



TO: York County Commissioners

FROM: Paul Schumacher, SMPDC Executive Director; Barbara Crider, YCCAC Executive Director **DATE:**
December 29, 2021

RE: American Rescue Plan (ARP) Transit Proposal

Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) and York County Community Action Corporation (YCCAC) greatly appreciate the Commissioners willingness to consider proposals for its American Rescue Plan Act funds. These funds will provide a unique opportunity to support York County communities as they deal with the current challenges around housing, jobs and transportation exacerbated by the impacts of the pandemic.

SMPDC and YCCAC have partnered to submit a proposal that enhances transit connections throughout the region. Public transit is a vital lifeline to jobs, educational resources, and essential services for many York County residents. With record high housing prices pushing demand inland, many residents are experiencing longer and more expensive commutes, and congestion is returning to pre-pandemic levels. Increasing transit options could help alleviate traffic on Route 111 between Sanford and Biddeford, one of the most heavily traveled roads in York County, while offering an affordable and efficient commuting option for those without access to a car. It also provides a vital link to senior services and medical resources for the county's aging population.

YCCAC already provides essential transportation connections throughout the region to medical appointments, educational and employment opportunities, and links riders to regional transit connections such as the Boston and Portland metropolitan areas, including a variety of demand response services. Recently, YCCAC and SMPDC have partnered to explore opportunities to expand transit services to meet the needs of new commuters and regional employers. The following project is proposed to the County for funding consideration under the American Rescue Act Funding:

Southern Maine Connector Project

The *Southern Maine Connector* services Southern Maine Health Care (SMHC) campuses in Sanford and Biddeford, as well as Maine Behavioral Health in Biddeford. It also connects to Nason Health Care in Springvale, the Saco Transportation Center, and the commercial area adjacent to exit 32 in Biddeford (Walmart, Market Basket, Target). The new proposed service is designed to provide more frequency and decrease time between runs. The service would increase efficiency and reduce overall cost by moving some of the current WAVE riders to SMC when appropriate to increase efficiency and decrease agency costs per trip. It will modify the existing route to include new courthouse on Route 1 in Biddeford and possibly serve the new County facility on Layman Way. The funding request below includes the addition of one additional vehicle to the route, provides service 5 days per week, and will expand service hours earlier in the morning and later in the afternoon to better align with employment shift times and worker needs.

Budget Request: Total 3-year cost for increased service = \$882,324

- \$84/hour operating expense
- Expanding service hours for existing vehicle/runs: 3.5 additional hrs. per day = 875 additional hrs./year ○ Adding one additional vehicle Monday – Friday for 13 hrs./day x 250 service days= 3,250 hrs.
- Total hours = 4,125/year (3,250 + 875)
- Expanded annual operating cost 4,125 x \$84/hr. = \$346,500 per year

o Partner funding/year:

SMHC	\$36,000
City of Sanford	\$6,000
Nasson Health Care	<u>\$2,000</u>
Total	\$44,000 x 3 = \$132,000

A more detailed breakdown of costs is available in the attached proposal summary (Attachment A). Both SMPDC and YCCAC are available for any follow up conversations, or happy to meet with the Commissioners to provide further information on these items. Thank you for your consideration.

Expansion of the Southern Maine Connector Public Transportation Service

Purpose:

Increase the number of runs per day on the Southern Maine Connector route and expand service hours

The current Southern Maine Connector (SMC) service operates five days/week from 7:30am to 3:40pm between Nasson Health Care in Springvale and the Saco Transportation Center: [YCCAC SMC rack-card-2021for-web-1.pdf](#) The SMC provides regional access to essential and retail services as well as important connections to County and municipal services. The modified route will include the new judicial center located on Route 1/Elm Street in Biddeford. It connects two major job centers, Biddeford and Sanford, as well as the rural community of Alfred.

