

SOUTH PORTLAND BUS SERVICE

21 WILLARD SQUARE

Route Overview

Route 21 connects eastern South Portland with downtown Portland, serving the Knightville, Ocean Street, Meetinghouse Hill, Ferry Village, and Willard Square neighborhoods in South Portland. Key destinations on the route include Southern Maine Community College (SMCC), the Shaw’s Millcreek Plaza, Hannaford, and downtown Portland. This route serves SMCC and several low- and medium-density residential neighborhoods.

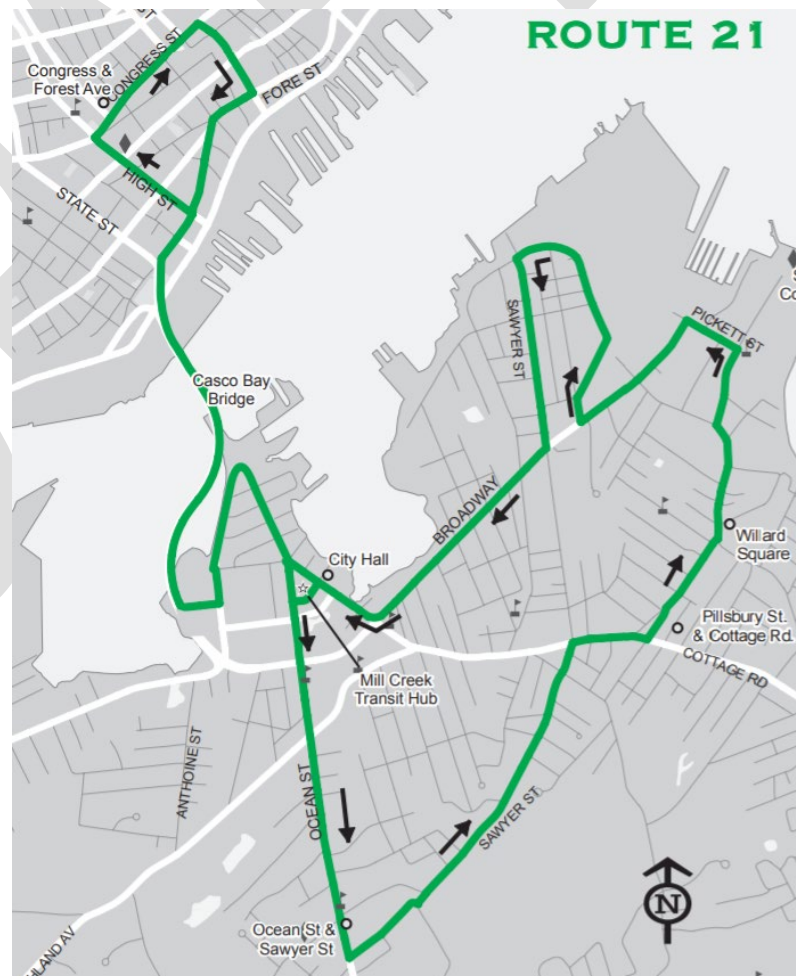
SPBS is considering adding a Route 21 Express Campus Connector, which would operate between SMCC and USM Portland, which a stop at Maine Medical Center. This route would operate bi-directionally on Broadway between Cottage Road and Preble Street, providing 30-min. frequency for connections between several destinations on the Route 21 corridor.

Alignment

Route 21 operates outbound from Forest Avenue at Congress Street in downtown Portland to Pillsbury Street at Cottage Road in South Portland via Ocean Street and Sawyer Avenue. The route serves SMCC and continues inbound on Broadway to the Mill Creek Transit Hub via a deviation through the Ferry Village neighborhood. The route then returns to downtown Portland.

Connections

Route 21 connects to all other SBPS routes at the Mill Creek Transit Hub and to METRO, RTP, and BSOOB Transit routes at Monument Square in downtown Portland.



Schedule

Route 21 operates every 60 minutes for most of the day on weekdays and Saturdays. Service before 8:30 AM operates every 45 minutes, and service after 5:30 PM operates every 35 to 45 minutes. Service frequencies are irregular and range from 83 to 147 minutes. The span of service is from 6:35 AM to 11:15 PM. Sunday service operates much less frequently and for shorter hours.

Schedule Summary (Current)

	Span of Service	Headways (mins.)	Trips
Weekdays	6:35 AM to 11:15 PM	36-60	41
Saturday	6:35 AM to 11:15 PM	36-60	41
Sunday	6:40 AM to 6:35 PM	83-147	13

Note: Span and frequency from January 2022 schedule. Trip counts from spring 2017 data.

