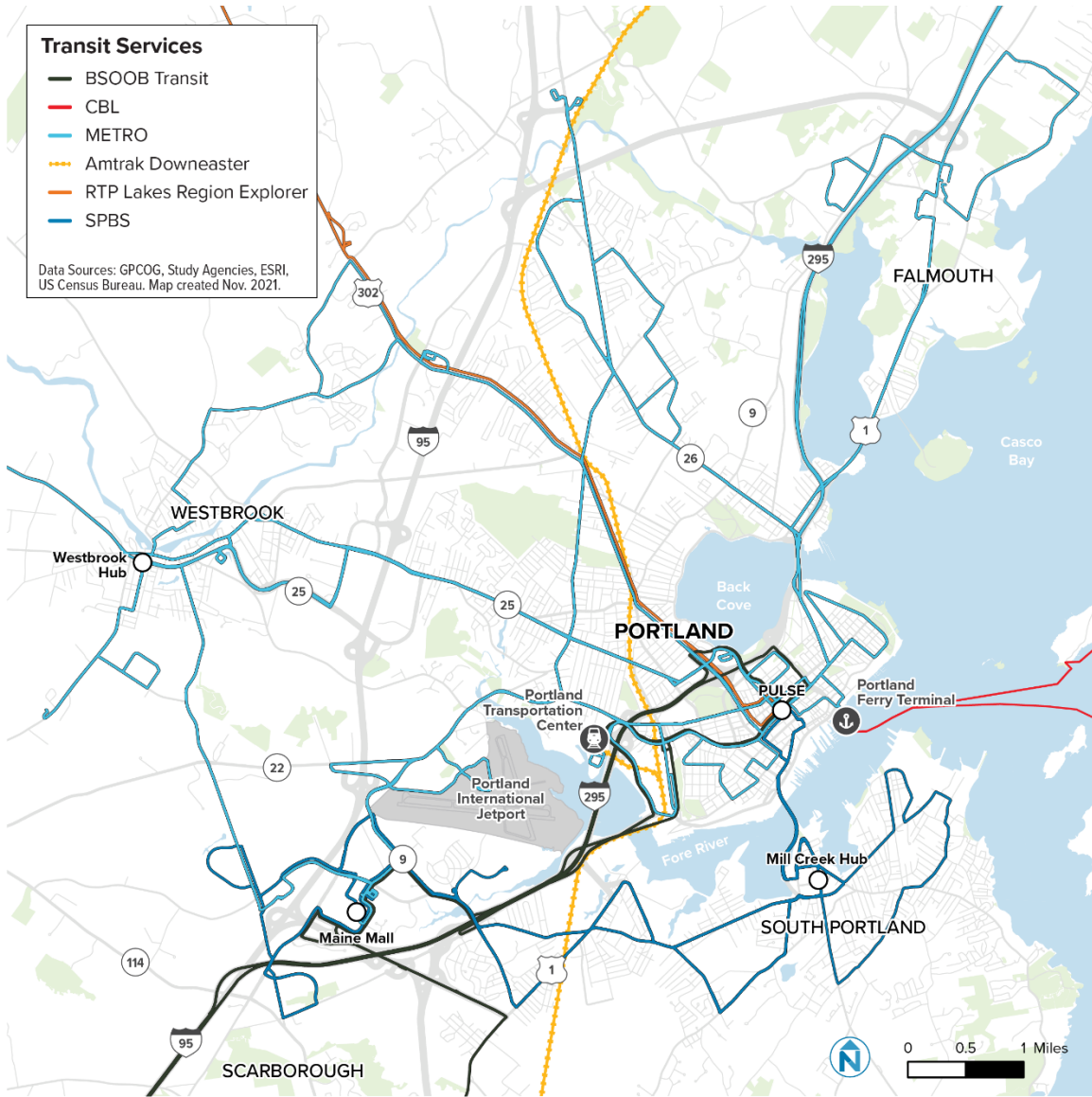




Figure 2-3 Map of Transit Services Operated in Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach





SERVICE TYPES

The seven study agencies and the four primary modes of transportation they provide are in Figure 2-4 and described below.

Figure 2-4 Transit Agencies and Services Operated in Greater Portland

	Agency	Bus	Demand Response	Ferry	Rail
Study agencies	BSOOB Transit	✓			
	Casco Bay Lines			✓	
	METRO	✓			
	NNEPRA (Downeaster)				✓
	Regional Transportation Program	✓	✓		
	South Portland Bus Service	✓			
	YCCAC	✓	✓		

Bus

Five of the seven study agencies operate bus service. This service can be separated into three categories: local bus, express bus, and deviated fixed-route bus.

Local Bus

- **BSOOB Transit** operates four local fixed routes, seven days a week. These routes serve Biddeford, Old Orchard Beach, Saco, Scarborough, South Portland, and Portland.¹
 - BSOOB Transit also operates four seasonal trolley routes, all providing weekday and weekend service. These routes serve Old Orchard Beach, Scarborough, and Saco and operate consistently from mid-June to Labor Day, with limited service during May, September, and October.
 - BSOOB Transit fixed-route buses deviate to provide ADA paratransit trips.
- **METRO** operates nine local bus routes, seven days a week. These routes serve Falmouth, Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook, with service concentrated on the Portland Peninsula.

¹ BSOOB Transit route names were recently updated to include numbers and slightly altered names. This document refers to BSOOB Transit routes by their public-facing route names and numbers as of March 2022.



- **SPBS** operates three routes on weekdays and two routes on weekends. All routes serve South Portland and downtown Portland, and two routes also provide service at and around the Scarborough Gallery shopping center.

Transfers between local bus operators can be made at:

- **The PULSE:** Transfers at or near the PULSE can be made among METRO routes 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, BREEZ, and the Husky Line, along with all SPBS routes, BSOOB Transit routes 60 and 70, and the RTP Lakes Region Explorer.
- **Maine Mall:** Transfers at the Maine Mall east entrance are possible among the BSOOB Transit Route 60, METRO routes 3 and 5, and SPBS routes 24A and 24B.

Express Bus

- **BSOOB Transit** operates Route 70 Purple/ZOOM between Biddeford-Saco and downtown Portland. This route makes 10 round trips each weekday.
- **METRO** operates two express routes:
 - The BREEZ connects Portland, Yarmouth, Freeport, and Brunswick. BREEZ runs Monday through Saturday with 14 round trips on weekdays and six round trips on Saturdays.
 - The METRO Husky Line operates as a limited-stop service connecting Portland, Westbrook, and Gorham with trips every 30 minutes during most of each weekday, as well as 45-minute service Saturday and Sunday. The route is branded as the Husky Line because it connects University of Southern Maine (USM) campuses in Gorham and Portland.

Deviated Fixed-Route Bus

- **RTP** operates the Lakes Region Explorer between Portland and Bridgton. This route stops in Naples, Casco, Raymond, Windham, and Westbrook, and deviates on request. Four trips are offered each weekday and there is seasonal Saturday service from Memorial Day to Labor Day.
- **YCCAC** operates a deviated fixed-route service called the Southern Maine Connector. This route operates between Springvale and Saco, with stops in Sanford, Alfred, and Biddeford, providing three trips each weekday. Deviations can be requested 24 hours in advance.



Rail

NNEPRA oversees the Amtrak Downeaster train, which runs from Brunswick to Boston, with Maine stops in Brunswick, Freeport, Portland, Old Orchard Beach (seasonally), Saco, and Wells. The train makes five daily round trips and operates on weekdays and weekends. As of March 2022, the Downeaster operates a one-way “Event Nite Train” from Boston to accommodate people attending major events such as concerts and sports games, with trains departing Boston’s North Station at 11:25 p.m.

The Downeaster is both a local and regional transit route. The service operates beyond the Greater Portland region, connecting 12 communities in three states along a 143-mile corridor.

Ferry

Casco Bay Lines (CBL) serves the Casco Bay islands year-round with passenger, vehicle, and freight service. Four CBL ferryboats operate from the Casco Bay Ferry Terminal on Commercial Street, providing:

- Regular passenger service to Peaks, Little Diamond, Great Diamond, Long, Chebeague, and Cliff islands.
- Regular vehicle transportation service to Peaks Island, with advanced reservation vehicle service to Great Diamond, Long, Chebeague, and Cliffs islands available.
- Routes operating weekdays and weekends, with:
 - Hourly service to Peaks Island.
 - Service every two hours or more to all other islands.
- Seasonal service to Bailey Island.²

Demand Response

Dial-a-Ride

RTP provides several demand-response services in Cumberland County’s 27 communities.

² This service has been discontinued since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



- **DHHS-sponsored service:** RTP offers several DHHS-sponsored demand-response rides, including MaineCare-based medical appointment rides, DHHS-based children and families rides, and rides for approved low-income passengers.
- **RTP Rides:** service is available to the general public, with fare discounts for seniors, low-income people, and people with disabilities. Reservations are required 48 hours in advance, except for complementary paratransit trips.
- **Shopper's Shuttle:** trips for older adults to access shopping destinations. Operates at least one weekday per week.
- **Volunteer Rides:** a volunteer-driver program where volunteers use their own vehicles to provide demand-response service and are reimbursed based on mileage.

YCCAC provides multiple demand-response services to meet the unique transportation needs of York County.

- **Connecting to Cancer:** free service for York County residents to area cancer-care facilities. Advanced reservation required.
- **Veteran's Transportation:** trips for veterans to medical and other appointments. Advanced reservation required.
- **Volunteer Rides:** contracted volunteer-driver service for children and families receiving case management from DHHS or Child Development Services. Also serves other private contracts and limited non-emergency medical transportation.
- **Wheels to Access Vocation and Education (WAVE)** connects Springvale, Sanford, Wells, and Biddeford with curb-to-curb dial-a-ride service. 24- to 48-hour advanced reservation is required.
- **Weekly Local Rides:** reservation-based service providing curb-to-curb trips to the closest regional shopping and medical centers. Only offered on Wednesday and Thursday.
 - Biddeford is only served on Wednesdays.
 - Saco and Old Orchard Beach are only served on Thursdays.

Fixed-Route Complementary Paratransit

- **BSOOB Transit** fulfills its complementary paratransit obligation by deviating fixed-route buses to destinations within 0.75 miles of its fixed routes, on request.
- **RTP** operates combined complementary paratransit service for METRO and SPBS routes. This service is called ADAPT (Americans with Disabilities Act Paratransit).



SPAN AND FREQUENCY OF SERVICE

Most weekday service in the Greater Portland region operates throughout the day, from approximately 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. (Figure 2-5). During this period, there is no transit service that consistently reaches headways of 30 minutes or fewer, although there are bursts of 15-minute service on the BSOOB Transit Route 54 circulator pattern. Several long-distance and express bus services, such as the BSOOB Transit Route 70, METRO BREEZ, and RTP Lakes Region Explorer reduce service or stop operating in the middle of the day. Several routes offer extremely infrequent service, with headways of two hours or more.

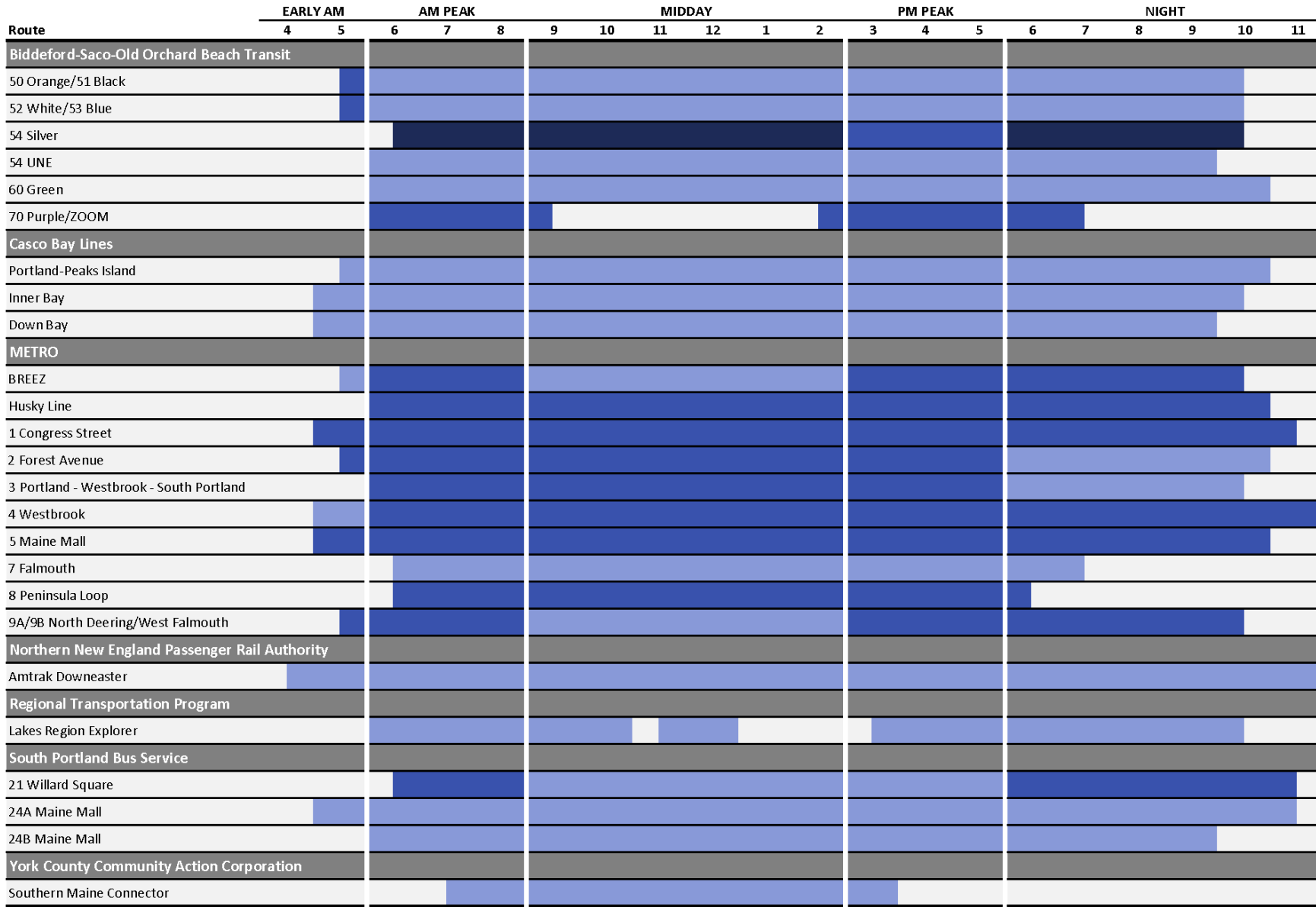
On Saturday, the span of service and frequencies for many routes decrease (Figure 2-6). Three routes do not operate at all on the weekends: BSOOB Transit Route 70, SPBS Route 24B, and the YCCAC Southern Maine Connector. On Saturdays, only the BSOOB Transit Route 54 and METRO routes 1, 4, 5, and Husky Line maintain all-day headways of under 60 minutes.

