

**TO:** Casco Bay Lines Board of Directors

**FROM:** Ben Dinsmore, GM

**DATE:** May 28, 2026

**RE:** May Update

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As we move into late May, the rhythm of the bay is shifting. Summer residents and visitors are beginning to return, ridership is climbing, and the terminal is once again alive with the familiar flurry of activity headed out to the islands. It's a welcome sight, and a reminder of just how much this service means to the communities we serve. This season also arrives on the heels of meaningful change at Casco Bay Lines, not only the recently approved passenger rate adjustments, but a range of new policies and procedures that touch nearly every part of our operation. Change of this scale is never easy. I want to recognize the grace, composure, and professionalism our staff continues to show, day in and day out, as we navigate through these changes. Their work is the reason these transitions have gone as smoothly as they have.

**Vessel Repairs/Drydocks:**

Aucocisco III:

The Aucocisco III is currently out of service while the port and starboard gensets are being replaced. The new units were purchased last year and were slated to be installed next spring during the vessel's scheduled drydock period. Unfortunately, the port generator suffered a catastrophic failure last week, and the decision was made to replace both gensets now.

Machigonne II

The Machigonne II missed a trip last week due to a faulty starter. Fortunately, staff had a spare on the shelf and were able to make the repair in short order.

**Four-Wheeled Wagon Policy:**

I want to pass along a friendly reminder that four-wheeled wagons are not permitted as personal "carry-on" items. The current policy was approved by the board on January 22, 2009 — 17 years ago. As designed, the policy affords captains and freight agents discretion to allow exceptions on trips with a limited number of passengers. Use of these wagons has increased over the last few months, and staff have been taking measures, as intended, to help ensure the safety of passengers and crew. These wagons take up additional deck space, create tripping hazards, and block access

to safety equipment, walkways, and escape routes. For a detailed explanation of what carts and wagons are permissible, please refer to our website: <https://www.cascobaylines.com/portland-ferry-rates/island-freight-info/>

### **Training:**

Training continues with both shoreside and boat staff, and we have certified one new captain. Staff continues to develop training materials for the Battery Steele as systems are installed and commissioned on the vessel. Trips to Senesco have increased in frequency as sea trial and commissioning activities ramp up in preparation for delivery.

### **Scheduling Review:**

I will be presenting a review of, and lessons learned from, the system-wide schedule and fleet analysis conducted in 2017. The goal of this presentation is twofold: first, to illustrate the level of resources that go into such an endeavor; and second, to help establish goals and boundaries for any future schedule change planning. The presentation includes an analysis of trips that have been added since FY2019, along with a cost breakdown on a per-trip and per-passenger basis, as well as a correlation between increasing service levels and rising operating costs.

<https://www.cascobaylines.com/uploads/Schedule-Analysis-Presentation-May-2026-1.pdf>

### **New Passenger Rate Adjustments:**

Last month, the board voted to adopt the Finance Committee's recommended adjustments to passenger fare tickets and passes. Staff has submitted these changes to the Maine PUC, and the new rates are scheduled to take effect June 20th.

### **E-Ticketing Presentation:**

This month, I will also be leading a discussion on e-ticketing and what it could potentially mean for Casco Bay Lines. The goal is to achieve board alignment on what we mean when we talk about "e-ticketing," what CBL's needs are with regard to e-ticketing, what the costs are, and where similar agencies have struggled in their implementations.

<https://www.cascobaylines.com/uploads/CBITD-E-Ticketing-May-2026-1.pdf>

### **Large Vehicle Implementation:**

The roll-out of the new large vehicle rate structure continues to be very successful. I want to extend another huge shout-out to the staff for the exceptional job they have been doing helping customers navigate the new process, especially those returning for the summer season. As crew and passengers become more familiar with the process, we have decided to hold off on painting hashmarks on the curb, since the process is becoming more routine. For more information on the changes and rules regarding vehicles of various lengths, please refer to the poster that has been conspicuously displayed in the terminal waiting area:

