

# Casco Bay Lines Finance Committee

Meeting 8/20/2025

## Agenda 2b: Vehicle Data Review - background

- Vehicle rate change implemented 6/21/25
  - Advance vehicle ticket buying until last day before rate change with 60 day validity helped people transition to new rates
  - Allowed tickets purchased at old rates valid through 6/20 could be used until 8/19
  - We will not have a full summer month of vehicle ticket sales at the new rates in 2025
  - Stated differently, the true impact of the vehicle tariffs will not be known until the end of the 2026 summer season
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- CBL vehicle data from 3 sources:
    - Financial statements sent with Finance Committee materials for each monthly meeting, 2 mos in arrears: in Aug we receive June
    - Vehicle ridership, after end of a month processing (number of vehicles on ferry as counted by mate, includes back and forth)
    - Vehicle ticket sales from RocketRez software, prior month sent with Finance Comm meeting materials (vehicle ticket sales in \$ and units by month compared to same month in prior year)

## Agenda 2b: Vehicle Data Review – preliminary

| vehicle ridership peaks |       |       |             |          |          |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------------|----------|----------|
|                         | June  | July  | 2 mos Total | change % | change # |
| 2025                    | 5,548 | 5,331 | 10,879      | -2.7%    | (299)    |
| 2024                    | 5,240 | 5,938 | 11,178      | -1.7%    | (197)    |
| 2023                    | 5,432 | 5,943 | 11,375      |          |          |
|                         |       |       |             |          |          |

- Vehicle revenue and ridership trend down over last 2 years, 2024 vehicle ridership to Peaks down 1.7% or 197 vehicles in June/July period compared to 2023
- In June/July 2025 downward trend continued with decline of 2.7% or 299 vehicles compared to 2024
- Finance vehicle rate change model predicted decrease in vehicle ticket sales with price increase
- Data on tourist visits to Maine and Portland not yet available; Canadian visits down 29% in June-July, per CBP
- Advance vehicle ticket buying masked full impact of price change
- It is too early to tell what the impact of vehicle rate change will be on vehicle ridership

# Vehicle Rate Change Data – pass sales Peaks, RocketRez

|                                                        | 25-Jun | 25-Jul | 2 mos 25    | 24-Jun | 24-Jul | 2 mos 24   | change #   | change %   |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------------|--------|--------|------------|------------|------------|
| 90 day pass                                            | 62     | 62     | 124         | 125    | 32     | 157        | -33        |            |
| 90 day pass w<br>vehicle add on                        | 59     | 48     | 107         | 0      | 0      | 0          | 107        |            |
| 90 day senior pass                                     | 34     | 23     | 231         | 62     | 10     | 157        | 74         |            |
| 90 day senior pass w<br>vehicle add on                 | 56     | 52     | 108         | 0      | 0      | 0          | 108        |            |
| <b>total adult 90 day</b>                              |        |        | <b>570</b>  |        |        | <b>314</b> | <b>256</b> | <b>82%</b> |
|                                                        |        |        |             |        |        |            |            |            |
| annual pass                                            | 158    | 55     | 213         | 152    | 16     | 168        | 45         | 27%        |
| annual pass senior                                     | 177    | 70     | 247         | 131    | 32     | 163        | 84         | 52%        |
| <b>total adult annual<br/>pass</b>                     |        |        | <b>460</b>  |        |        | <b>331</b> | <b>129</b> | <b>39%</b> |
|                                                        |        |        |             |        |        |            |            |            |
| <b>vehicle discount eligible total in 2 mo period</b>  |        |        | <b>675</b>  |        |        |            |            |            |
| <b>total pass sales 90 and annual, 2 mo<br/>period</b> |        |        | <b>1030</b> |        |        | <b>645</b> | <b>385</b> | <b>60%</b> |

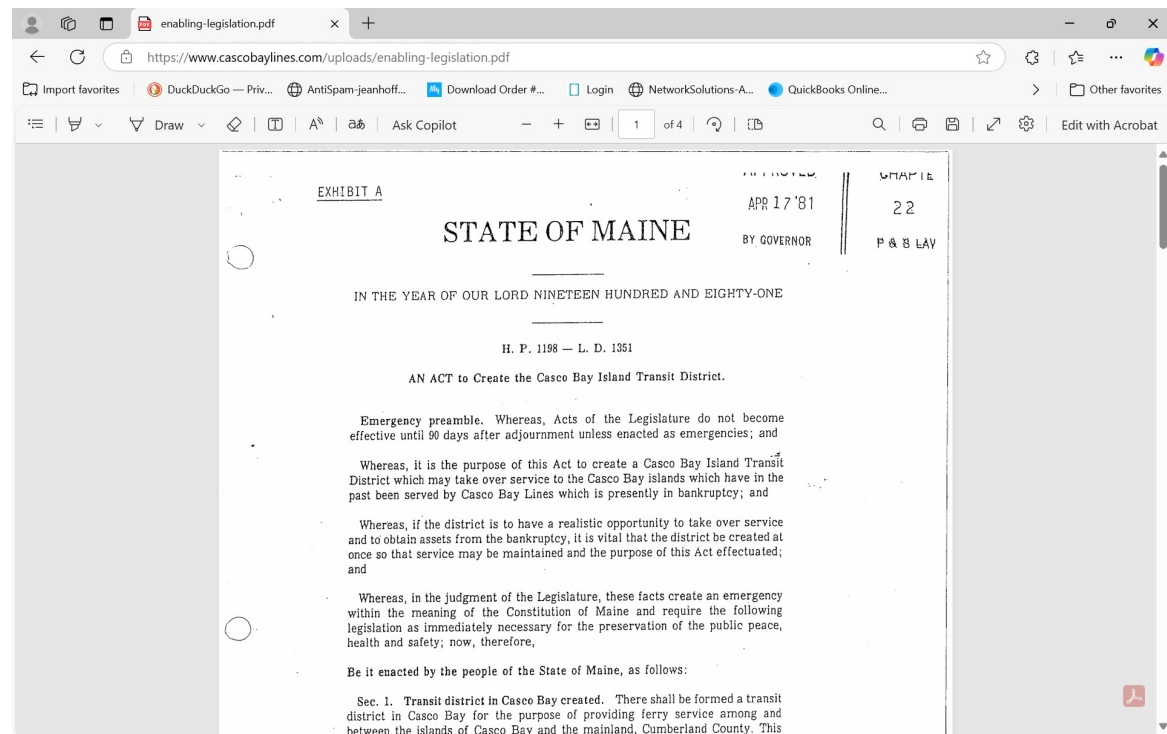
## Pass Sales Peaks, from RocketRez: trends

