

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

October 27, 2016
4:00 PM
BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center
One Columbus Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201

MINUTES

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Present:

Jeff Snoonian, Adams; Mary Cherry, Dalton; William Cooke, Gt. Barrington; Peter Gallant, Lanesborough; Channing Gibson, Lenox; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Leonard Lipton, Pittsfield; and Douglas McNally, Windsor

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Absent:

Timothy Drumm, Alford; William Elovirta, Becket; Paul Astorino, Cheshire; Carl McKinney, Clarksburg; Bruce Bernstein, Egremont; Glenn Burdick, Florida; Laurel Schialabba, Hinsdale; Thomas Wickham, Lee; Carol Edelman, Monterey; Jim Lovejoy, Mount Washington; Robert Sarnacki, Otis; Gary Stergis, Peru; Alan Hanson, Richmond; Andrew Peterson, Sheffield; Ernest Cardillo, Stockbridge; Mike Case, Washington; Brian O'Grady, Williamstown; and Vacant Disability Representative

Also present: Robert Malnati, Sarah Vallieres, and Barbara White - BRTA staff; Kirk Dand and Corey Gagnon - BTM; Jonathan Levine- Pittsfield Gazette; and Patti Annechiarico.

| | Voting Shares | Present | |
|----------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| Adams | 2.18 | 2.18 | |
| Alford | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| Becket | 1.04 | 0.00 | |
| Cheshire | 2.05 | 0.00 | |
| Clarksburg | 1.00 | 0.00 | 31.75 |
| Dalton | 2.07 | 2.07 | needed for |
| Egremont | 1.00 | 0.00 | quorum |
| Florida | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| Great Barrington | 3.76 | 3.76 | 38.21 present |
| Hinsdale | 1.32 | 0.00 | |
| Lanesborough | 2.68 | 2.68 | |
| Lee | 3.90 | 0.00 | |
| Lenox | 3.18 | 3.18 | |
| Monterey | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| Mt. Washington | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| North Adams | 4.48 | 4.48 | |
| Otis | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| Peru | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| Pittsfield | 18.86 | 18.86 | |
| Richmond | 1.01 | 0.00 | |
| Sheffield | 1.02 | 0.00 | |
| Stockbridge | 2.62 | 0.00 | |
| Washington | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| Williamstown | 2.33 | 0.00 | |
| Windsor | 1.00 | 1.00 | |
| Disability Community | 1.00 | 0.00 | |

1) **ROLL CALL**

Meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM.

2) **MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 29, 2016- MEETING- VOTE**

Mr. McNally made the motion to accept the minutes of the September 29, 2016 meeting. Mr. Gallant seconded the motion, which passed with one abstention from Mr. Gibson.

3) **ADMINISTRATORS REPORT**

Mr. Malnati gave an overview of the Administrators Report below:

FY16 ANNUAL AUDIT.

BRTA's Audit Statement, that the Board passed at the last meeting, was submitted to the State. A copy was sent to the BRTA member communities for their records.

FY16 ANNUAL REPORT

BRTA will be meeting tomorrow with TSM Design to update the Annual Report. When it is completed, it will be distributed to the Board, Communities, Town Halls, Legislative Delegation, and Chambers of Commerce. The Annual Report informs readers what BRTA does within the communities it serves. This report will be distributed at the next Board Meeting.

TRAVEL TRAINING

BRTA has 2 certified trainers, one on the administrative side and one on the operation side, that work with the community to instruct customers on how to navigate the BRTA bus system. BRTA has a vehicle that goes to different communities, that was retrofitted with some graphics and a Sales Outlet Terminal, to show how to use a Charlie Card. So far this year, the Travel Trainers made presentations to 29 adults and 26 seniors with 3 people enrolling in and completing the program. The trainers are working with CIP in Lee to instruct the people on how to use the bus. If you have a community event that you would like the Travel Trainers to be a part of, you can contact us by phone or e-mail to: traveltraining@berkshirerta.com and our certified trainer will respond to your inquiry.

