

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

July 26, 2018  
4:00 PM  
BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center  
One Columbus Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201

MINUTES

**Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Present:**

Christine Hoyt, Adams; William Elovirta, Becket; John Boyle, Dalton; William Cooke, Great Barrington; Harvey Drosehn, Hinsdale; Peter Gallant, Lanesborough; Edward Lane, Lenox; Jim Lovejoy, Mount Washington; Sherry Youngkin, New Ashford; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Rene Wood, Sheffield; Brian O’Grady, Williamstown; and Douglas McNally, Windsor.

**Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Absent:**

Peggy Rae Henden-Wilson, Alford; Mark Webber, Cheshire; Carl McKinney, Clarksburg; Bruce Bernstein, Egremont; Neil Olsen, Florida; Steve Moritz, Lee; Donald Coburn, Monterey; William Hiller, Otis; Caleb Mitchell, Peru; Alan Hanson, Richmond; Donald Chabon, Stockbridge; and Richard Grillon, Washington.

Also, present: Robert Malnati, Sarah Vallieres, and Bridget Keegan - BRTA staff; Eli Grenier-BTM; Patti Annecharico; Clete Kus-BRPC; Tate Coleman; Amanda Drane, Berkshire Eagle; and Andy McKeever-iBerkshires.

	Voting Shares	Present	
Adams	2.18	2.18	
Alford	1.00	0.00	
Becket	1.05	1.05	
Cheshire	2.12	0.00	
Clarksburg	1.00	0.00	33.00
Dalton	2.12	2.12	needed for
Egremont	1.00	0.00	quorum
Florida	1.00	0.00	
Great Barrington	3.82	3.82	47.32 present
Hinsdale	1.29	1.29	
Lanesborough	2.87	2.87	
Lee	3.82	0.00	
Lenox	3.21	3.21	
Monterey	1.00	0.00	
Mt. Washington	1.00	1.00	
New Ashford	1.00	1.00	
North Adams	4.93	4.93	
Otis	1.00	0.00	
Peru	1.00	0.00	
Pittsfield	18.95	18.95	
Richmond	1.02	0.00	
Sheffield	1.02	1.02	
Stockbridge	2.72	0.00	
Washington	1.00	0.00	
Williamstown	2.88	2.88	
Windsor	1.00	1.00	
Disability Community	1.00	0.00	

**1) ROLL CALL**

Meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM. Ms. Irvin introduced new members of the Advisory Board: Christine Hoyt of Adams, John Boyle of Dalton, Edward Lane of Lenox, Sherry Youngkin of New Ashford, and Rene Wood of Sheffield.

**2) MINUTES OF MAY 24, 2018 MEETING- VOTE**

Mr. McNally made a motion to accept the minutes of the May 24, 2018 meeting. Mr. Gallant seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Lovejoy, Ms. Hoyt, Mr. Lane, and Ms. Wood abstained from the vote. Ms. Irvin's name was misspelled in the minutes, which will be corrected.

**3) ADMINISTRATOR`S REPORT**

Mr. Malnati said that as of 3:00 PM on July 26<sup>th</sup>, Governor Baker released an \$88 million budget submitted by the conference committee for the RTAs. He explained the budget is \$88 million, but that the funds accessible to the RTAs is \$82 million. There will be \$4 million set aside for MassDOT to distribute. Mr. Malnati stated that the \$82 million is higher than the original budget the governor has previously given of \$80.4 million. He also stated that a Task Force will be formed, including members of the House, members of the Senate, and three current or past RTA administrators, and 11 members appointed by the Governor including experts on bus planning, a representative of disabled commuters, and an outside advocate. The Task Force will be determining performance measures. Mr. Malnati stated that each RTA varies from one another having different needs, different demographics, and ridership. Mr. Malnati's concern is if there is a matrix for the State, smaller communities could lose service if the funding is tied to a statewide performance matrix. There is also another \$2 million set aside for RTAs that have an unfunded deficit that goes before a review board.

Mr. Malnati indicated that BRTA had been working with the State Auditor's office since the beginning of February on their audit of BRTA. The last time the State Auditor office was at the BRTA was around 2007. The BRTA was one of the only RTAs that received an audit report without any findings. Copies of the Audit report are available.

Mr. Gallant asked about how much BRTA is entitled to from the \$2 million. Mr. Malnati stated that it's about \$62,000. Mr. McNally asked how the \$4 million would be allocated. Mr. Malnati stated that it could be a new or old allocation formula, that the task force would determine.

**4) CASH REPORTS APRIL 2018 and MAY 2018- VOTE**

Mr. Gallant made a motion to accept the April and May 2018 cash reports. Mr. Elovirta seconded that motion which passed unanimously.