On Sunday, the span of service for most routes decreases by several hours, and frequency also decreases (Figure 2-7). Two routes that operate on weekdays and Saturdays do not operate on Sundays: METRO BREEZ and the RTP Lakes Region Explorer. On Sundays, only the BSOOB Transit Route 54, and METRO routes 4, 5, and Husky Line maintain all-day headways of under 60 minutes. There is no bus service in the Greater Portland region that operates past 8:00 p.m. on Sundays, and the earliest METRO service starts after 7:00 a.m. on Sundays.

Span and frequency of service for ferry and train service in the region are inherently different than bus service, as increasing the span of service or frequency can involve major capital expenses (e.g., a new ferry) or considerable coordination with several stakeholders (e.g., coordinating track usage among freight and passenger rail services).



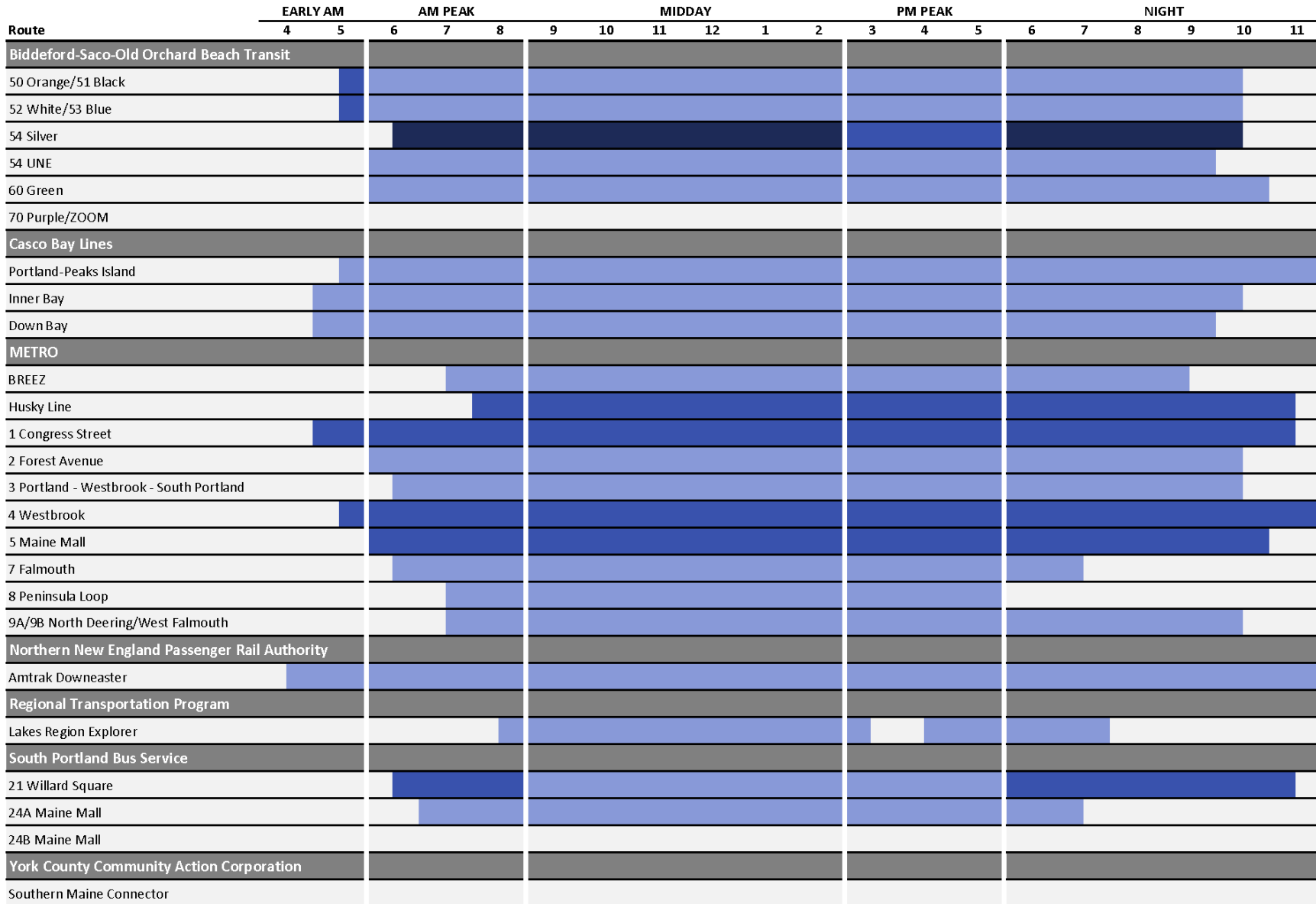
Figure 2-5 Weekday Span of Service and Frequencies for Greater Portland Region Transit Routes



< 30 mins 30-59 mins ≥ 60 mins



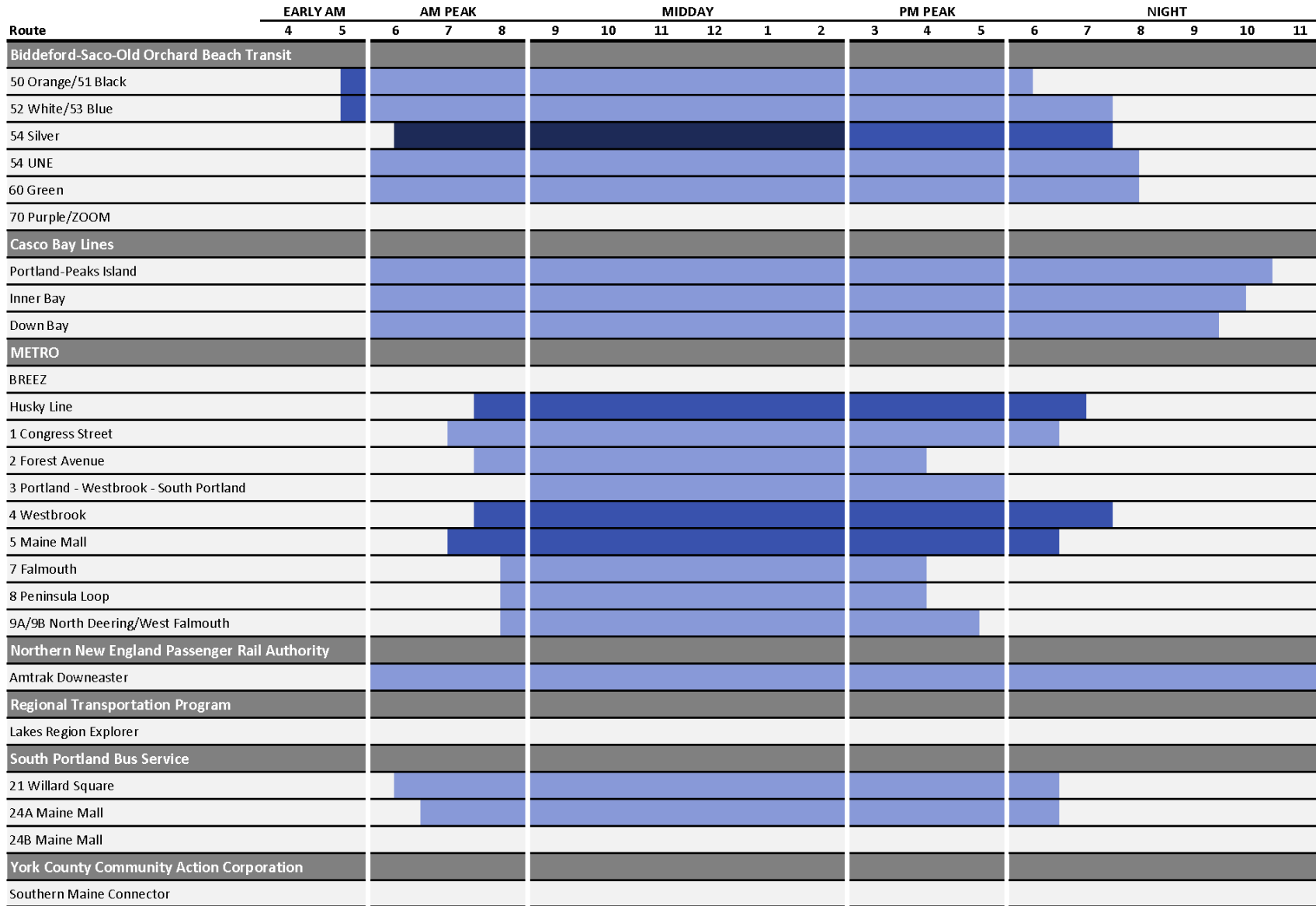
Figure 2-6 Saturday Span of Service and Frequencies for Greater Portland Region Transit Routes



< 30 mins 30-59 mins ≥ 60 mins



Figure 2-7 Sunday Span of Service and Frequencies for Greater Portland Region Transit Routes



< 30 mins 30-59 mins ≥ 60 mins





Maps in Figure 2-8 through Figure 2-11 show transit service frequency in the Greater Portland region by time period. For the most part, higher-frequency service is concentrated in the Greater Portland area. At night and on weekends, higher-frequency service is available in fewer places.

Figure 2-8 Maps of Greater Portland Region Services by Weekday Frequency, Early a.m. and a.m. Peak

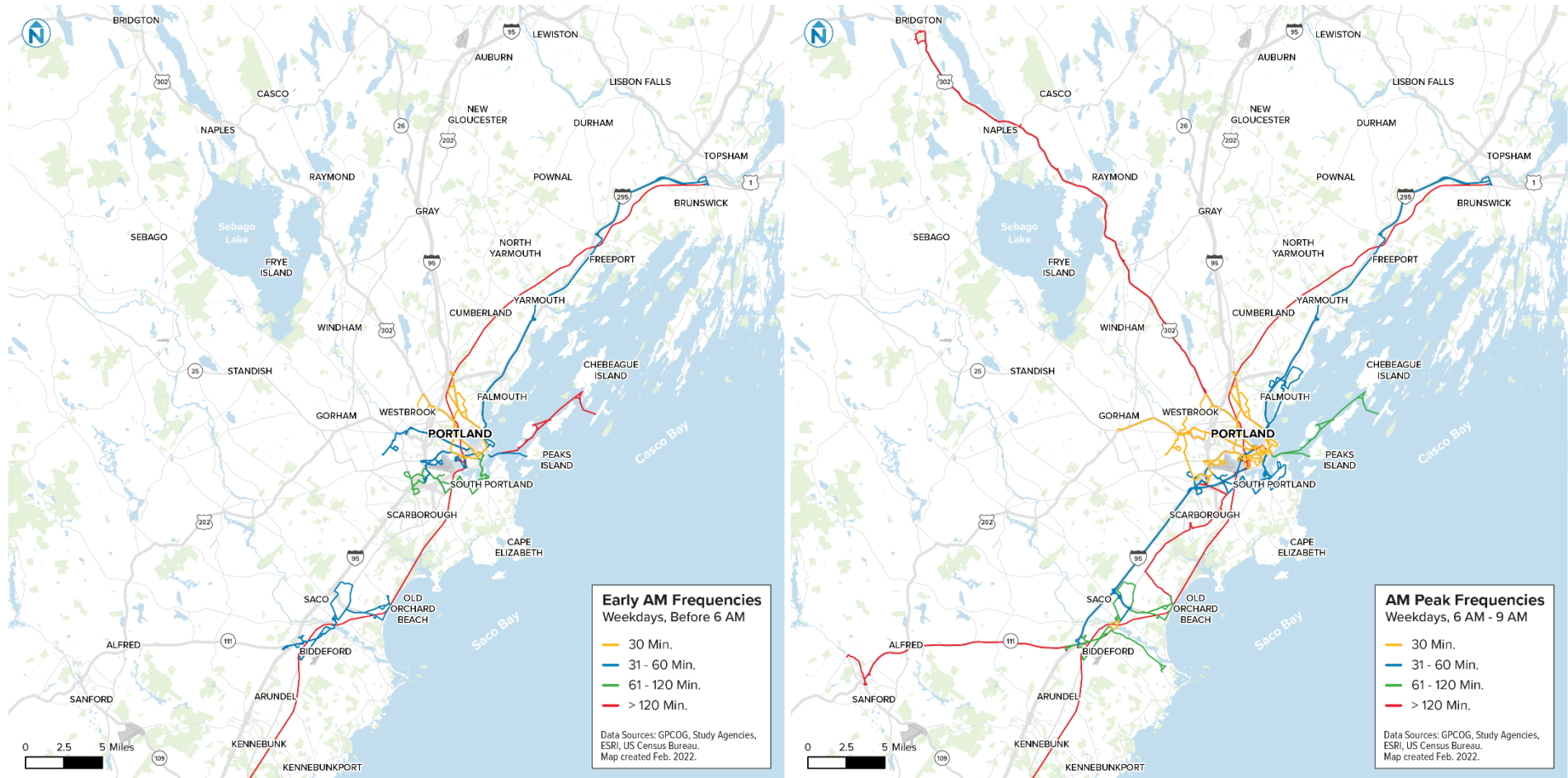




Figure 2-9 Maps of Greater Portland Region Service by Weekday Frequency, Midday and p.m. Peak

