

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

September 29, 2016

4:00 p.m.

BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center

One Columbus Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201

MINUTES

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

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

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

Jeff Snoonian, Adams; Timothy Drumm, Alford; William Elovirta, Becket; Paul Astorino, Cheshire; Carl McKinney, Clarksburg; Bruce Bernstein, Egremont; Glenn Burdick, Florida; Laurel Schialabba, Hinsdale; Thomas Wickham, Lee; Channing Gibson, Lenox; 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	0.00	
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	32.85 present
Hinsdale	1.32	0.00	
Lanesborough	2.68	2.68	
Lee	3.90	0.00	
Lenox	3.18	0.00	
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 MAY 19, 2016- MEETING- VOTE**

Mr. Lipton made the motion to accept the minutes of the May 19, 2016 meeting and Mr. Gallant seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Ms. Cherry abstained from voting as she was not in attendance last meeting.

3) **ADMINISTRATORS REPORT**

**FY16 AUDIT AND BORROWING**

Mr. Malnati explained the auditors were here the end of August and first of September, to put their final touches on our financial statement. He will be distributing copies of the draft financial report. As BRTA is a component of Mass DOT, there is a deadline for their receipt of the financial by October 1<sup>st</sup>.

BRTA will be completing our annual borrowing, as there is a short term note that is due. Three companies submitted bids and Eastern Bank was the successful bank. BRTA has borrowed \$4.5 with a net interest of .915027%.

Mr. Gallant asked where Eastern Bank is located, to which Mr. Malnati replied, Boston.

**FEDERAL**

Mr. Malnati stated Ms. Vallieres has applied for funding opportunities to upgrade our fixed route fleet, some operational funds, a satellite facility in North County, and Mobility on Demand to serve everyone in the community. The LoNo grant was not selected as BRTA proposed replacing our larger bus fleet with a new version of the Gillig vehicle. This is a hybrid propulsion system using both diesel and electric. The winners went to the Proterra 100% electrical vehicle. BRTA is hoping to hear from the others.

**STATE**

Mr. Malnati stated the Governor's budget was overridden again. The budget the Governor funded the RTA's was at \$80 million but supposed to be at \$84.1 million. For FY 17, the collective RTA's received a total of \$82 million.

Even though BRTA has an HST, Federal, and independent audits, we also had a Mass DOT audit. A copy of this audit is in the packet. There were two insignificant issues, called low priority issues. One is when the bus gets probed, meaning, the fare box is inserted in to the vault at Downing Parkway, the money drops out and the fare box pulls forward.

The outside entrance to the vault has a key lock on it and they want it locked at all times. The second one was to extend the capacity to record video surveillance to 30 days.

Currently, it is 18 to 20 days. BRTA's response to this recommendation is for the state to provide more funding to allow updating the hard drives.

### **PARATRANSIT TRANSITION**

Mr. Malnati remarked on July 1, 2016, BRTA went from County Ambulance as the operator of our Paratransit Services to Paratransit Management of Berkshire, a subsidiary of First Transit housed out of Downing Parkway. Mr. Dand and Mr. Gagnon are responsible for that operation. This got off to a rocky start. Customers were used to the other vendor they had for five years, even though the buses and some drivers were the same. A different system had to be learned. The stats reflected that the paratransit ridership decreased a little because of that transition. Mr. Dand and Mr. Gagnon are here to answer any questions.

### **RECENT NEWS ARTICLES**

Mr. Malnati remarked he included in the packet some recent news articles. Ellen Kennedy, President of Berkshire Community College and Ms. Vallieres, Assistant Administrator, rode the buses to show how easy it is to get on the bus and use the Charlie Card. Part of the Clean Air Challenge is to promote the benefits of using public transportation to reduce pollution. Ms. Kennedy remarked it is very easy to ride the bus, would use the bus to attend meetings downtown, and encourage her staff to do the same.

