

RTP

LAKES REGION EXPLORER

Route Overview

The Lakes Region Explorer connects communities on the Route 302 corridor with Portland. The route operates between Bridgton and downtown Portland with stops in Naples, Casco, Raymond, Windham, and Westbrook. There are four inbound and four outbound trips every weekday, and the route will deviate on request or conduct flag stops. The route’s low frequency and 7:30 AM arrival time in Portland (before 9:00 AM shifts and after 7:00 AM shifts begin) means it is primarily a lifeline service for people without vehicles living to the northwest of Portland. The Lakes Region Explorer is the only route operated by the Regional Transportation Program (RTP), which primarily operates demand-response service in Cumberland County.

Alignment

The route operates bi-directionally on Route 302, with a terminal loop around Bridgton which serves Bridgton Hospital and Bridgton Community Center. Much of the alignment in Portland duplicates the METRO Route 2, but with fewer stops. The route deviates slightly to serve the Naples American Legion and the Elmwood Ave at SR 302/Bridgton Road Park-and-Ride.



Connections

The Lakes Region Explorer serves the PULSE and Congress Street in Portland, allowing for transfers with BSOOB Transit, METRO, and SPBS routes.

Schedule

The Lakes Region Explorer operates four round trips per day, with headways of over three hours in both the morning and evening periods.

Schedule Summary

	Span of Service	Headways (mins.)	Revenue Hours
Weekdays	6:00 AM to 1:05 PM 3:45 PM to 10:15 PM	190 in AM 205 in PM	10
Saturday	<i>Seasonal Only</i>	-	-
Sunday	<i>No Service</i>		

Span and frequency data are from February 2020 schedules and revenue hour and ridership data are from March 2021.

The route has a strong span of service and operates from early morning to late night, however there is a large gap during midday when no service operates.

Ridership and Productivity

Ridership and Productivity by Day

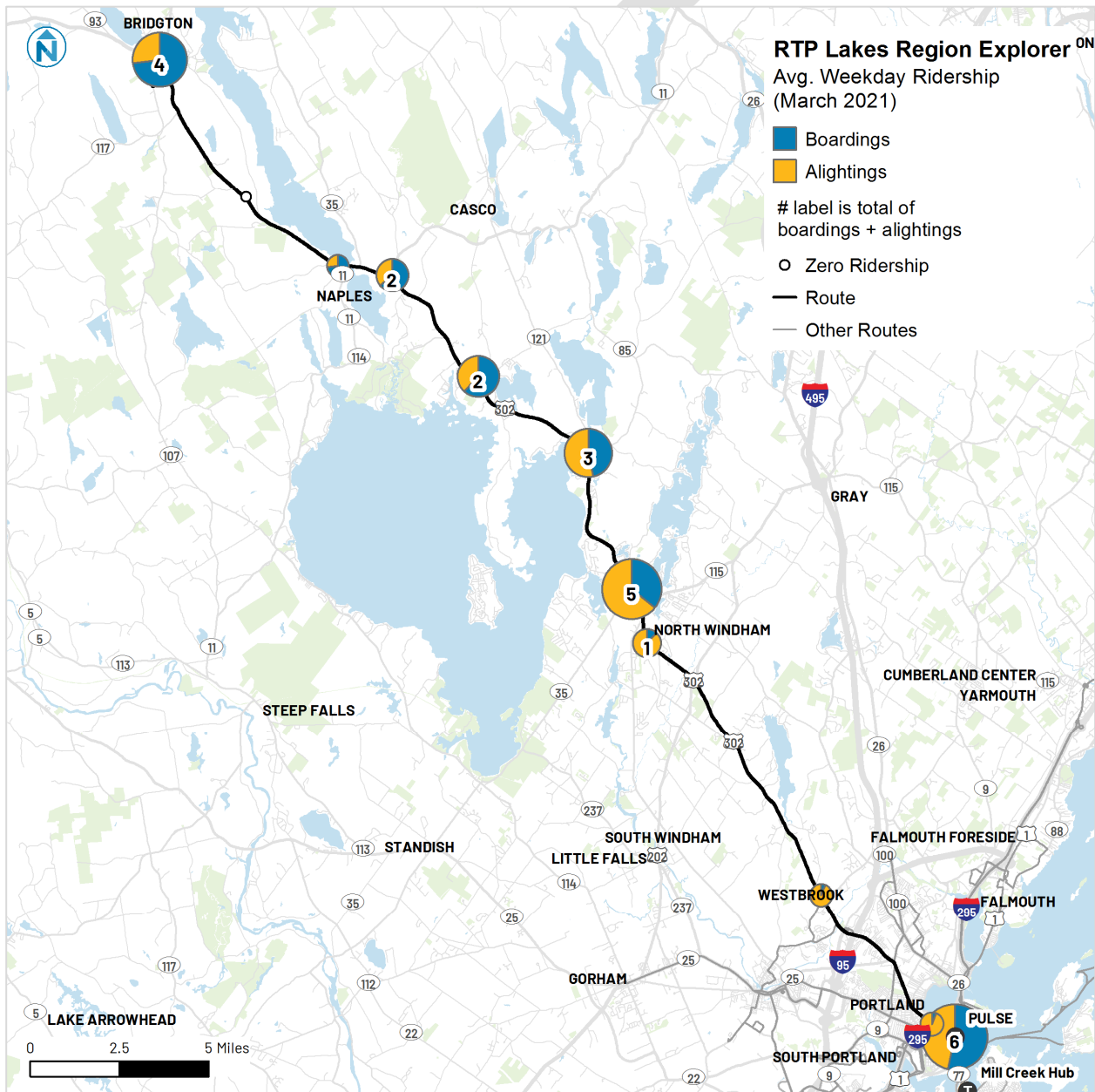
Ridership on the Lakes Region Explorer is very low, with a daily weekday average of only 13 boardings across the entire route in March 2021. Consequently, the route had very low productivity, carrying only 1.3 boardings per revenue hour.