Ridership and Productivity

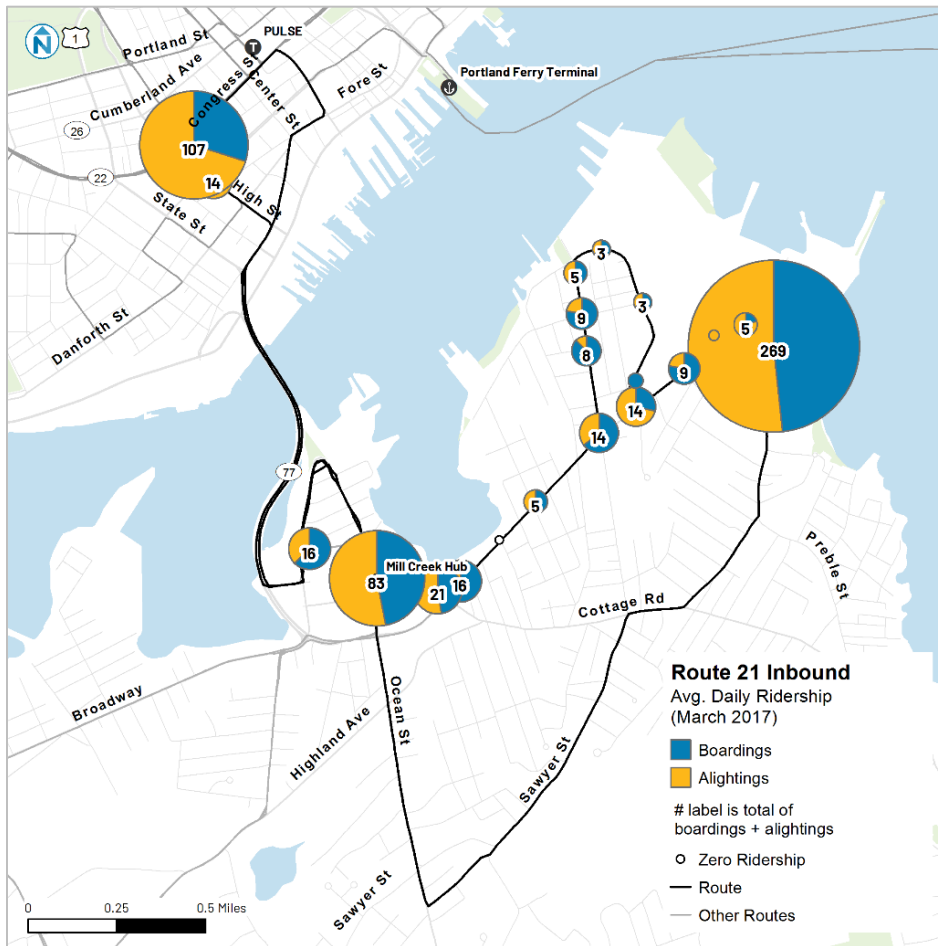
Ridership and Productivity by Day

In spring of 2017, Route 21 carried an average of 535 passengers on weekdays, 90 on Saturdays, and 59 on Sundays. On weekdays, Route 21 was SPBS' highest-ridership route. On weekends, when there is less activity at SMCC, it was SPBS' second-highest ridership SPBS route. Productivity, in terms of boardings per revenue hour, was 22 on weekdays, 15 on Saturdays, and nine on Sundays.