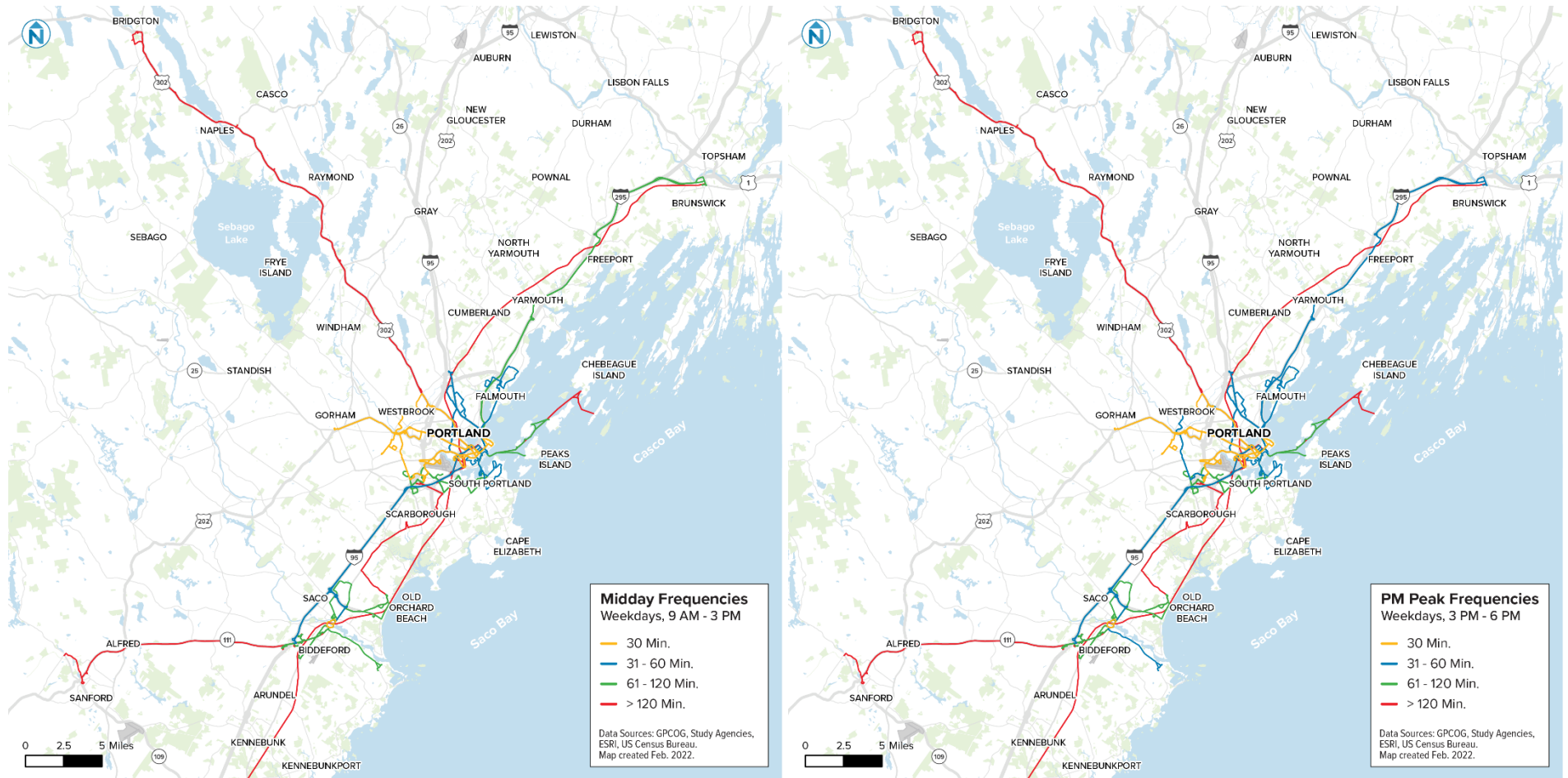




Figure 2-10 Map of Greater Portland Region Service by Weekday Frequency, Night

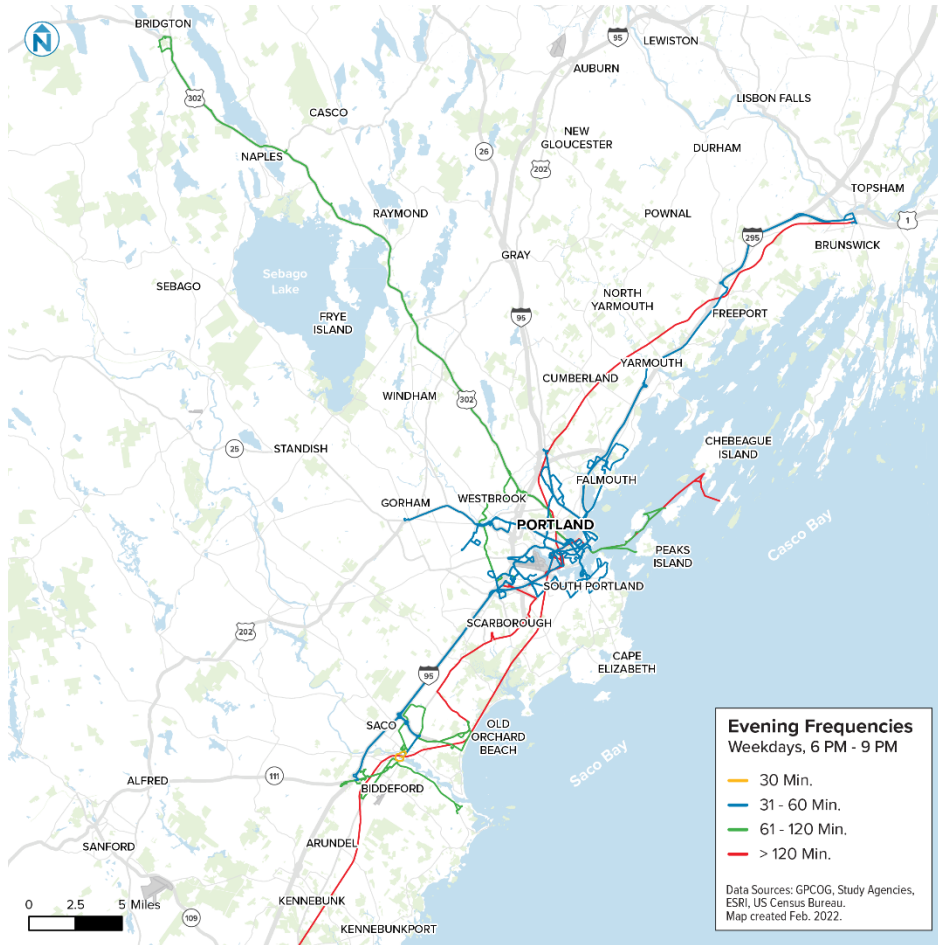
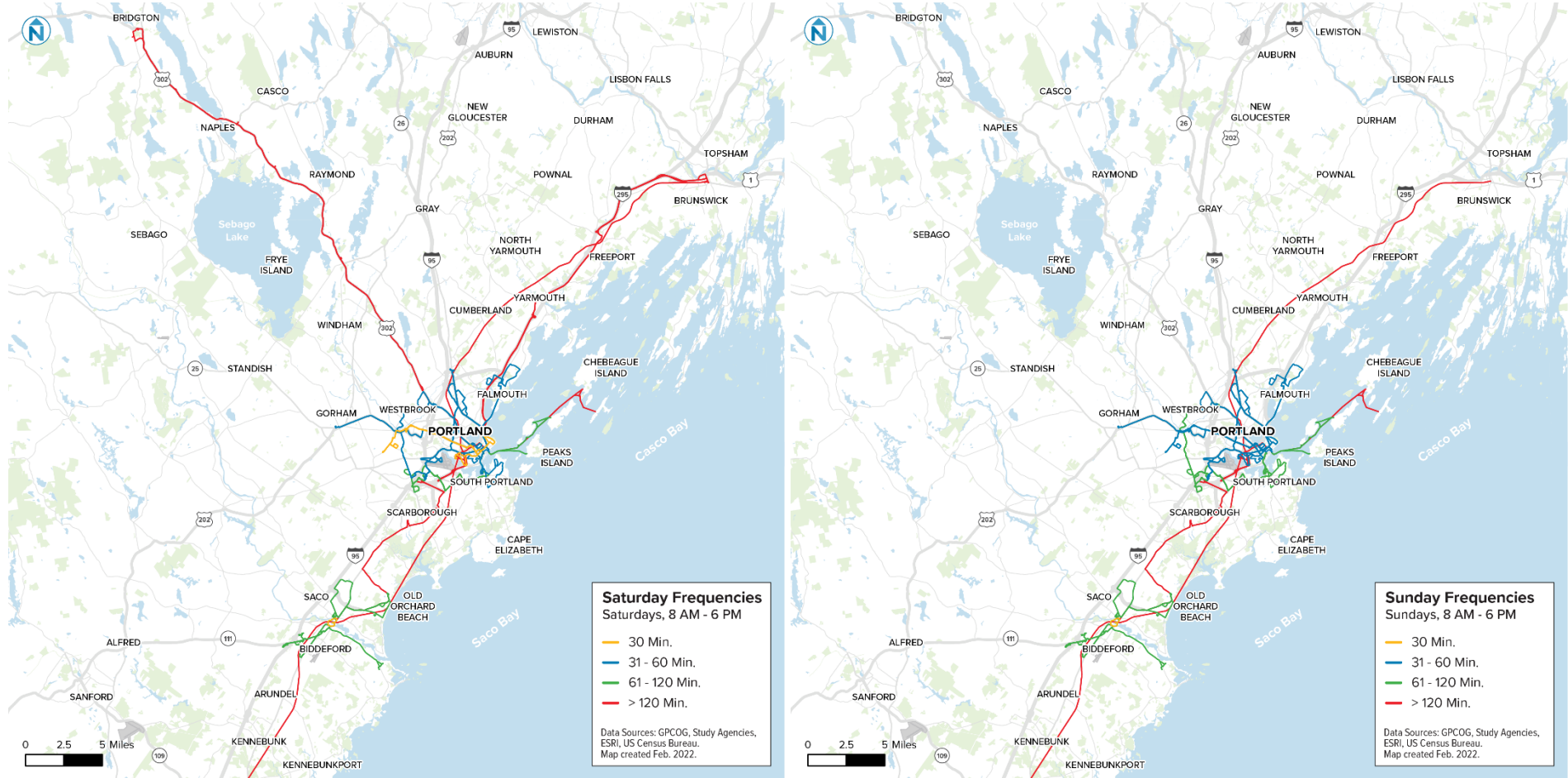




Figure 2-11 Maps of Greater Portland Region Services by Frequency, Saturday and Sunday





ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

Defining On-Time Performance

On-time performance (OTP) is a measure of how often a transit vehicle leaves a stop when it is scheduled to. Vehicles that leave early or late can inconvenience passengers or, in a worst-case scenario, strand passengers without another form of transportation. Several transportation agencies in the Greater Portland region have OTP standards for fixed routes but only two agencies (NNEPRA and METRO) collect fixed-route OTP data. RTP maintains demand-response OTP standards but YCCAC does not.

Figure 2-12 Study Agency On-Time Performance Definitions

Mode	Agency	On-Time Performance Definition
Bus	BSOOB Transit	Departs timepoint no more than 1 minute early and 5 minutes late. ³
	METRO	Departs timepoint no more than 0 minutes early and 5 minutes late. ⁴
	RTP	No information available.
	SPBS	Departs timepoint no more than 0 minutes early and 5 minutes late. ⁵
	YCCAC	No definition or target.
Paratransit	RTP	Departs from pick-up time no more than 0 minutes early and 30 minutes late. Arrives for drop-off time no more than 0 minutes early and 30 minutes late. ⁶
	YCCAC	No definition or target.
Ferry	CBL	No definition or target.
Rail	NNEPRA	Train arrives at final station within 10 minutes of scheduled time. ⁷

Bus agencies with fixed-route OTP standards consider late departures to be five minutes after the scheduled time but differ in considering zero or one minute an early departure.