Ms. Cherry stated we should encourage BCC to add a bus fee onto the student activity fee so it would be an automatic pass. Mr. McNally asked how it works. Ms. Cherry replied based on the model my children are on in Providence, it is automatic on their student fee and it is a lower rate than what the semester pass is. Mr. Malnati stated UMass has the same system. Also, if a BCC student has a Pell grant, BCC is cutting checks to BRTA for that student for a semester pass.

Mr. Malnati stated coordination between Berkshire Innovation Organization (BIO), BRTA, and the city of North Adams helped change one of the routes since Price Chopper closed and to help customers get to the grocery store. BRTA has created a bus stop at Big Y with a QR Code.

#### **4) FY 2016 AUDIT – VOTE**

Ms. Lamb stated the Finance Committee met with the auditor, found it was a good audit, and is recommending to the Board to approve and accept it.

Mr. Lipton made the motion to accept the audit for FY16 and Ms. Cherry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Malnati has copies of the draft audit to distribute and Ms. Vallieres will text the Auditor the financials have been approved by the Advisory Board.

**5) CASH REPORTS FOR APRIL, MAY, JUNE AND JULY 2016- VOTE**

Mr. Gallant asked who is County Rainbow Taxi and are they distracting from our Paratransit? Mr. Malnati replied they are a Human Service Transportation member and listed under CRT or County Rainbow Taxi. They provide transportation for Mass Health customers.

Mr. Gallant made the motion to accept the cash reports for April, May, June and July, 2016 and Ms. Cherry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**6) HST BUDGET FY 17, UPDATED – VOTE**

Mr. Malnati stated BRTA has to have a budget sent to the State before the end of May, but HST didn't give us the contract numbers until July 15<sup>th</sup>. One page says draft, FY Budget. The revenue is \$8.2 million and the expense is \$8.2 million and then you will see the edited on July 15<sup>th</sup> for \$8.3 million. Both the revenue and expense are the same amount. However, BRTA will have to amend the Budget to say this is the edited version of the HST Budget.

Mr. Gallant made the motion to accept the updated HST Budget FY 17 and Mr. Lipton seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**7) PENSION COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT – VOTE**

Mr. Malnati stated we will table the Pension Committee appointment.

**8) DBE STANDALONE POLICY & GOALS – VOTE**

Mr. Malnati stated BRTA has a policy statement on how contracts are award for the Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) Program. BRTA receives a list from the State, Office of Supplemental Supplies and Diversity, (OSD) of vendors who are minorities, disabled, or women owned businesses. When BRTA has a procurement or shops for supplies, this list is consulted. Last month the list was consulted to find a DBE nearby to buy tires for the buses. BRTA went to Worcester to pick up a load of tires and can now state BRTA spent so much of our Federal dollars to support a DBE firm within the Commonwealth. BRTA looks at the region of this location first, but sometimes go Statewide. This year BRTA had to update the DBE program to set the goal. The goal is 0.78%. This is the Policy Statement and the Standalone Policy that will be posted to the website. It is tied to the use of Federal Funds, so the Office of Civil Rights reviews this every three to five years and makes recommendations.

Mr. McNally asked if this would affect anything we bid on? Mr. Malnati remarked not that we are bidding on but what our vendors are bidding on. A lot of our purchases are small purchases, so the threshold was just raised. Mr. McNally asked, anything over the threshold, we have to go to bid? Mr. Malnati replied yes and we also do quotes. If we are looking for tires, we get a quote from a local vendor and this program. It may not be the lowest but we are supporting this program. We have to have a reason why we chose

that one. Ms. Cherry asked, we could potentially not go with the lowest bid? Mr. Malnati replied yes. Ms. Cherry asked if there is some kind of financial incentive for doing this? Ms. Vallieres stated that it is mandated.