<https://www.cascobaylines.com/uploads/Large-Vehicle-Poster-v1.0.pdf>

## **Off-Peak/Peak Ticket Policy:**

As of April 18th, blue tickets are no longer accepted for boarding Casco Bay ferries, as we have transitioned to peak season rates — even if the blue tickets have not expired. I want to thank the staff for their patience and professionalism throughout this transition. Unused, unexpired blue tickets can be refunded or traded in toward the purchase of peak season (yellow) tickets. This is a major policy change that was approved by the board last year, and staff has been extremely proactive in communicating it. In addition to posters and signage placed throughout the terminal, we sent text and E-News alerts the week prior to remind passengers of the change. For more information on the new policy and exchange options, please see the poster, which is also available on the Casco Bay website: <https://www.cascobaylines.com/uploads/CBL-Peak-Season-Ticket-Policy.pdf>

## **Terminal:**

We continue to experience technical difficulties with our Cisco Webex video conference system for board and committee meetings. Staff has been working to identify and resolve these issues with our IT contractor, our service provider, and the manufacturer of the system. Unfortunately, the support we have received during troubleshooting has been disappointing, and we are exploring more reliable alternatives.

Security remains a top priority at the terminal. Our improved signage and staggered security rounds have helped significantly, and we are pleased to see continued police presence through Portland's constable program, which brings uniformed officers on roving patrols.

Staff has been coordinating with Prock Marine on minor adjustments to the floating transfer bridge once Battery Steele is ready to be placed into full-time service. Because the vessel is a double-ender, the deck freeboard was raised on what is considered the Portland end, which requires the bridge to sit about a foot higher on the pontoon supporting the end of the bridge. The work should take only a few hours, and Prock is looking at performing it at night so as not to impact CBL's regular schedule.

Staff has submitted a grant request to the FTA for funds to design and build a new ramp pontoon to replace the existing pontoon under the vehicle ramp at Gate 5. The existing pontoon has reached the end of its useful life and represents a major failure point within our system.

## **Battery Steele:**

Commissioning work and testing have been ongoing for the past couple of months, and all systems appear to be working as designed. Based on that work, the shipyard plans to begin DVTP (Design Verification Test Procedures) and PSTP (Periodic Safety Test Procedures) testing with the U.S. Coast Guard on June 1st. The testing will run through all of the vessel's operating systems and will also verify that all safety features and protective systems work as designed and intended. It is expected to take approximately six days to complete. Senesco and ABB will perform additional pre-checks and testing on May 28th and 29th in preparation for the Coast Guard testing. If all goes according to plan, that testing will be followed by Builders Trials on

June 9th (running five days), and then Sea Trials on June 15th (running approximately four days). Sea Trials are again conducted with the Coast Guard and constitute the final set of tests required before the vessel is prepared for delivery. Any issues identified during testing will be addressed and corrected, and once everything is satisfactory to the Coast Guard, the design team, and CBL, the vessel will be cleaned and prepared to travel to Maine. The yard currently anticipates delivering the vessel beginning June 23rd. If they are able to depart Rhode Island on the 23rd, they would arrive in Maine that night or early the next morning.

#### **Down Bay Vessel:**

BHGI has begun early design work and is also putting together a design document on the proposed propulsion system based on the accepted Preliminary Design Report. That document will be used in conjunction with an RFP (Request for Proposals) to solicit a vessel integrator and propulsion system provider. BHGI expects to have the technical document ready for CBL by June 5th. Once received, CBL will advertise the RFP to begin the procurement process.

#### **MaineDOT Piers:**

Last month, CBL executed an agreement with MaineDOT for reimbursement of barge service during the painting of the Peaks Island transfer bridge tower. Reimbursement is capped at \$100,000 and must cover up to 30 days, which would only support roughly four to five barge round trips per day. We have requested additional funding, but DOT has not changed its position. The bridge closure window runs from mid-October through mid-May, with DOT imposing damages for overruns and offering incentives for early completion. Staff continues to coordinate plan reviews for both this project and the Cliff Island Pier Replacement.

#### **TAM Plan:**

Staff has begun work on an update to CBL's Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan. The TAM Plan is required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and helps identify critical assets that, if not kept in a state of good repair, could lead to breakdowns and schedule impacts. It must be updated at least every four years, or whenever there are major changes to our assets. This update will add the Battery Steele and the shore charging equipment to the plan and adjust current condition assessments for all of our assets. It will also help us stay compliant with the four-year update requirement.

As always, I welcome any questions or feedback from the board. Thank you for your continued support.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Dinsmore". The signature is stylized and includes a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Ben Dinsmore, GM