Weekday Ridership by Stop

In March 2021, the Lakes Region Explorer’s highest average weekday-ridership stops were:

- Downtown Portland, with six boardings and alightings
- North Windham Shopping Center, with five boardings and alightings
- Bridgton, with four boardings and alightings

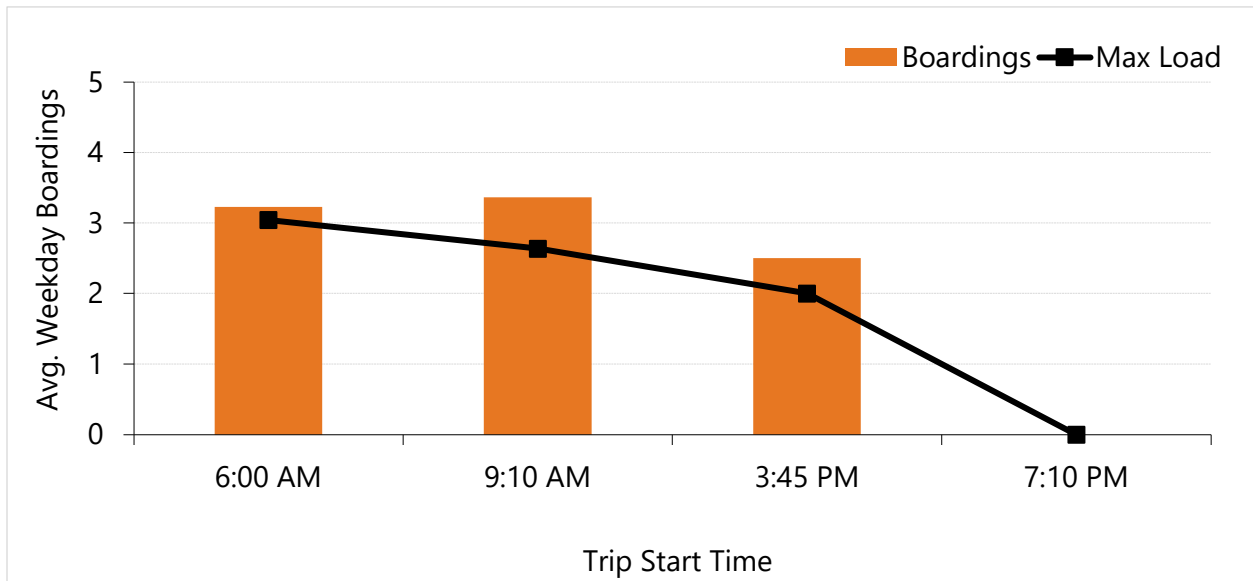
Weekday Ridership by Stop Map (March 2021)



