

Downeast Transportation and Island Explorer, Maine



(Source: Downeast Transportation)



Island Explorer Shuttle (Source: Volpe Center)



Island Explorer bicycle trailer
(Source: Downeast Transportation)

Location: Hancock County, Maine (*Rural Transit*)

Project Type: Rural transit providing year-round access to jobs and services since 1979 and seasonal access to Acadia National Park since 1999.

Transit Funding:

- FTA rural funds, FTA jobs access funds; National Park Service, LL Bean, local businesses, municipalities
- *Total annual budget* : ~ \$2M

Federal Partners:

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
National Park Service (NPS)

Livability Goals:

- ✓ Provide more transportation choices
- ✓ Support existing communities
- ✓ Coordinate policies and leverage investment
- ✓ Value communities and neighborhoods

Project Description:

Downeast Transportation, a private non-profit agency, partners with public and private entities to provide transportation seasonal and year-round services in Hancock County, Maine. The 12 Downeast routes connect to the towns of Bangor, Bar Harbor, Blue Hill, Ellsworth, and Southwest Harbor. Residents and visitors rely on the service to access jobs, shopping, ferry terminals, trails, and recreation. All transit vehicles carry bicycles, further expanding the range of destinations reachable by transit.

Downeast Transportation runs two primary services – jobs access to major employers such as Jackson Laboratories in Bar Harbor, and the Island Explorer shuttle system on Mount Desert Island. Downeast routes bring employees from as far as 60 miles away to the Laboratory and nearby businesses, and support multiple shifts; Downeast assists employers to provide employees with a “transit-friendly” shift, so that they can ride transit to work. Downeast leverages FTA jobs access funds to help provide other transit service in the county at off-peak times. To support riders with special needs, Downeast serves passengers at destinations up to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the fixed route service, at no additional fee. Passengers must call 24 hours in advance to request the route deviation.

Through a partnership with the National Park Service, LL Bean, and local businesses, Downeast Transportation also operates the seasonal Island Explorer shuttle on Mount Desert Island. The eight routes serving Acadia National Park and the town of Bar Harbor carried more than 400,000 people in 2010. The service provides access to a variety of destinations, reducing traffic on congested roads, pollution, and damage from illegal parking. The system enhances the visitor experience by utilizing intelligent transportation systems (ITS) that provide real-time service information. Transit vehicles include bicycle racks and trailers to support longer distance trips.



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Community Outreach:

Downeast Transportation began as support for an expanded “Meals for Me” program, bringing seniors to meals, community centers, shopping, and medical appointments. It has evolved to provide access to a range of services to meet community needs.

Downeast is planning a new Welcome Center in Trenton to include offices, vehicle storage and maintenance, an intermodal transit facility, and Acadia Gateway Visitor Center. This will provide better access to the region for inter-city and day visitors.

Key Partners:

- Maine DOT
- Friends of Acadia
- L.L. Bean
- Jackson Laboratories
- Communities in Hancock County

Livability Highlights:

Provide more transportation choices: Downeast services provide visitors, residents, and commuters with additional travel options. Bicycle racks and trailers on vehicles further expand the range of destinations accessible by transit.

Promote equitable, affordable housing: Downeast Transportation provides commuter services to users who must travel long distances to get to employment.

Enhance economic competitiveness: Commuter services accommodate multiple shifts, providing flexibility to support both employers and employees. Access to businesses and tourist destinations provides necessary support to the local economy.

Support existing communities: Hancock County residents rely on Downeast Transportation services to commute to work, access nearby shopping, and travel to neighboring towns. Use of the seasonal Island Explorer helps to maintain community character by reducing traffic congestion and pollution and supporting the local community.

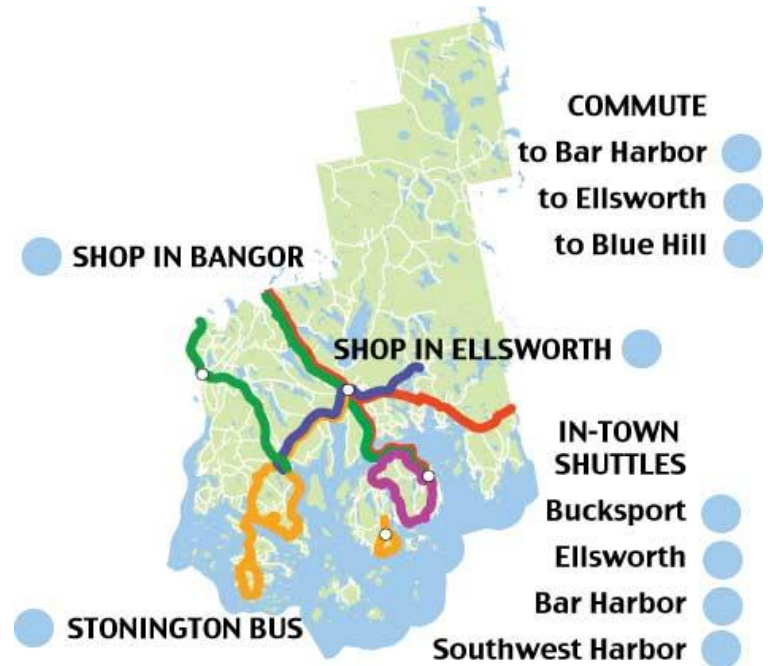
Coordinate policies and leverage investment: Downeast has effectively partnered with public and private entities, securing long-term funding support from the NPS and L.L. Bean for the Island Explorer service. The agency also creatively combines Federal funding sources to better support year-round access to jobs and services throughout Hancock County.

Value communities and neighborhoods: The Island Explorer provides visitors and residents with additional transportation options in a region that experiences significant congestion in the summer. The service improves visitor and community experience with fewer private vehicles on the road and additional transportation options.

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(Source: Downeast Transportation)

Prepared for FTA by the U.S. DOT Volpe
National Transportation Systems Center

This case study, and others related to Livable
and Sustainable Communities, is available at:
http://fta.dot.gov/publications/publications_10991.html