- Annual pass or 90 day pass with vehicle supplement allows purchase of vehicle tickets at passholder rates
- Passholder rate discount is key to affordability for islanders and those who work on or serve Peaks, 90 day pass with supplement broadens eligibility to summer residents who purchase pass
- Growth in discount eligible pass purchases and growth in handicapped ticket sales are notable
- Note that anyone may purchase any pass, no residence requirement
- Vehicle revenue will not be available in financial statements for months, full impact of rate change will not show this summer due to advance buying
  - RocketRez shows July vehicle sales\$ up 13%

# CBL Statute: Support “inhabitants of the islands” “assure income to meet the cost of the service”

Sec 1. Transit District in Casco Bay created. ...do all things necessary to furnish waterborne transportation... including incidental tour and charter service, for public purposes in the interest of ... the inhabitants of the islands comprising the district.

Sec 8. Directors may establish such routes and shall fix such rates of fare to be charged for such public transportation service as shall to the extent possible reasonably assure sufficient income to meet the cost of the service.



# CBL Deficit Reduction Goal

- **Revenue** from operations is less than **expense** of operations. Result: operating deficit
- **Revenue** a function of volume in each category (passenger, vehicle, freight, tours/charters) & fares; vehicle fares not increased in 17 years
- **Expenses** increased at 2x inflation, moderated since 2023
  - Inflation 46% since last fare increase
    - Notably: fuel, wages (personnel is CBL's highest expense)
  - Increased service down the bay (KPFF schedule) + modifications
- Finance Committee recommended and Board voted in 2023, 2024, 2025 to direct staff to reduce deficit

# History of CBL Deficit

- Long ago CBL broke even, managed expenses to stay within income
- Model changed: expenses grew without proportionate revenue increase, obtained government grants to cover resulting losses
- Historical loss pattern: *moderate* ~**-\$1.5m** a year; 2019 loss **-\$2.4m**
- Pattern changed: Covid losses and grant dependence increased
  - **Losses 2020-2022: -\$4.6m, -\$5.8m, -\$4.5m**
- Post covid, ridership recovered, loss stayed high **-\$4.5m in FY 2023**
  - Auditor advice: increase fares
  - Board direction: reduce deficit

Progress in FY 2024, management met goal of reducing deficit; passenger rate change



## Agenda 2c: Discussion of Structure for New Rate Framework for Large Vehicles

- Vehicles of <6000 lbs: standard sized pickup trucks & vans
  - Includes vehicles with commercial plates and regular/non-commercial plates
  - Same size vehicles take same deck space irrespective of license plate type
  - Align around classifying these standard size vehicles within new vehicle tariff
    - \$150/\$170 peak season and \$70/\$100 off peak
    - Passholder discount available
    - <6000 lb gvwt category represents majority of commercial vehicles, some are islander or small business serving island owned, some are large company owned
- Propose revised structure based on length (not weight), begin large (formerly commercial) class of vehicle at >20-21'

## Classes 1,2,3.... Large Vehicles

- Operations discussing and researching vehicle traffic to recommend classes
  - Examples: 21-30', 30-35' or 30-40' .....
- Vehicle size defined as total length with any extensions
  - Include extensions in size for determining fare class: trailer, bike rack, kayak, lumber
  - No passholder discount above 21' (standard truck), no fare variability by day of week
  - Peak off-peak seasonal fare change
  - Fares and class definitions by length to be determined
  - Fair system, charge based on space taken (not weight as under current tariff)
    - Example: Suburban with bike rack 27' long, would pay appropriate class of fare for 27' vehicle
    - Large trucks would pay appropriate class of fare based on length
    - Standard car or truck with extension, lumber or kayaks or trailer, would pay based on length

## Other Considerations

- Reservations currently available for commercial vehicles only
- Charge \$25 (\$50 on weekend)
  - Determine how to apply based on new classifications
  - Increase reservations fee, has not been raised in years

## Next meeting September 17

- September Finance Committee meeting focus on 2026 budget
- Some further discussion on large vehicle rates