SCHEDULE AND STATEWIDE MAP UPDATES

BRTA is in the process of updating our schedules with the transition of Route 1 and Route 34 (34 was called 65 at the last meeting). We have color graphics on the buses of what the Route 1 and 34 will look like, the different communities it will go to, and the start date. The start date will be the Monday after Thanksgiving and will have new route schedules made up. We are considering a linear presentation which will make it easier to read and understand. This concept was brought to a few different groups. The disability committee will be reviewing this next week. Mr. Malnati explained the new schedule, colors, and the transfers to the Board.

Ms. Cherry had a concern about the color and background of the schedule, which Mr. Malnati discussed and explained. Mr. Dand explained it was done in excel as a concept for the Board to see.

Mr. Malnati stated the Routes 12/14 will be the next to change and will also upgrade the system-wide map.

GREYHOUND BUS

Mr. Malnati recently met with a Greyhound representative, as they were awarded a contract from MassDOT for a new route between Albany, NY and Boston. The bus will leave Albany, NY at 6 AM, arriving in Pittsfield at 7 AM and onto to Boston arriving at 10:30 AM. The return bus leaves Boston at 2 PM arriving in Pittsfield at 5:40 PM, and then back to Albany, NY. It will not interfere with the current Peter Pan schedule. There was no information on fares. BRTA does not open until 8 AM and will not sell Greyhound tickets for the 7 AM bus, but the customers can purchase their tickets online and we certainly could be an agent for them. Additional revenue from daily docking fees and ticket commission would be income for us. He will keep the Board informed when additional information is available.

Mr. Gallant asked what time the building opens. Mr. Malnati replied 5:30AM. Mr. Gallant stated they could put a Kiosk in to sell tickets. Mr. Malnati agreed.

Mr. Malnati stated he told them we have a pillar for them to put a sign on and they could put a QR code on it.

FEDERAL REVIEW

BRTA was sent the first packet of the Triennial Review with a December 16th deadline. This is a review of our operations, how we deal with grants, rules, and regulations. An independent contractor performs the review, which is done every three years. If we have any questions or issues, they can be rectified then. Mr. Malnati gave an example of a finding 3 years ago and how it was handled. The review currently examines 17 areas. It also gives the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) an opportunity to provide technical assistance on FTA requirements and aids FTA in reporting to the Secretary, Congress, other oversight agencies, and the transit community on the Urbanized Area Formula Program.

Mr. Malnati stated he and Ms. Vallieres will be attending a workshop in Hartford, CT on November 1 and 2 to assist BRTA in preparing the required response materials for the yet to be scheduled visit.

Mr. Gibson asked if we ever found these reviews helpful; to which Mr. Malnati replied absolutely.

4) CASH REPORTS FOR AUGUST, 2016- VOTE

Mr. Gallant made the motion to accept the cash reports for August 2016.

Mr. Lipton seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

5) BUS ROUTE MODIFICATIONS, IN SERVICE TIME – VOTE

Mr. Malnati reminded the Board that at the last meeting, he spoke of both accepting the recommendations to change the Route 1 and Route 34 and about "out of service" buses. When these buses are coming from Downing to the Intermodal, if they picked anyone up, it was a liability. Customers have been asking for this service. BRTA would like to put these buses "in service" and has updated the individual community's net cost of service spreadsheet to include "in service" times. Mr. Malnati gave an explanation of the calculations and the new routes. If passed, BRTA will update the schedules to reflect the new "in service" times.

Ms. Cherry asked why Dalton has the only urban classification other than Pittsfield in Berkshire County. Mr. Malnati stated it is based on the UZA, Urbanized Area, which is a planning tool. Looking at the map of Berkshire County, there are several urban clusters, but they are not contiguous. Ms. Cherry asked what ramifications does that category have, the fact that Dalton is urban and not rural. Mr. Malnati replied that it is just a classification. Ms. Cherry asked if it has anything to do with what our level of payment is. Mr. Malnati replied no and explained a more detail explanation of it.

Mr. Gallant made the motion to accept the bus route modifications and in service time. Ms. Cherry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

6) PENSION COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT – VOTE

Ms. Lamb stated the Pension group consisted of Mr. Malnati, Ms. Lamb, and Ms. Carmel. Ms. Carmel has retired from the Board and Mr. Gallant has accepted the appointment to join the Pension Committee, if approved by the Board.