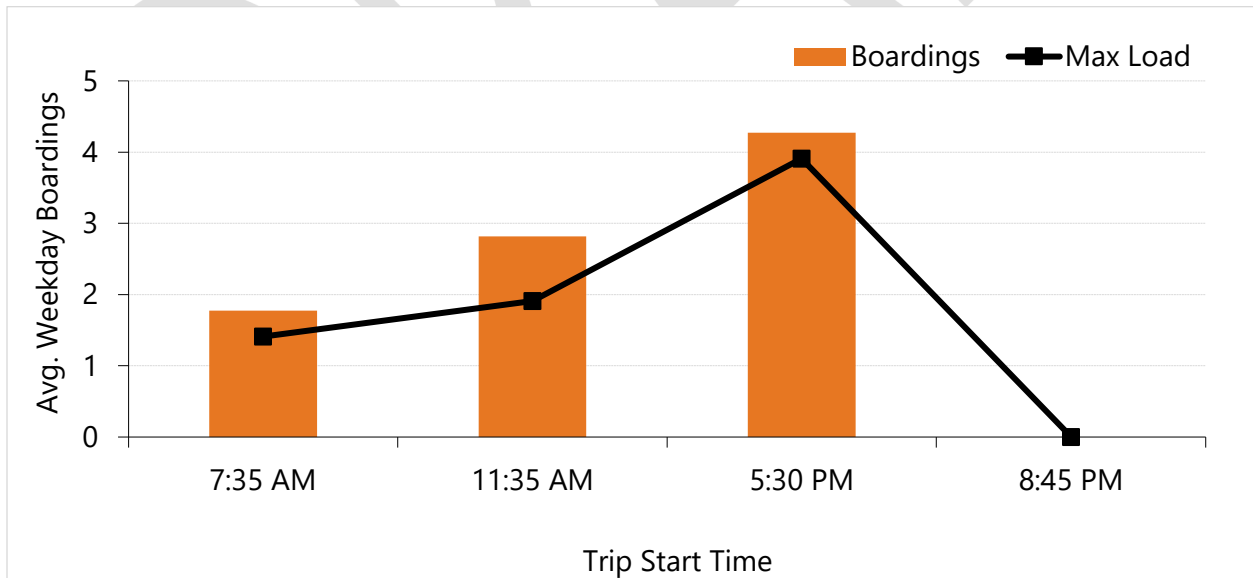
Weekday Ridership by Trip

In March 2021, Lakes Region Explorer ridership was relatively low across all time periods, with approximately two to four boardings per trip. Passenger loads on all trips were well below seated capacity. The last inbound and outbound trips averaged zero riders.

Weekday Boardings by Trip: Inbound (March 2021)



Weekday Boardings by Trip: Outbound (March 2021)



Overall Service Assessment

Strengths

- The Lakes Region Explorer has a simple, direct alignment with few stops which minimizes travel time.
- The route provides the only fixed-route service to the Lakes Region.

Weaknesses

- Only operating four trips per day makes the route very inconvenient for riders.
- Seasonal-only Saturday service limits the potential market for people working in Portland on weekends.

Opportunities

Opportunities to strengthen the Lakes Region Explorer are listed below. Some suggestions may be contradictory, as there is usually more than one approach to improving a route.

- The last inbound and outbound Lakes Region Explorer trip averages zero ridership. Operating this trip during the mid-day period may be a better use of resources.
- Regional travel flows show substantial numbers of trips between the Windham and Portland areas. Increasing service frequency and/or better marketing the service may increase ridership.
- Because this route already operates on extremely infrequent headways, extending the route to an additional destination, such as the Portland Ferry Terminal, Portland Transportation Center, or Southern Maine Community College would not dramatically change the frequency of the route but would provide one-seat ride access to another key destination for people living on the Route 302 corridor.
- The Lakes Region Explorer, METRO BREEZ, and BSOOB Transit Route 70 are all express bus routes operating to and from Portland. Branding these routes similarly with names such as “BREEZ North”, “BREEZ West”, and “BREEZ South” (or “ZOOM North”, etc.), may make the region’s express/commuter bus system easier to understand and navigate, and increase ridership.
- The regional DiriGO fare program could be enhanced so the Lakes Region Explorer could accept the farecard for riders transferring between other regional transit providers and the LRE. Joining a unified fare system would make regional travel simpler for residents and tourists.
- The Southern Maine Transit Tracker app provides real time information for other providers in the region. LRE has a separate real time tracking tool – integrating into one tool for riders would promote more seamless travel throughout the region.