³ BSOOB Transit. September 3, 2021. Title VI Program. p. 19. <<https://bsoobtransit.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Biddeford-Saco-Old-Orchard-Beach-Transit-Title-VI-Program-9.30.21.pdf>>

⁴ METRO. April 1, 2019. Title VI Program. p. 22. <<https://gpmetro.org/DocumentCenter/View/459/2019-Title-VI-Program-final-with-attachments-040119?bidId=>>>

⁵ 12/8/21 e-mail communication with SPBS staff.

⁶ RTP. February 2020. ADA Complimentary [sic] Paratransit Policies and Procedures. p. 29 <<https://www.rtprides.org/wp-content/uploads/ADA-Complimentary-Paratransit-Policy-and-Procedures-2-2020.pdf>>

⁷ Defined as "end point on-time performance", per 11/5/21 e-mail communication with NNEPRA staff.



Ferry and train on-time performance is inherently different from fixed-route bus on-time performance, as ferries cannot predict the amount of cargo or vehicles that need to be loaded or unloaded at each stop, and train service can be subject to delays that are out of their control.

On-Time Performance Outcomes

Fixed-route OTP data are available only for the Downeaster and METRO. These data show some on-time performance issues on METRO routes in the congested urban area, such as METRO Route 8. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic,⁸ none of METRO's routes achieved the agency's 90% OTP goal, and the Downeaster did not achieve its 85% OTP goal, although Downeaster customer OTP⁹ for fiscal year 2019 was 87%. Although METRO did not meet its OTP goal, most of the routes perform at over 75% OTP, which is in line with peer agencies.

The primary causes of Downeaster delays are speed restrictions, passenger train interference, and freight train interference, as the Downeaster operates on shared commuter and freight railways for most of its alignment. Downeaster OTP is fundamentally different than bus OTP, as the Downeaster does not have direct control over when it can use railways.

BUS STOPS, SHELTERS, AND SIGNAGE

Bus stops are one of the most important elements of transit service. Bus riders use stops every time they make a trip, and non-riders often gauge the quality of a service based on bus stops they see in their community. Good stops are easy to identify, provide shelter from the elements, allow for safe and easy boarding and alighting of a bus, and include clear information on what service is available at the stop.

⁸ Pre-pandemic OTP data are considered in this assessment because traffic congestion and ridership levels were more representative of a likely future condition. March 2021 OTP shows better performance than pre-pandemic OTP.

⁹ Customer on-time performance is a weighted measure based on the number of passengers arriving to their destination on time, rather than the percent of trains arriving into North Station on time.



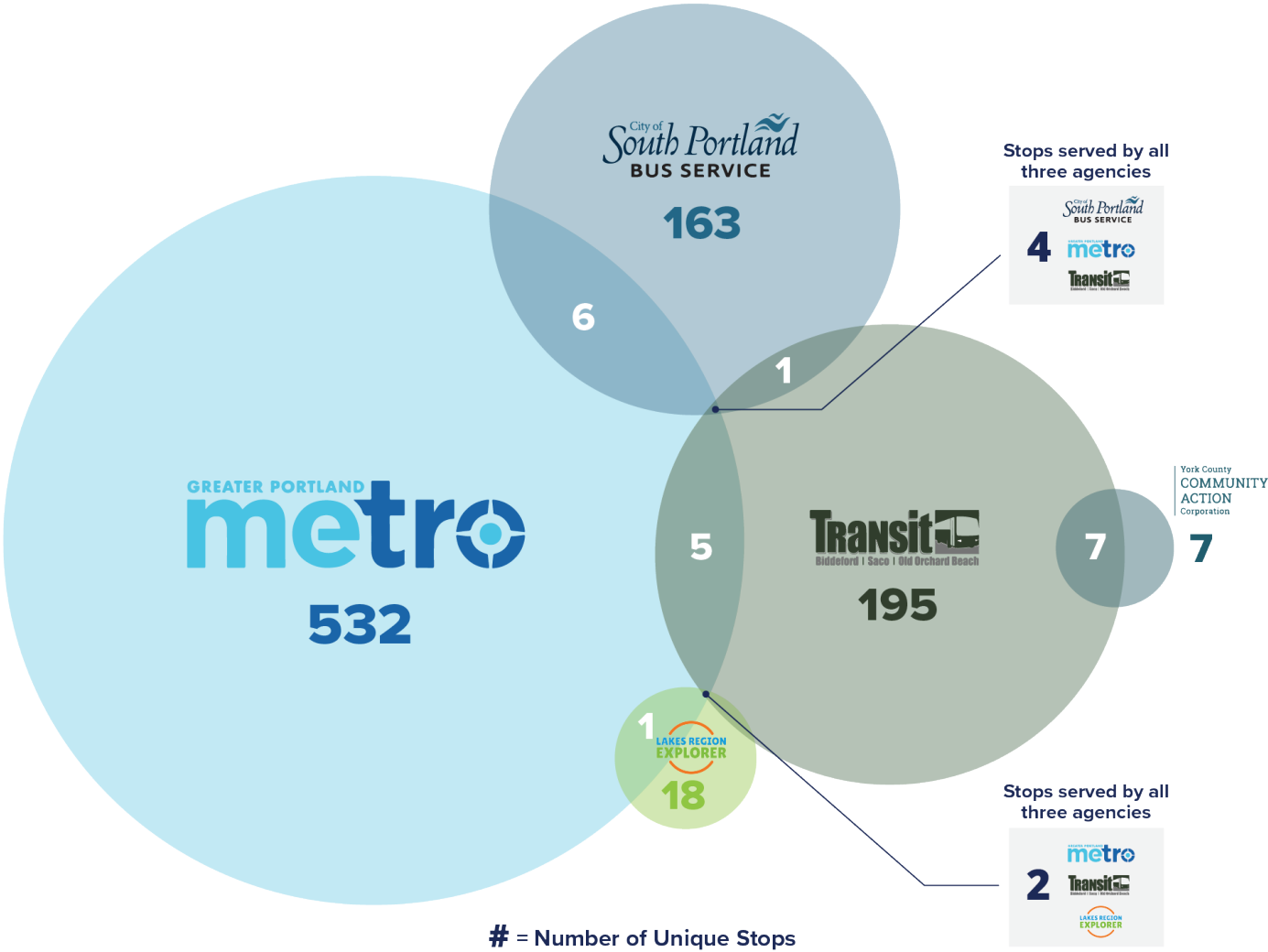
Stops

There are approximately 941 bus stops in the Greater Portland region, about 25 of which are served by multiple agencies.¹⁰ BSOOB Transit and the YCCAC Southern Maine Connector share several stops in Biddeford, and METRO shares several stops with SPBS, BSOOB Transit, and the RTP Lakes Region Explorer in Portland (Figure 2-13). BSOOB Transit and the RTP Lakes Region Explorer are the only study agencies that offer flag stops, and only when the driver considers a flag stop safe.

¹⁰ These numbers are based on GTFS data and are not precise because some agency GTFS may not precisely match real-world operational patterns.



Figure 2-13 Approximate Number of Fixed-Route Bus Stops Served by Each Agency

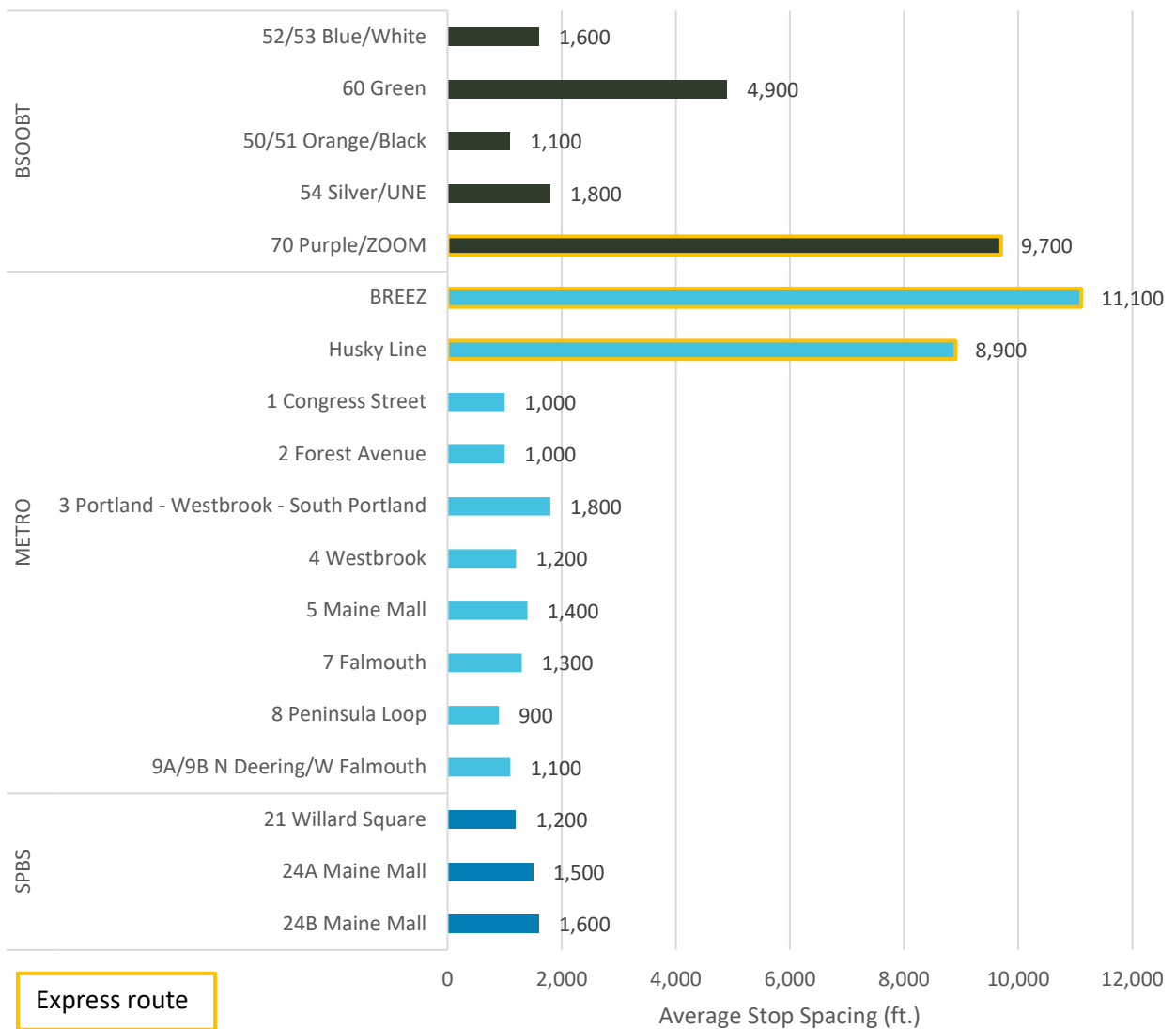




In general, the distance between fixed-route bus stops in the Greater Portland region is between 1,000 and 2,000 feet (Figure 2-14), which is consistent with national best practice. METRO routes 1, 2, and 8 have stops spaced the most closely together, and the METRO Route 3, BSOOB Transit Route 52/53, and SPBS Route 24B have stops spaced the furthest apart. The BSOOB Transit routes 54 and 60 have relatively distant stop spacing but operate on highways for some of their alignment.

Among express routes, the stop spacing varies between 8,900 feet and 11,100 feet (approximately every two miles). Express route stop spacing is largely dependent on the alignment of and key destinations on the corridor served.

Figure 2-14 Average Distance between Fixed-Route Stops by Agency



Source: Agency GTFS.



Stop quality in the Greater Portland region varies dramatically (see images in Figure 2-15). Some stops include shelters, benches, and trash barrels, while others are unmarked or have signs on the wrong side of the road.

Figure 2-15 Bus Stops in the Greater Portland Region



Left to right: A bus stop in Scarborough with homemade bench, damaged stop pole, and trash; a bus stop in downtown Portland with shelter, trash barrel, formal bench, and transit information. Source: Nelson\Nygaard.

Shelters are one of the most important stop amenities for passenger comfort, especially in New England, where rain and snow are common. For some riders, shelter presence is one of the factors that leads them to choose transit over other travel modes. There is currently no database of which stops in the Greater Portland region have shelters.

A regional transit stop database, with fields indicating which amenities are available at each stop, would be a valuable tool for the study agencies as they assess which stops should see amenity upgrades. Typically, stops with higher ridership are prioritized for amenities such as shelters, benches, and trash barrels, although equity factors can also be incorporated into stop amenity prioritization; for example, shelters and benches may be prioritized at stops near senior living facilities or low-income housing.



GPCOG has been working to improve transit stops in the Greater Portland Region since at least 2013, when the *Regional Bus Sign and Shelter Study Report and Implementation Guide*¹¹ was published. Today, GPCOG administers a Transit Stop Access Project.¹²

¹¹ GPCOG. October 2013. Regional Bus Sign and Shelter Study Report and Implementation Guide. <<https://me-gpcog.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/346/2013-Regional-Bus-Shelter-Project-Report---Maps-PDF>>

¹² GPCOG. March 2022. Transit Stop Access Project. <<https://www.gpcog.org/175/Transit-Stop-Access-Project>>



3 RIDERSHIP

INTRODUCTION AND DATA SOURCES

This chapter describes ridership for the study agencies. The data used are collected from a variety of sources and analyzed together. Ridership data in the route profiles are—when available—from before the COVID-19 pandemic. In most cases, these data are from October 2019, as October is considered a ‘typical’ transit ridership month. Pre-pandemic ridership data are used under the assumption that as the COVID-19 pandemic fades, ridership will return to pre-pandemic levels, and any recommendations regarding transit service in the Greater Portland region should be made to accommodate those higher, pre-pandemic levels of transit use.