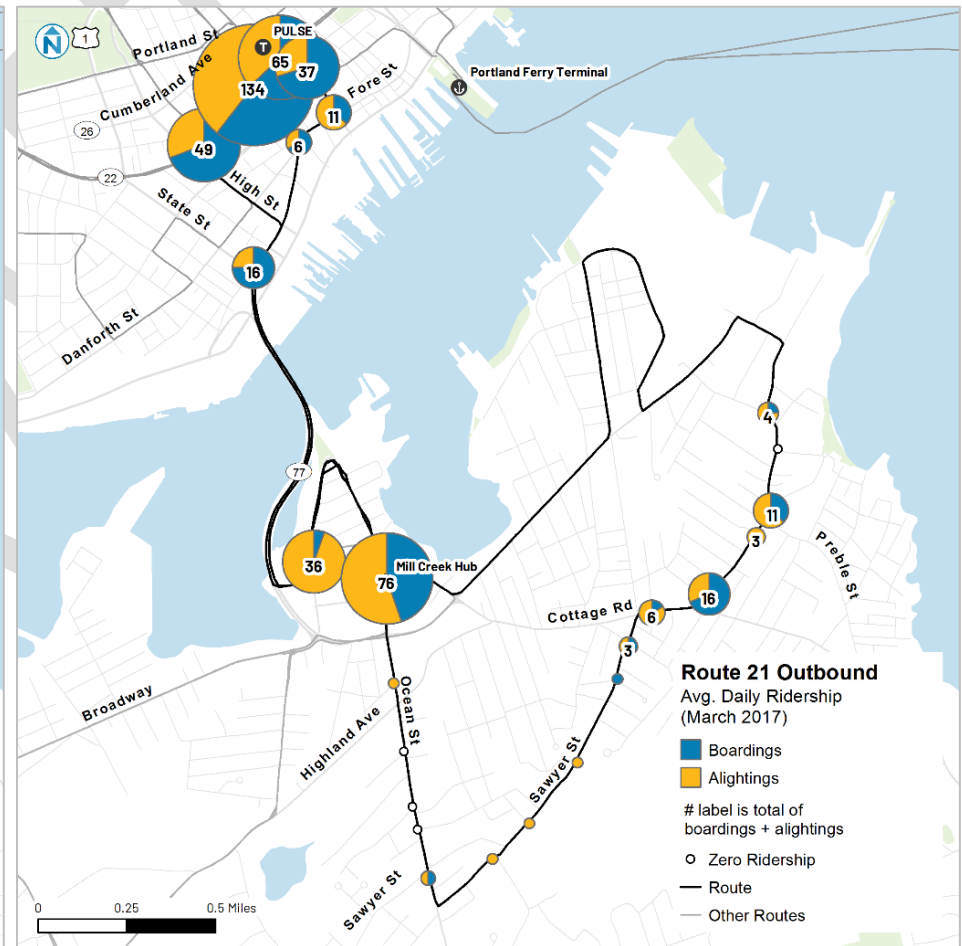
Weekday Ridership by Stop

The highest-ridership stops are in downtown Portland and at SMCC and the Mill Creek Transit Hub, which is adjacent to two major supermarkets. Ridership on the Ocean Street and Sawyer Street segments of the route is very low. It is also low on the indirect segments through Ferry Village and Knightville.

Weekday Ridership by Stop: Inbound (Spring 2017)



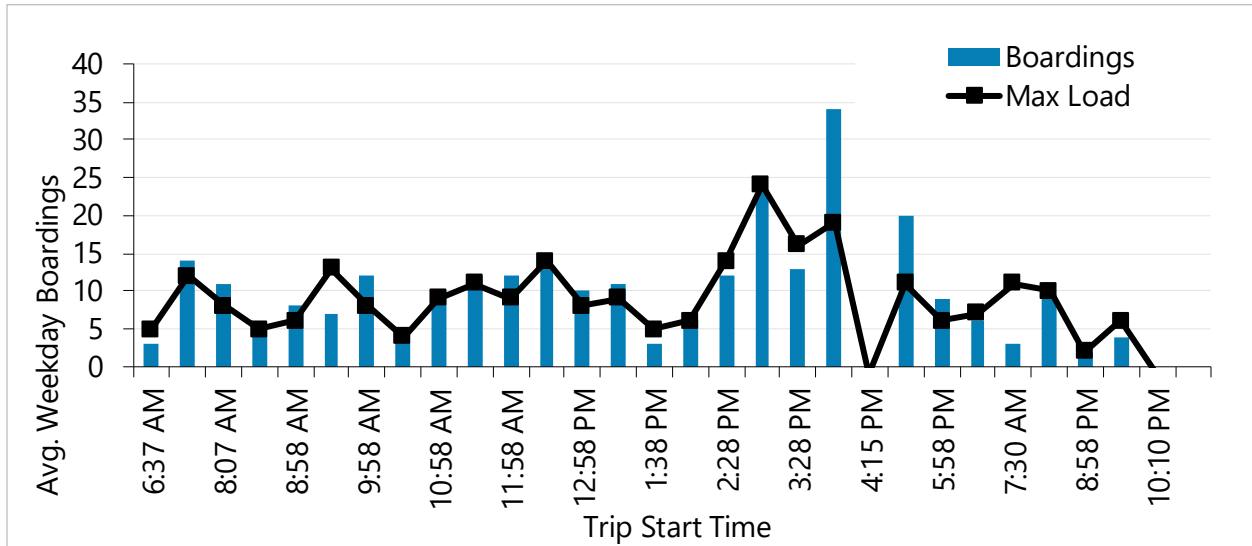
Weekday Ridership by Stop: Outbound (Spring 2017)