**5) SCENARIO IMPLEMENTATION - VOTE**

Mr. Malnati shared that at the last Advisory Board meeting, the members were presented both scenario A and B to fulfill the budget obligation for the \$80 million threshold. While performing due diligence, it was discovered that scenario B, reducing service to the Great Barrington area, impacted two Environmental Justice (EJ) areas the Route 21 travels through. Mr. Malnati stated that eliminating this service through Great Barrington could potentially cause problems as annually BRTA signs Federal certifications and assurances for equitable distribution of funding and services. Mr. Malnati stated that due to this, it would eliminate scenario B as an option. He showed a

power point slide based on the 2010 census data of the EJ areas in both Housatonic and in the center of Great Barrington where the senior housing is located. The bus routes currently travel through these areas. If BRTA eliminates every other hour of service for the Route 21, this will be an issue. Mr. Malnati explained that the Route 5/13 is in an EJ area, but there will still be hourly service in that area. This would eliminate Scenario B. Mr. McNally asked about the 21X, 5, 13, 15, and 16 as an issue with EJ. Mr. Malnati included in the packet the breakdown of scenario A. Mr. Gallant questioned if we had to take a vote for scenario A, even though it was the only possible option as it was not eliminating service in an EJ area.

For BRTA, the additional \$2 million for the 15 RTAs equals \$62,000. Mr. Malnati discussed the possibility of a trial later evening service using that funding. Mr. Malnati showed a possibility of Route 12, which leaves the ITC, loops through to Berkshire Crossing, back down Merrill Road to the Intermodal Center to run until 9 or 10 PM. He said this would continue for a 6 month trial to increase customers and revenue. Mr. Gallant said to investigate how many people that work at Berkshire Crossing live in Pittsfield. Mr. McNally suggested contacting employers around the surrounding Route 12 area to find out the demand or need for night service. Mr. O'Grady brought up the possibility of businesses helping to subsidize the transportation, to which Ms. Irvin agreed in regards to cooperation. Mr. McNally discussed the MassDOT additional \$4 million MOU. The Task Force will be seeking new service in innovative ways. Mr. Malnati said BRTA will need to substantiate our services using demographics. Ms. Irvin suggested using PCTV to discuss the pilot service. Mr. Malnati said BRTA will look at the efficiency of the routes to increase ridership.

Ms. Wood made a motion to accept scenario A, and Mr. Gallant seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

There was discussion after the vote. Ms. Wood stated that BRTA should not plan on any extra money from MassDOT. That \$4 million may have conditions with that funding. The Board should adopt a leaner budget and make changes.

#### **6) BUDGET YTD**

Mr. Malnati provided the layout of the budget packet for the new members present at the meeting and explained the various line items. Mr. Malnati stated the fixed route fares were under budget but thought we would be expected to receive more revenue with the increase of the Charlie card fare. Mr. Malnati stated that the fixed route expenses were under budget. HST was over budget by almost \$1 million due to increased trips, but the funding is an in and out program where expenses are offset by revenue.

#### **7) RIDERSHIP YTD**

Mr. Malnati stated that the fixed route ridership for the entire year was 841 passengers higher than last year. Mr. Malnati stated that last year BRTA lost about 6% of their ridership due to population decrease, BCC enrollment decline, and the Berkshire Mall's decreasing economy with the loss of anchor stores. Ridership is slightly up this year and BRTA has a survey out now. Mr. Boyle asked if the ridership numbers showed a decrease through all of the county or just specific locations; where is the ridership concentration loss? Mr. Malnati explained that the ridership fluctuates by month and by route. The ridership decline is a national trend. The change to the Route 1 and the addition of the Route 34 has the highest usages of wheelchairs on the fixed route. The

wheelchair ridership for FY 18 through May is 1,874 customers that may have been on the paratransit side and have transitioned possibly due to cost or convenience.

Mr. Malnati stated that paratransit ridership has increased and MassHealth rides were up 33% from last year. DMA trips have almost doubled in four years. He discussed that bicycles carried on buses as being an extension of transportation and will occur all year long.

Ms. Hoyt asked when we would see the June ridership numbers. Mr. Malnati explained that we receive each month's ridership numbers the third week of the following month. Mr. Boyle brought up the Berkshire Mall having an impact on the declining ridership.

**8) OLD BUSINESS**

None discussed.

**9) NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Vallieres shared that BRTA was the recipient of the Helping Hands Mini Grant from Mass DOT in the amount of \$1,000. These funds will be used for marketing and outreach for the Travel Training program. Two retractable banners and a BRTA table cloth have been purchased. Mr. Malnati said these banners will make the Charlie Card van more visible, which was suggested by Mr. Cooke at a previous meeting. Ms. Vallieres also stated the BRTA received 5339 discretionary money and are receiving two Gillig buses next year.

Mr. McNally suggested that it be a good idea to look into per run per route reports to have a better idea of ridership. Mr. Malnati agreed and will look at the software.

**10) NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME**

September 27, 2018 at 4:00 PM

**11) ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. McNally made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Boyle seconded the motion which passed unanimously.