Figure 3-1 Ridership Data Sources Summary Table

Agency	Ridership Source	Ridership Period
BSOOB Transit	Driver tallies	October 2019
CBL	Ridership database	October 2019
METRO	Automatic passenger counter (APC) and farebox data	October 2019
NNEPRA	Ridership database	October 2019
RTP	Driver tallies	March 2021
SPBS	Ridecheck	Spring 2017
YCCAC	Driver tallies	March 2021

Detailed SPBS ridership data were not available from October 2019 but were available from a spring 2017 ridecheck, so spring 2017 data were used. The YCCAC Southern Maine Connector did not operate prior to the pandemic, so March 2021 ridership data were used. Pre-pandemic data were not available from RTP, so March 2021 ridership data were used.

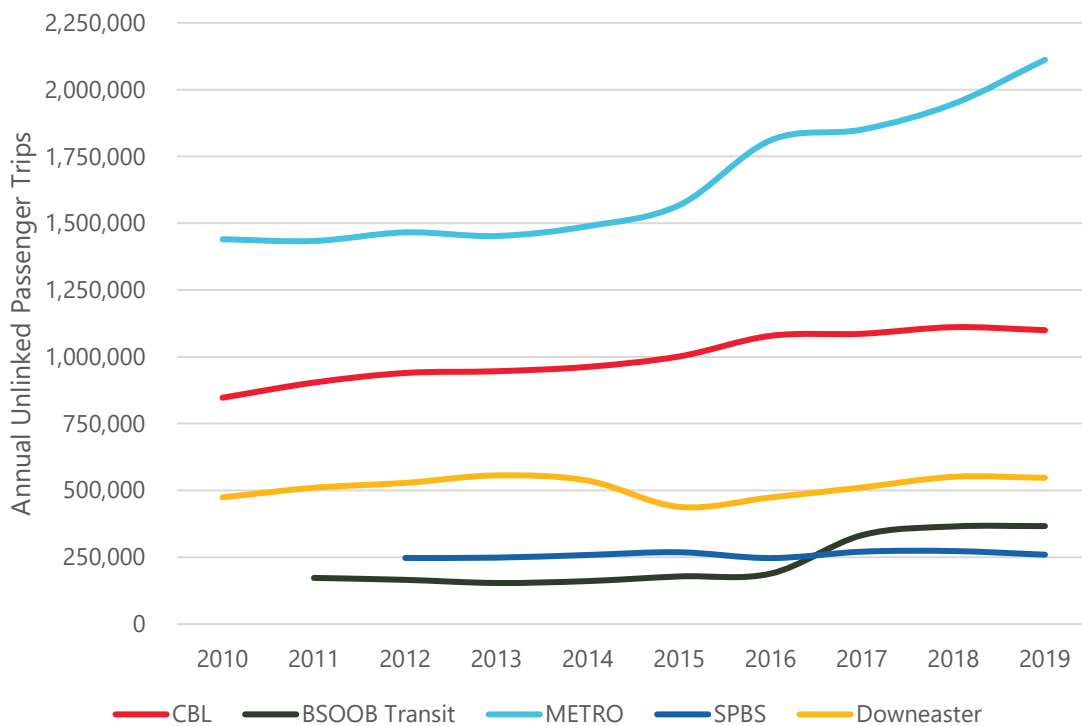


RIDERSHIP

How many people ride a transit service is the most fundamental measure of the utility it provides the community.¹³ In the Greater Portland region, about 11,000 passenger trips on public fixed-route transit occurred on an average August 2021 day, down from approximately 16,500 in August 2019, before the pandemic. This section discusses ridership on fixed-route and demand-response services separately.

METRO has the highest ridership of regional transit operators (approximately 2.1 million annual pre-pandemic passenger trips), followed by CBL and the Downeaster (Figure 3-2). BSOOB Transit and SPBS have historically carried similar numbers of passengers, but BSOOB Transit ridership has increased considerably since 2016 (to about 360,000 annual pre-pandemic passenger trips), and now exceeds SPBS ridership. All the study agencies have experienced ridership growth over the past decade, with METRO and BSOOB Transit experiencing the greatest rate of growth.

Figure 3-2 Annual Ridership by Fixed-Route Service, 2010-2019



Data source: National Transit Database

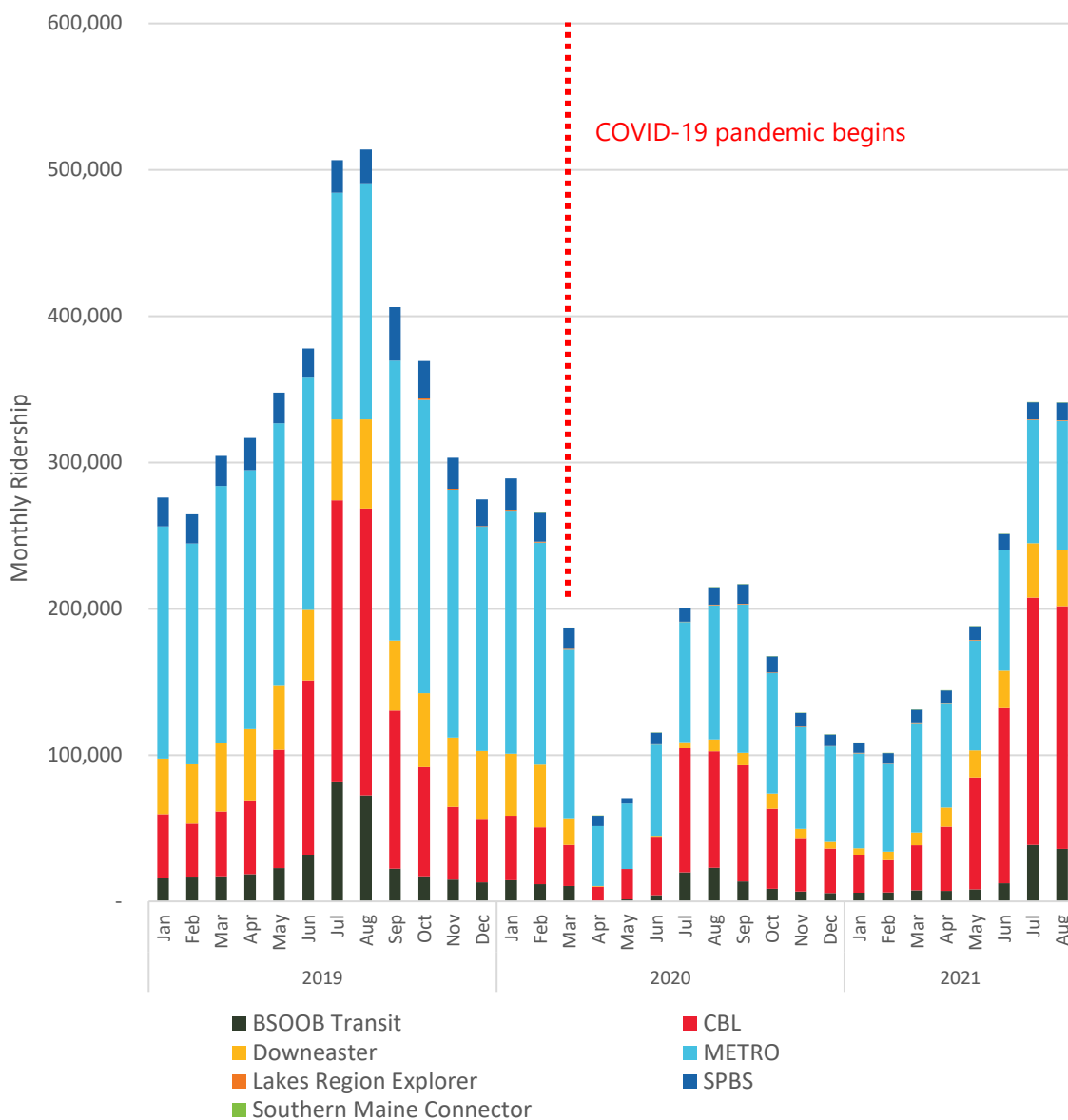
¹³ Casco Bay Lines, as a lifeline service, considers service provision (i.e., the existence of any service at all) the most fundamental measure of its community utility, and ridership a secondary measure.



COVID-19 Ridership Impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically reduced transit ridership in the Greater Portland region. As the pandemic took hold in Southern Maine in March 2020, ridership for all transit agencies dropped precipitously (Figure 3-3). Although ridership has begun to recover for all providers, it remained 34% lower than 2019 levels in August of 2021, which has historically been one of the region’s highest-ridership months. Over this same period, ridership on local bus services has not recovered as much as ridership on Downeaster and CBL ferry service.

Figure 3-3 Monthly Transit Ridership in Greater Portland by Agency, January 2019 through August 2021





Fixed-Route Ridership

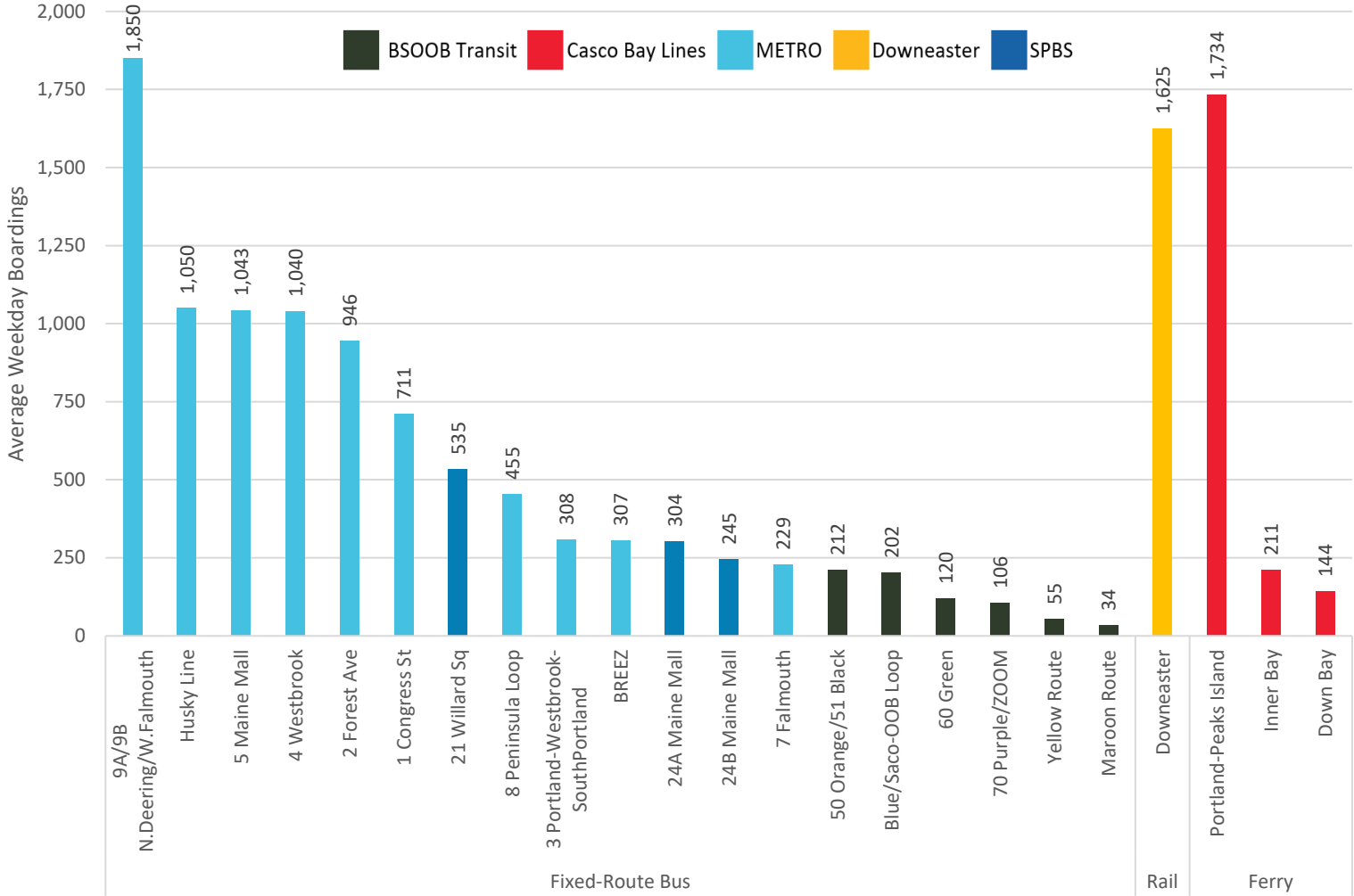
The highest-ridership transit routes in the Greater Portland region are the METRO Route 9A/9B, Portland-Peaks Island ferry, and the Downeaster (Figure 3-4). Among completely fixed bus routes (i.e., not deviated), METRO operates the highest-ridership routes, which are routes 9A/9B, Husky Line, 5, and 4; these routes mostly operate on direct alignments and serve several key destinations. The lowest-ridership fixed routes¹⁴ are long-distance express and local routes (the BSOOB Transit routes 60 and 70) and other BSOOB Transit routes. These routes are generally less direct and frequent than higher-ridership routes. A considerable portion of METRO's ridership comes from university and high school students.