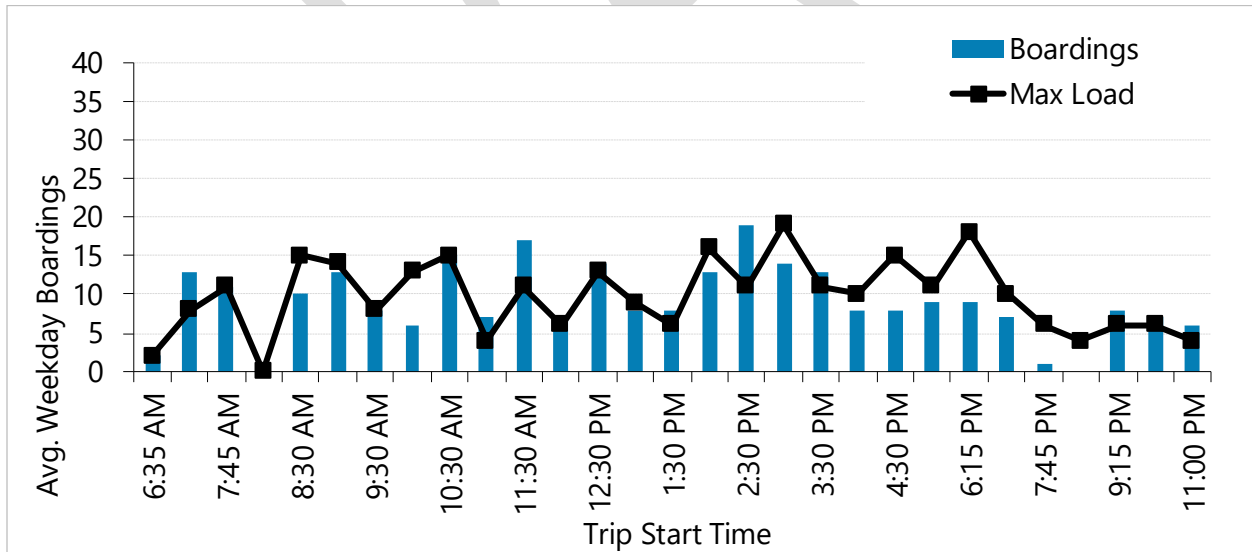
Weekday Ridership by Trip

For most of the day, ridership ranges from 10 to 15 passengers per trip. Exceptions are afternoon inbound trips that serve up to 34 passengers when students are leaving SMCC, and trips before 7:00 AM and after 5:30 PM, all of which serve fewer than 10 passengers.

Weekday Boardings by Trip: Inbound (Spring 2017)



Weekday Boarding by Trip: Inbound (Spring 2017)



Assessments and Opportunities

Strengths

- The route serves three key ridership generators, which are downtown Portland, the Mill Creek Transit Hub and adjoining area, and SMCC.
- It operates for long hours on weekdays and Saturdays.
- Ridership is relatively good overall.

Weaknesses

- The route is very circuitous, and as a result, takes most riders out of their way and increases their travel times by up to 15 minutes.
- Ridership along Ocean Street and Sawyer Street is very low and on the deviation through Knightville is low.
- Ridership is low along other out-of-direction segments, such as Cottage Road and through Ferry Village.
- Sunday service is very limited.

Opportunities

Opportunities to strengthen Route 21 are listed below. Some suggestions may be contradictory, as there is usually more than one approach to improving a route.

- Reconfigure the route to operate bi-directionally between downtown Portland and SMCC (or Cottage Road and Pillsbury Street) via Broadway and discontinue fixed-route service along Ocean Street and Sawyer Street. The proposed Route 21 Express Campus Connector would add an express bi-directional connection between Mill Creek Transit Hub and SMCC.
- Serve Ocean Street and Sawyer Street areas with microtransit to and from the Mill Creek Transit Hub.
- Discontinue the deviation north of the Mill Creek Transit Hub through Knightville, due to very low ridership.
- Increase weekday frequencies to every 30 minutes for most of the day. The proposed Route 21 Express Campus Connector would increase frequencies on portions of Route 21 to every 30 minutes.
- Increase Saturday frequencies to every 30 minutes for most of the day.
- Discontinue Sunday service to partially fund weekday and Saturday frequency improvements.
- Alternatively, improve Sunday frequencies to every 60 minutes.

- Provide heat at Mill Creek Transit Hub and SMCC shelter to make waiting more comfortable. There are plans to heat the Mill Creek Transit Hub; this will likely be achieved in the short term.
- Consider extending Route 21 to serve USM and Maine Medical Center. SMCC and USM have transfer agreements and some students take courses at both campuses. Extending Route 21 to Maine Medical Center would give South Portland residents living near Route 21 a one-seat ride to the hospital for work and healthcare purposes. The proposed Route 21 Express Campus Connector would make these connections.

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