Mr. Snoonian made the motion to accept the Pension Committee Appointment. Ms. Cherry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Gallant replied thank you.

7) BUDGET YTD

Mr. Malnati provided an overview of the Budget. Fixed Route fare box income is \$23,647.08 under budget. In July it was \$19,000 under budget. Mr. Malnati did a route analysis and Routes 1, 2, and 4 were the ones causing concerns for both revenue and ridership. He took the variance of how much ridership and fare box revenue was off for the last three months. Of these three routes, the difference for ridership was off 10,400 customers for the quarter. The ridership loss on those 3 routes is 99.32% or 10,365 customers. That means, all the other routes made up for the difference. The funding for those 3 routes for that quarter was short \$15,800 compared to last fiscal year. Mr. Malnati did some research asking BCC how their student body census was compared to last year and their enrollment is down 7%. BRTA is the feeder route for BCC students coming from both north and south county. We need to talk to BCC to see what we could do to promote ridership.

Ms. Cherry stated we need to keep exploring getting every BCC student, as part of their student activity fees, a pass on the bus. Mr. Malnati replied he agreed.

Mr. McNally remarked that BCC is hoping now that they are done with their renovations the enrollment will pick up and will be easier to market students.

Mr. Malnati stated revenue from the Paratransit program is down. Our other income, we are above budget. BRTA has received half of the State funding, the Federal money is always lagging. On expenses, we are showing an overage on our fringe benefits for the administrative part, as we had to make a contribution to the pension beginning of the fiscal year and it was higher than what we budgeted for. BRTA is over budget on ADA services due to the start-up costs for the new paratransit management. In all BRTA is over \$70,000 for our administrative expenses, due to all of these factors.

Mr. Gallant asked if we have to make that expense every year? Mr. Malnati replied it is settled for this year but will come back up again.

8) RIDERSHIP YTD

Mr. Malnati gave an overview on Ridership. September fixed route was down 5% and the student passes were off 20%. Ridership for Paratransit is decent; wheelchair is down 12% and bicycles up 3%.

Ms. Cherry asked if those could be high school students also. Mr. Malnati replied those are different. Before BRTA had a lot of St Joe students riding, but their student enrollment is down.

Mr. McNally asked if there has been any recent promotions of BRTA in the Pittsfield Public schools. He was at Taconic one year when BRTA did a promotion and sold a lot of passes in the cafeteria. Mr. Malnati remarked no but it might be worth it to revisit.

Mr. Gallant wanted to know how much value is still available on the Charlie cards from BCC where ridership is down. Mr. Malnati replied if it is a pass that you put on your card, it expires. If it is stored money, it doesn't expire. If it is a semester pass, it starts in August and ends in December, then January through May. Customers pay the money and BRTA gets the money. If you use it, great, if not, it supports us. If the money is stored, then it is a liability for us. If a customer uses it two times doesn't use it anymore, the money is still there until the customer uses it on the bus, then it is income for us. BRTA does track the residual value on the cards.

Ms. Cherry stated if they use it in Boston, then we don't get that revenue. Mr. Malnati agreed.

9) OLD BUSINESS

None

10) NEW BUSINESS

BRTA will be requesting a transfer of three 2005 Gillig Transit buses from the Lowell Regional Transit Authority. The buses have over 300,000 miles and exceeded their useful life with no remaining Federal interest. BRTA will overhaul these vehicles and place into revenue service to fill the short term need of larger vehicles pending the arrival of the replacement vehicle ordered earlier this month.

Mr. Gallant asked, when we get the bus and something is wrong with it and we cannot salvage it affordably? Mr. Malnati stated that we could piece it out, but would not go overboard as the maintenance line item has a distinct budget. Mr. Malnati spoke of the level of expertise that BRTA's mechanics have.

Mr. Cooke asked about the life expectancy in terms of mileage on an average bus. Mr. Malnati replied it depends on how it is classified. If it is a heavy-duty bus, like the Gillig, it's 12 years or 500,000 miles.

11) NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME

January 26, 2017 @ 4PM.

12) ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Cherry made the motion to adjourn and Mr. Gallant seconded the motion.