The RTP Lakes Region Explorer and YCCAC Southern Maine Connector are both deviated fixed routes that support fewer than 15 passenger trips each day, as of March 2021 (the Southern Maine Connector did not operate pre-pandemic).

¹⁴ The BSOOB Transit Yellow, Maroon, and Blue/Saco-OOB Loop have been discontinued but are useful estimates of demand on the current routes 52/53 and 54, as the current, numbered routes include segments previously covered by the color-named routes. The Yellow route was incorporated into the current Route 54, and the Maroon and Blue/Saco-OOB Loop were incorporated into the current Route 52/53.



Figure 3-4 Fixed-Route Weekday Boardings by Route, October 2019



Notes: Downeaster ridership is shown as average daily, not average weekday, due to data limitations. Pre-pandemic ridership data for the Lakes Region Explorer are not available. Post-pandemic, the route averages 13 weekday boardings.

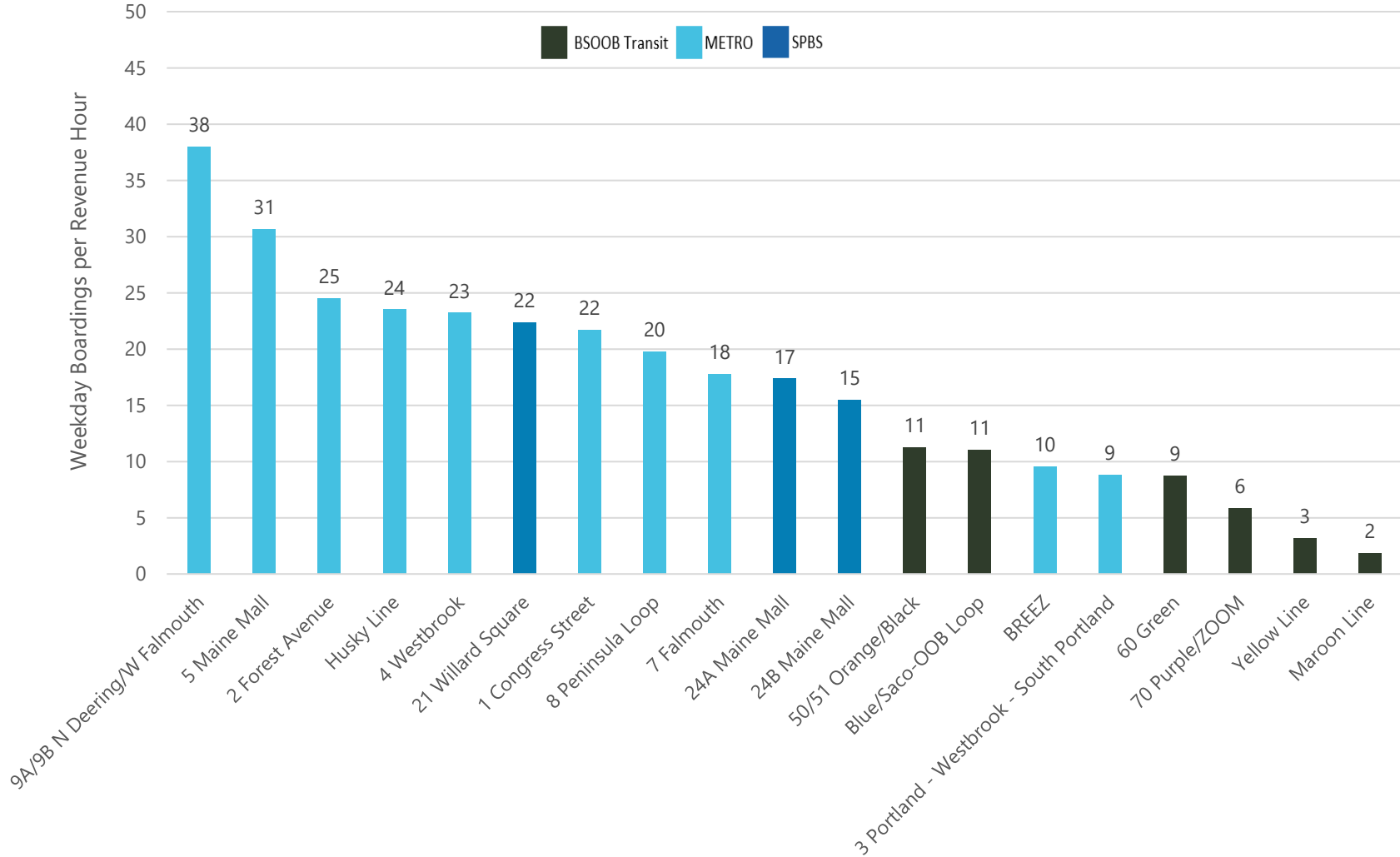


Bus Productivity

Productivity is a measure of how efficiently a transit route uses its resources to carry passengers. Boardings per revenue hour is a common measure of productivity for fixed-route bus, where a higher number of boardings per revenue hour indicates more productive, efficient service. The amount of service provided is often correlated closely and positively with ridership, so routes with the lowest and highest ridership are similar to those with the lowest and highest productivity (Figure 3-5). Routes with the highest productivity are the METRO routes 9A/9B, 5, and 2, which are mostly direct and serve key destinations. Local routes with the lowest productivity are METRO Routes 3 and BSOOB Transit Route 60, which do not serve as many key destinations and/or are infrequent and indirect. Several other routes have lower productivity (for example, the METRO BREEZ) but they are designed as intercity express services and so are often not designed with the same productivity metrics in mind. Some of the routes shown in Figure 3-5 are no longer operated, such as the Yellow Line and Maroon Line, which have been consolidated into new BSOOB Transit service.



Figure 3-5 Fixed Bus Route Weekday Revenue Hour-Level Productivity by Route, October 2019

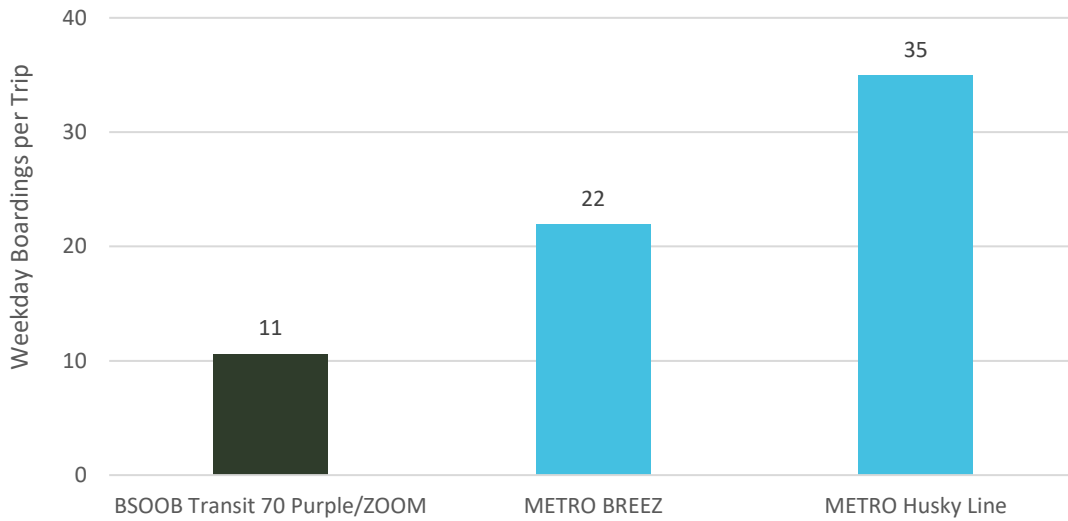




Because several transit routes in the Greater Portland region are express in nature, their productivity may not be best measured in terms of boardings per hour, but instead in terms of boardings per trip. This measure considers that these routes are meant to carry passengers over longer distances and not intended to be as productive, on a per-revenue hour basis, as local routes.

Figure 3-6 shows three express bus routes' average weekday boardings per trip. The METRO Husky Line has the highest per-trip productivity of express bus routes, and BSOOB Transit Route 70 has the fewest, at approximately 11 boardings per trip.

Figure 3-6 Fixed-Route Weekday Trip-Level Productivity by Express/Regional Route, October 2019



Notes: Pre-pandemic ridership data for the Lakes Region Explorer is not available. Post-pandemic, the route averages 4.2 weekday boardings per trip.

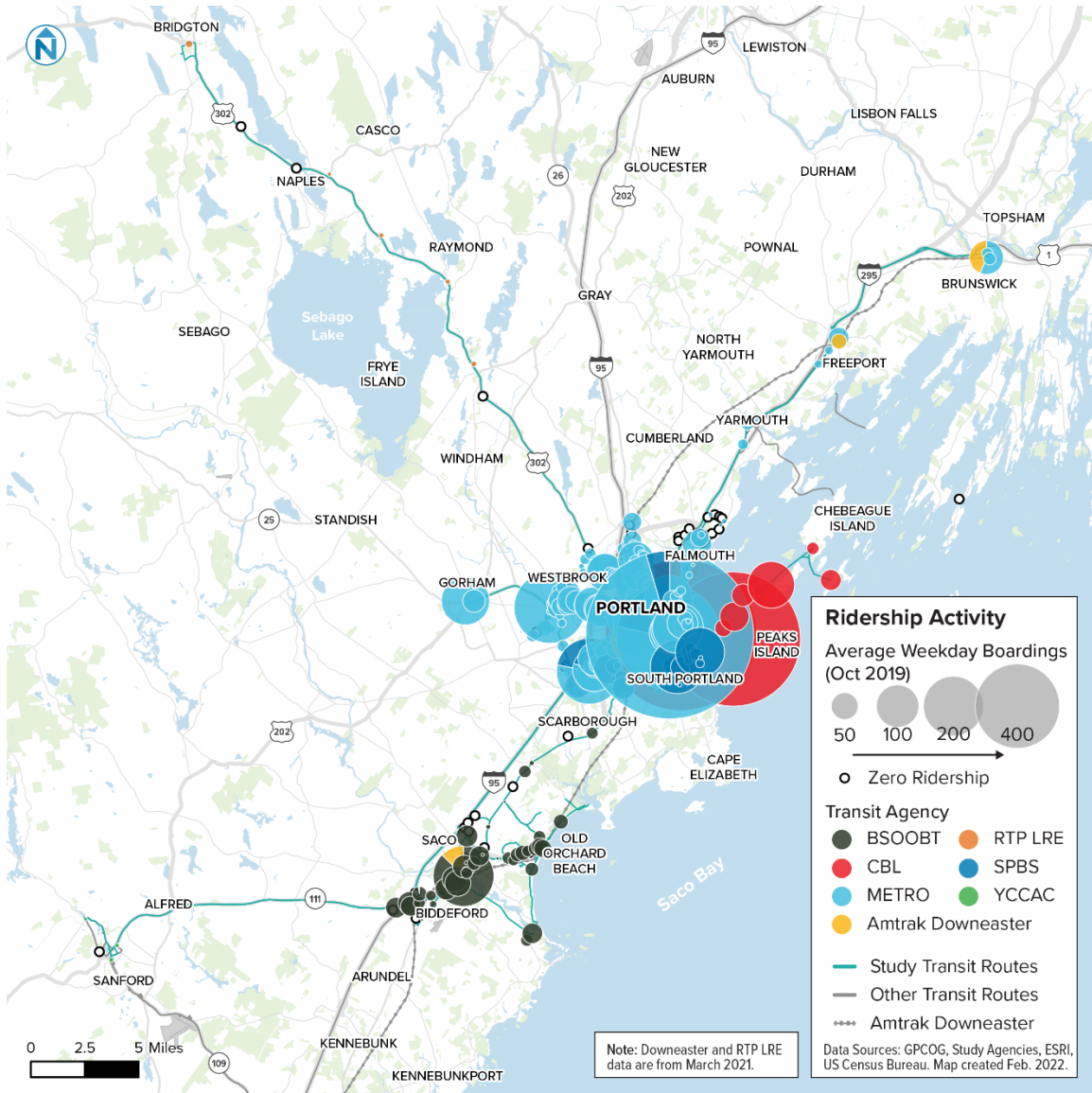
Non-Bus Productivity

Because ferry and rail service are fundamentally different from fixed-route bus service, it is not always appropriate to directly compare ferry and rail productivity to bus productivity. That being said, it is important to note that rail and passenger ferry productivity is typically high: in October 2019, the Downeaster carried approximately 325 passengers per trip and 48 passengers per train revenue hour. In the same period, CBL carried 60 passengers per revenue hour.



Figure 3-7 through Figure 3-10 show average weekday ridership at the stop level in the Greater Portland region. Most of this ridership occurs in the Portland and Biddeford-Saco urban areas, though additional ridership is also generated in Gorham, at the University of New England (UNE) campus, in Freeport, and in Brunswick.