Current stops (service will also be stopping at the new Courthouse location in Biddeford):

- Nasson Health Care – Springvale
- School St lot – downtown Sanford
- Southern Maine Health Care (SMHC) – Sanford campus
- York County Courthouse – Alfred
- Jackson Corner Store – Lyman
- Market Basket – Biddeford
- Walmart - Biddeford
- SMHC – Biddeford campus
- SMHC – Barra Rd.
- SMHC – Healthcare Drive
- Saco Transportation Center

The SMC also connects to the following routes and services:

- Sanford Transit - Provides year-round in-town service from Springvale to South Sanford with designated stops, route deviation, and connects to other YCCAC services.
- Orange Line - The Orange Line operates year-round between Sanford and Wells with designated stops, route deviation and connecting services, including the Wells Regional Transportation Center/Downeaster Amtrak service.
- WAVE - Provides year-round, curb to curb workforce transportation service connecting Sanford to Biddeford and Sanford to Wells.
- BSOOB Transit – connects to all routes at the Saco Transportation Center.
- Downeaster Amtrak service at the Saco Transportation Center.

Goals:

- Increase access to key employment and healthcare locations for York County residents
- Provide more service frequency and decrease time between runs
- Expand service hours earlier in the morning and later in the afternoon to better align with employment shift times and worker needs
- Reassign some current WAVE transportation service riders to SMC when appropriate to increase efficiency and decrease agency cost per trip
- Modify route to include new York County courthouse facility on Route 1 in Biddeford
- Eventually serve proposed new York County facilities on Layman Way (near the current County jail) and the York County Shelter in Alfred

- Help to reduce the amount of traffic on Route 111 between Sanford and Biddeford. This is one of the most heavily traveled roads in York County, with daily traffic counts of 13,418 in Alfred, 15,764 in Lyman and 22,552 in Biddeford.

Need:

- The current headways/time between runs on the SMC are very long, limiting the options for residents. Adding a vehicle will provide service roughly every hour.
- Although we provide connections to most BSOOB routes at the Saco Transportation Center, currently the SMC only connects with the BSOOB Zoom service to/from Portland once in the morning - for the last trip north at 8:44am. There is also no connection in the afternoon. Expanded service hours will make better connections in both the AM and PM, including transfers to Zoom for the 6:00 am run heading into Portland from Biddeford.
- While our WAVE service, which provides trips for employment, between Sanford/Springvale and Biddeford/Saco has very good ridership and popularity, it is a pre-scheduled service providing almost door-to-door trips. This is very labor intensive and more costly. With the expanded SMC options, we plan to move many of the WAVE riders (if appropriate based on need) to SMC for their trips. This would also allow us to utilize the WAVE vehicle capacity as a feeder service for the SMC, and also the possibility of a micro transit service to augment the SMC.

YCCAC has worked with several of its partners during the development of the SMC service including: City of Sanford:

- Provides annual funding support
- YCCAC and the City are coordinating the location of shelters and bus stop signs at SMC stops in Sanford. These are planned to be installed in 2022.

Southern Maine Health Care (SMHC):

- Provides \$36,000 per year in funding support
- (when fares are collected) provides bus passes for staff and trip vouchers for patients - YCCAC meets every other month with SMHC staff to review the service

York County:

- YCCAC was involved in the discussions and planning sessions for relocating and consolidating the County Court system, which will be located in Biddeford.
- We have agreed to modify the SMC route to include a stop at the new County Court House complex which is under construction and located on Route 1 in Biddeford

Estimated Cost:

- \$84/hour operating expense
- Expanding service hours for existing vehicle/runs, including driver time before/after revenue service (5am - 6pm) = 3.5 additional hours per day ○ 3.5 x 250 service days excluding holidays = 875 hours
- Adding one additional vehicle Monday - Friday:
 - 13 hours/day
 - 250 service days excluding holidays ○ 13 x 250 = 3,250
- Total hours = 4,125/year (3,250 + 875)
- 4,125 x \$84/hour = \$346,500 annual operating cost

Total 3-year cost for increased service = \$ 1,039,500 Partner

funding/year:

SMHC	\$36,000
City of Sanford	\$6,000
Nasson Health Care	<u>\$2,000</u>
Total	\$44,000 x 3 = \$132,000

Projected fare revenue: 3,200 x \$3.56 average fare = 11,392/year = \$34,176 for three years

\$1,039,500 - partner funding (\$132,000) - fare revenue (\$34,176) = \$882,324

Estimated ridership:

With the addition of one vehicle, our ridership estimate is 3,200 trips per year.

- Estimating that approximately 50% of WAVE service riders will be able to utilize expanded SMC service (2,000 trips per year)
- With increase service frequency, we estimate 1,200 additional trips per year (ridership was 622 for FY 2021 during Covid).