Mr. McNally made the motion to accept the DBE Standalone Policy & Goals and Ms. Cherry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

#### **9) BUS ROUTE MODIFICATIONS, IN SERVICE TIME – VOTE**

Mr. Malnati spoke on the modifications on some bus routes. Route 1 presently takes three hours to do the total loop. The proposal is to stop Route 1 at Wal-Mart in North Adams and return back to the ITC instead of making several stops enroute to the Mohawk Forest and back. Route 65 will encompass Route 31/33 to improve on-time performance and will not incur any extra costs. The Route 65 will also meet Route 3 on Main Street in North Adams and continue back to Walmart to connect with the Route 1. BRTA had three public meetings in Great Barrington, Pittsfield, and North Adams to discuss this with the public

The Route 12/14 buses follow much of the same path. The Route 14 goes down East Street and the Route 12 goes down East/Elm Streets, both meeting at Wal-Mart at approximately the same time although the Route 14 leaves the ITC ten minutes later. BRTA proposes to change the departure time on Route 14 to leave the ITC on the hour. This will enable us to have almost ½ hourly service to Wal-Mart in Pittsfield between Route 12/14.

Ridership is down on the Route 7 express service to Williamstown. BRTA is proposing cutting back to one trip in morning and one trip in afternoon. We have to wait to the end of this month as the students are back in school. This was partially funded by Williams College and BRTA had some Federal Funds that are no longer there. Mr. Lipton asked how much ridership will justify doing this? Mr. Malnati remarked because it is such a rural route we would have to look at how many customers per hour. Ridership is not enough to support this route.

Mr. Malnati spoke on “dead head service or “out of service” buses. The buses depart the garage at Downing enroute to the ITC in the morning and return to Downing in the evening. Both ways are “out of service”. The proposal is to put those buses in service when they are enroute to and from the garage instead of arriving empty. This will enable fare collection to offset the cost. If there isn’t enough funds from the State to extend hours, this is an easier way to extend our service. Mr. Malnati passed out an analysis he and Mr. Gagnon did on what the individual towns paid as an assessment for 2015 and by making the adjustment of putting these “out of service hours”, “in service”, what the adjustments would look like.

Mr. Gallant stated Lanesborough took a big hit. Mr. Malnati remarked, yes. He also spoke on the assessment issue and will continue to work on it.

Ms. Vallieres had a packet of questions and responses from our public meetings. Some people had concerns but most were favorable.

Mr. McNally made the motion to accept the bus route modifications only and Mr. Cooke seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**10) BUDGET YTD**

Mr. Malnati spoke on the budget and stated the fixed route ridership and ADA Paratransit are down in July. Some reimbursements are higher for miscellaneous income. BRTA received half of our money from the State in July with the other half coming in December/January. It will have the increase from \$80 million to \$82.1 million. expenses and admin are over, fixed route are over, and paratransit expenses are down. Overall, \$6,000 over on budget for first month. BRTA has a surplus in HST since the update today.

**11) RIDERSHIP YTD**

Mr. Malnati spoke on the ridership. fixed route ridership is down as almost 7,000 riders were lost in July. Ms. Vallieres passed out a sheet of last year ending FY16 ridership. He spoke with operators, other people in the profession, and other transit authorities to see if this is a trend. They said they were down a little but not to the extent we were. Mr. Malnati thinks a lot attributed to our loss was a warm spring, not a lot of rain, gas prices were favorable, Macy's closed, and people weren't shopping at the mall or going to the mall to work. The general unemployment was a big factor. Ridership dropped in April, May, and June significantly. July was a bigger drop and August's ridership was down 500 people. It looks like we are coming back. Paratransit has increased, bicycles are down and wheelchairs are down from last year.

Kirk Dand gave his projected September numbers which are now more than August, but less than last year. Mr. Malnati stated we are still continuing to research why ridership is off.

**12) OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Gallant asked how we are coming along with the new tenants. Mr. Malnati replied very well and stated they made some modifications. Mr. Lipton asked what is the term of the lease? Mr. Malnati replied five years and an option for another five after that.

**13) NEW BUSINESS**

None

**14) NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME**

October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016 @ 4PM

**15) ADJOURMENT**

Mr. Gallant made the motion to adjourn and Mr. Lipton seconded the motion.