Figure 3-7 Average Weekday Fixed-Route Boardings by Stop, Greater Portland Region

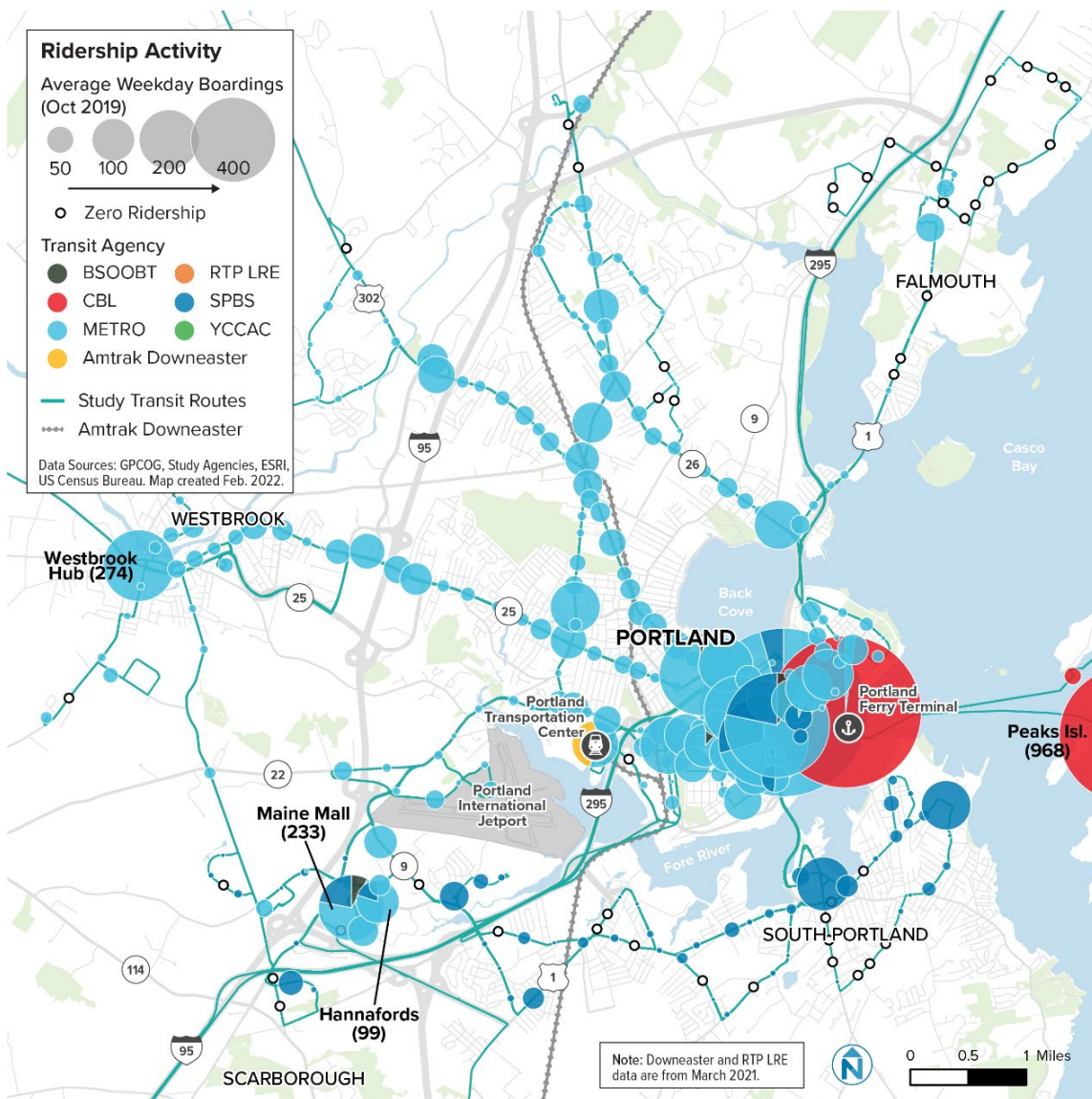


Note: Downeaster and RTP LRE data in this map are from March 2021, due to data limitations. BSOBT Transit data shown here are segment level and aggregated up to stops that represent the segment near the stop.



In the Greater Portland area, stop-level ridership patterns show considerable ridership along several corridors, including Forest Avenue, Stevens Avenue, Washington Avenue, Brighton Avenue/Main Street, Broadway, and near the Maine Mall. Both Forest Avenue (Route 302) and Brighton Avenue/Main Street (Route 25) were identified as potential rapid transit corridors in Transit Tomorrow, as was the corridor from downtown Portland, over the Casco Bay Bridge, and on Broadway to SMCC in South Portland. Ridership in the Greater Portland region is by far the highest on the Portland Peninsula. Several stops outside the Portland Peninsula with high ridership include Southern Maine Community College (SMCC), the Mill Creek Transit Hub, the Maine Mall, and the Westbrook Hub.

Figure 3-8 Average Weekday Fixed-Route Boardings by Stop, Greater Portland Area



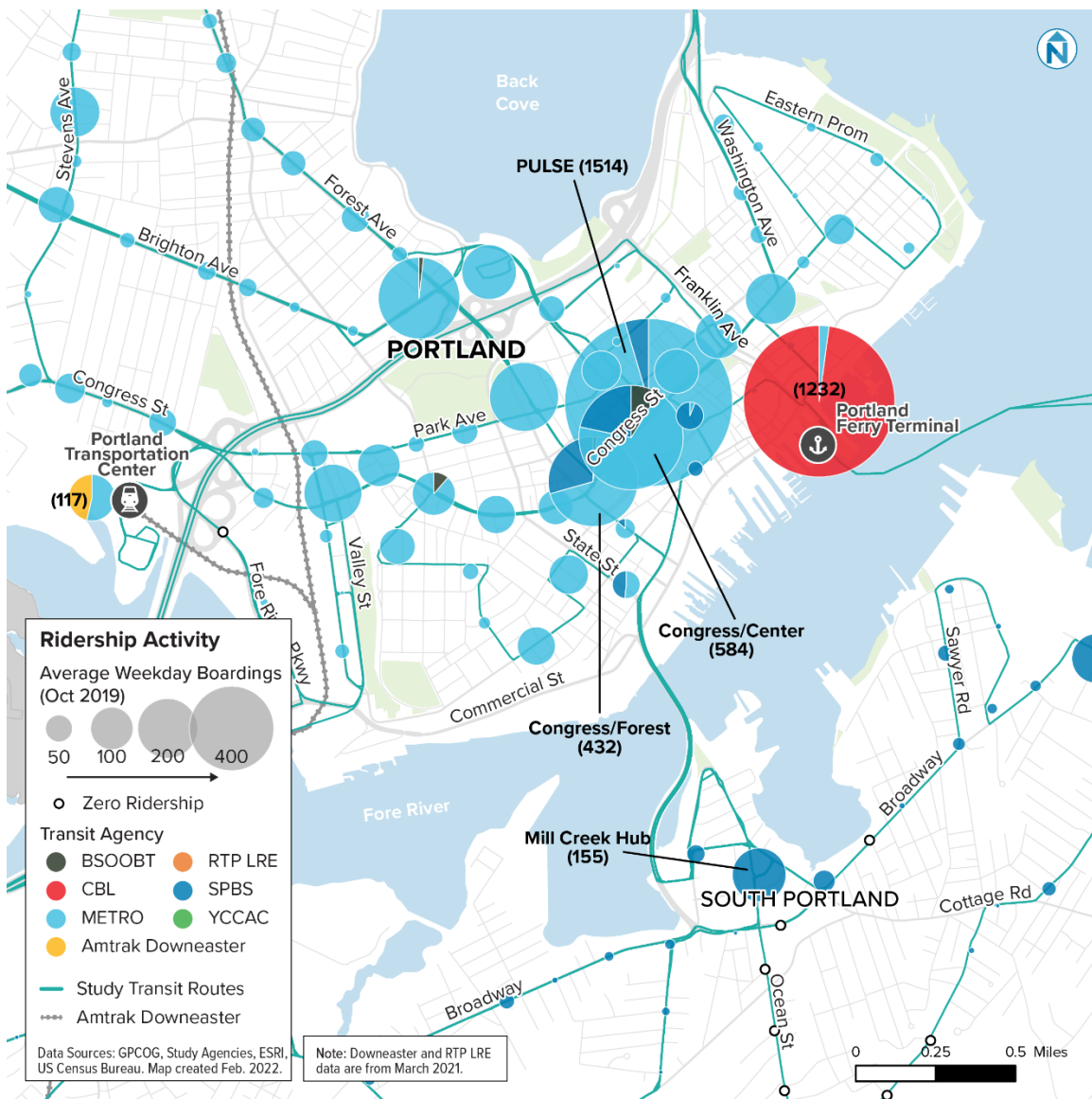
Note: Downeaster and RTP LRE data in this map are from March 2021, due to data limitations. BSOBT Transit data shown here are segment level and aggregated up to stops that represent the segment near the stop.



On the Portland Peninsula, bus ridership is highest along Congress Street and especially near the PULSE, where riders using BSOOB Transit, METRO, the RTP Lakes Region Explorer, and SPBS transfer buses. There is also considerable ridership at several key destinations on the Peninsula, such as Maine Medical Center, USM, and near Deering Oaks Park.

Ridership at the Casco Bay Ferry Terminal is considerable, although it is almost all ferry riders; METRO Route 8 has about 20 average weekday boardings at the ferry terminal stop. Most of CBL's non-Casco Bay Ferry Terminal ridership occurs at Peaks Island.

Figure 3-9 Average Weekday Fixed-Route Boardings by Stop, Portland Peninsula



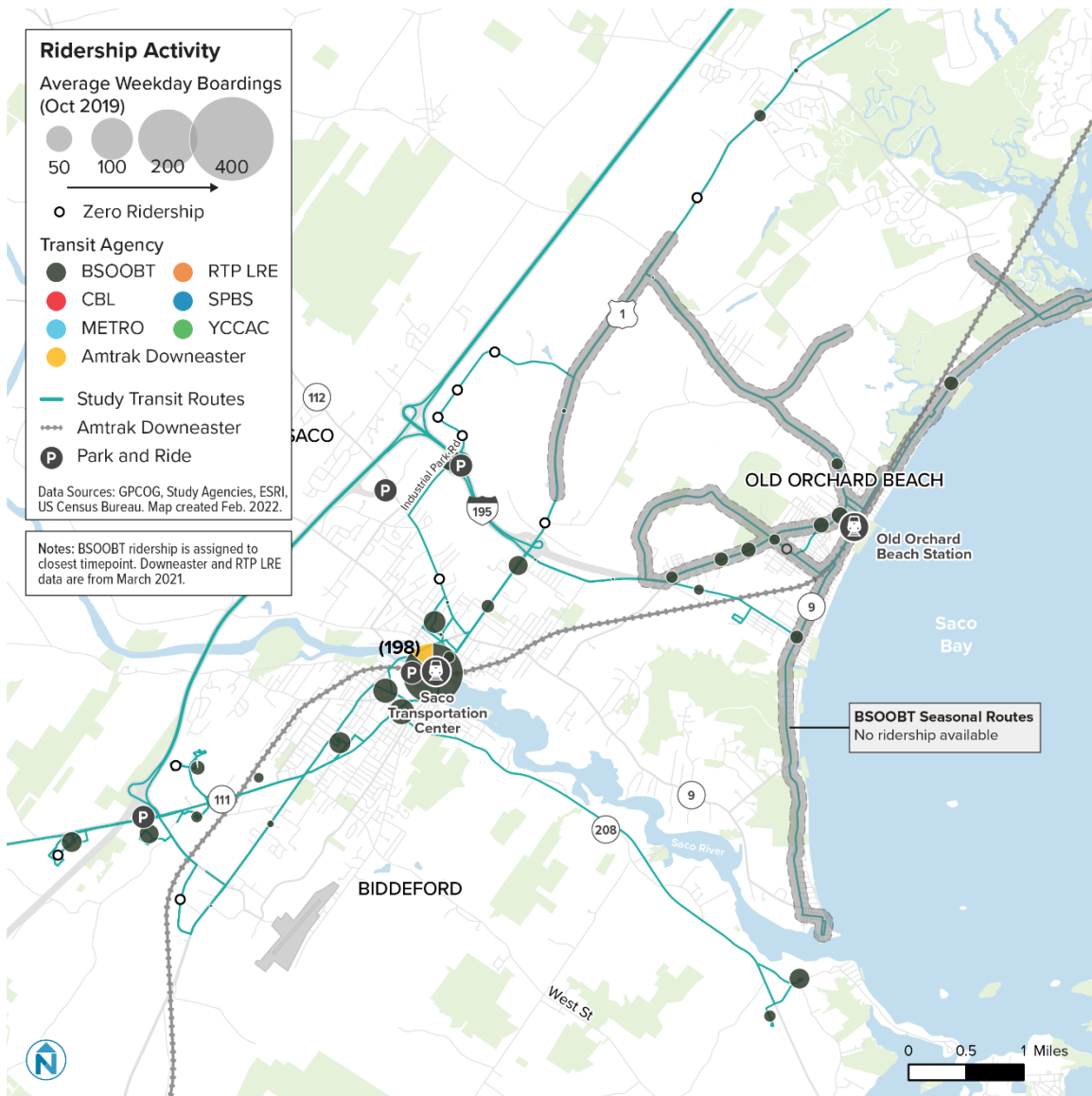
Note: Downeaster and RTP LRE data in this map are from March 2021, due to data limitations. BSOOB Transit data shown here are segment level and aggregated up to stops that represent the segment near the stop.



In the Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach area, ridership is highest along the Alfred Street (Route 111) corridor, in downtown Biddeford, and at UNE. There is some ridership along Route 5 between Old Orchard Beach and Saco, and very little ridership in the Biddeford Industrial Park Road area.

Ridership on Alfred Street (Route 111) is highest near the Biddeford Crossing shopping center, Walmart, and Hannaford. The highest-ridership area in Saco (excluding the Saco Transportation Center) is near the Saco Valley Shopping Center.

Figure 3-10 Average Weekday Fixed-Route Boardings by Segment, Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach



Note: Downeaster data in this map are from March 2021, due to data limitations. BSOBT Transit data shown here are segment level and aggregated up to stops that represent the segment near the stop.

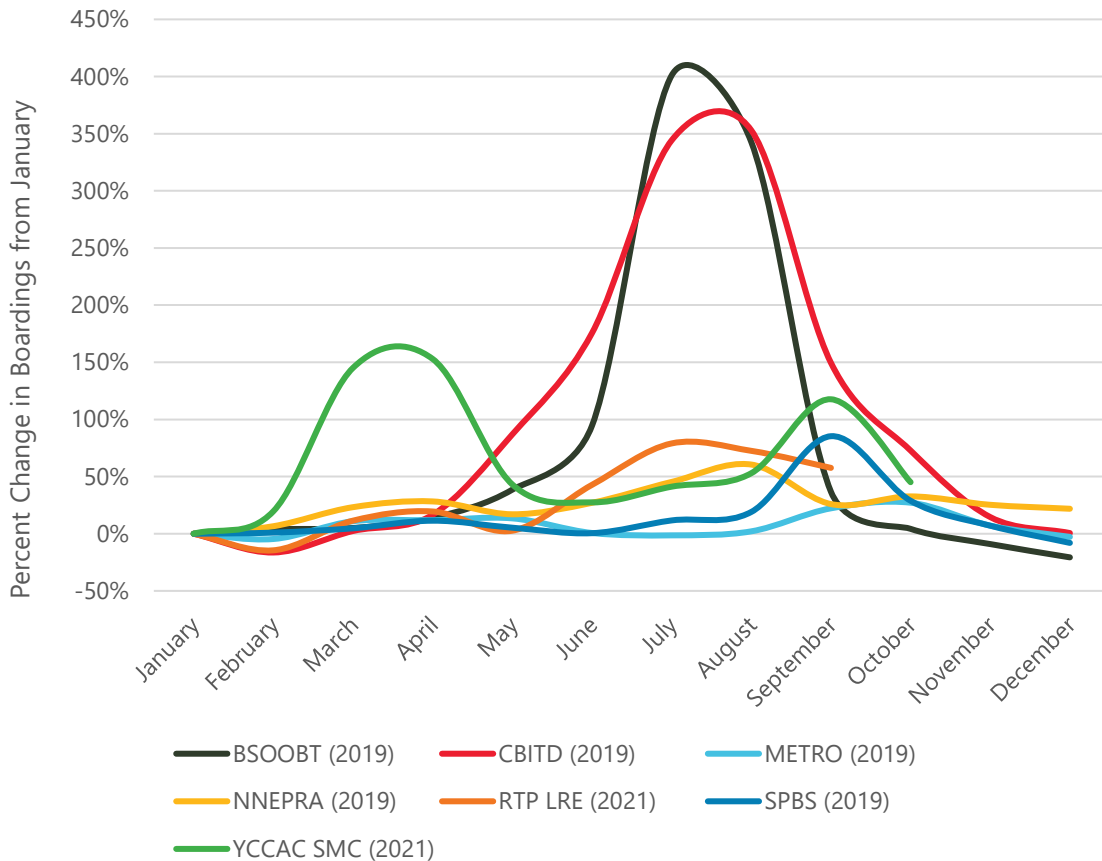


Seasonal Ridership Variation

Millions of tourists visit Maine each year, with most of these visits occurring in the warmer summer months. This influx of people changes transit service demand and ridership patterns to varying degrees. Compared to January, BSOOB Transit sees approximately 400% more ridership in the summer, and CBL over 300% more riders (Figure 3-11). The RTP Lakes Region Explorer and Downeaster also see significant increases in summer ridership.

The YCCAC Southern Maine Connector and SPBS see shoulder-season increases in ridership. SPBS typically sees ridership peak in September, which may be caused by a combination of tourist activity and SMCC returning to session. METRO ridership is among the most stable of the study agencies.

Figure 3-11 Seasonal Variation in Ridership by Agency, Indexed to January



Note: 2019 and 2021 data are used to avoid using 2020 data, which was skewed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Much of this increase in ridership is borne by additional service. BSOOB Transit and CBL, especially, increase the amount of service offered in the summers significantly. BSOOB Transit operates five summer-only trolley routes in the Old Orchard Beach area.



Demand-Response Ridership

Both RTP and YCCAC provide demand-response service in the Greater Portland region. RTP carries approximately 58 riders each day on its ADA paratransit and general-public demand-response service, and YCCAC carries approximately 52 people each day on its WAVE service.¹⁵ In general, RTP and YCCAC demand-response trips are made to shopping and medical destinations. YCCAC's WAVE service is also used to access employment, particularly near the Sanford Seacoast Regional Airport.

¹⁵ This includes RTP trips operated under 'funding source' codes ADP, ADS, and GPF from 10/1/20 through 2/28/21. Data shown here are for FY21 for WAVE.



4 PASSENGER FACILITIES

Passenger facilities in the Greater Portland region range from multimodal transit centers to simple bus stops, and range in size, quality, and intensity of use. This chapter of the Existing Service Report describes these facilities and the role they play in the regional transit network.

FACILITIES

The study agencies own, operate, and serve six key transit facilities in four municipalities in the Greater Portland region. These facilities are described below and mapped in Figure 4-1 and Figure 4-2.

Portland Transportation Center

The Portland Transportation Center (PTC) is a large intermodal facility with short- and long-term parking and passenger amenities that meet industry standards. The facility is primarily served by Concord Coach Lines and the Downeaster, but transfers are possible to the METRO BREEZ and Route 1. There is no BSOOB Transit or SPBS service at the PTC, and non-Concord Coach intercity buses also do not stop at the PTC. The facility is isolated from most other destinations in Portland but plans to relocate the Downeaster stop onto the mainline, east of I-295, are under consideration.

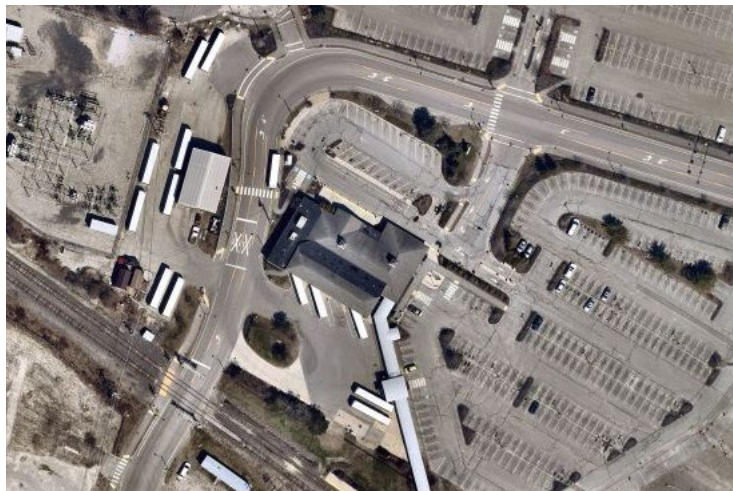


Image source: Nearmap



Saco Transportation Center

The Saco Transportation Center is a large facility with short- and long-term parking and good passenger amenities. The facility is served by the Downeaster, BSOOB Transit, and the YCCAC Southern Maine Connector. Sight lines are such that passengers can wait indoors, with access to amenities. The facility is located on Factory Island with pedestrian access to downtowns of both communities.



PULSE

The Portland METRO PULSE (also called Downtown Transportation Center) is served directly by METRO and the RTP Lakes Region Explorer, and by nearby BSOOB Transit and SPBS stops. This facility has some indoor passenger amenities and is in downtown Portland, with good pedestrian access to several major destinations. Intercity bus service does not serve the PULSE.



Casco Bay Ferry Terminal

The Casco Bay Ferry Terminal is the mainland terminal for all CBL ferries. This newly renovated facility is served by the METRO Route 8, which allows CBL riders to connect with BSOOB Transit, RTP's Lakes Region Explorer, and SPBS at the PULSE. There is no one-seat ride from the Casco Bay Ferry Terminal to Downeaster or intercity bus service, and the connection to the PULSE via the METRO Route 8 is fairly circuitous.





Mill Creek Transit Hub

The Mill Creek Transit Hub, which serves as a transfer point for SPBS routes, allows riders to wait inside for buses but lacks most amenities, including heating.¹⁶ The facility is in South Portland's Knightville neighborhood, near two malls (Shaw's Millcreek Plaza and Mill Creek Shopping Center) that include key transit destinations: a Shaw's and Hannaford grocery store.



Intermodal Downeaster Stations

Several Downeaster stations are served by local bus connections. The METRO BREEZ stops a few blocks from Freeport Station and directly at Brunswick Station, and BSOOB Transit service is available at the Old Orchard Beach Station (Downeaster trains only stop at this station in summer) and Saco Transportation Center. Brunswick Link local bus and BlueLine Commuter intercity bus serves Brunswick Station.

Other Transfer Points

Key transfer points among transit services also exist at METRO's Westbrook Hub and at the Maine Mall.

The Westbrook Hub serves as a transfer point for METRO routes 3, 4, and the Husky Line. This hub consists of a shelter for north- and eastbound trips, and an unsheltered stop for south- and westbound trips.

The Maine Mall is a transfer point among BSOOB Transit, METRO, and SPBS services. These transfers occur at the eastern entrance to the mall. There is no dedicated transit infrastructure at this location, but riders can wait under an awning and/or on one of several benches.

¹⁶ Plans are underway to heat the Mill Creek Transit Hub.



Figure 4-1 Map of Key Passenger Facilities in Greater Portland Area

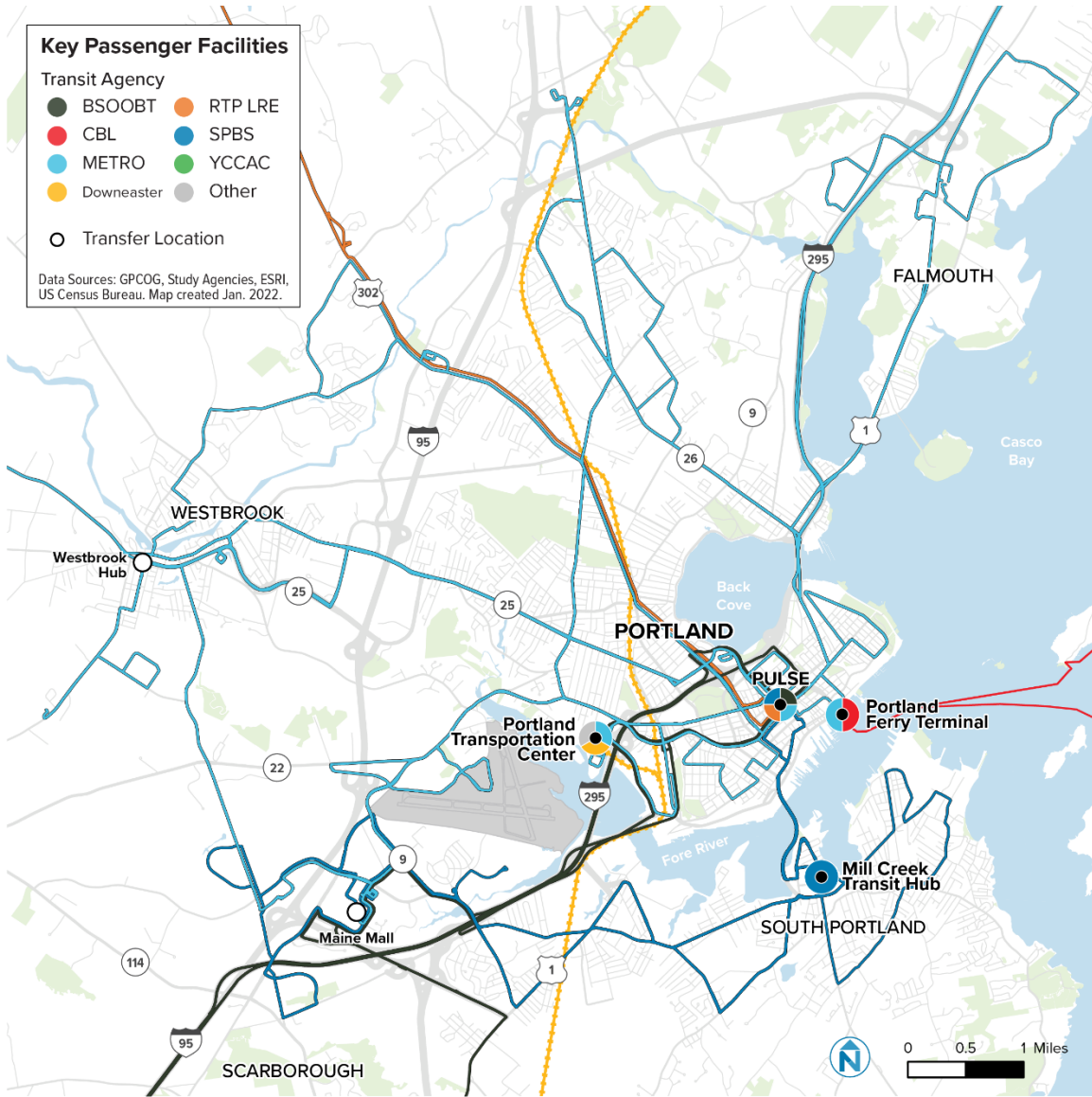




Figure 4-2 Map of Key Passenger Facility in Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach

