

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

January 17, 2019

4:00 PM

BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center

One Columbus Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201

MINUTES

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Present:

William Elovirta, Becket; John Boyle, Dalton; William Cooke, Great Barrington; Peter Gallant, Lanesborough; Steve Moritz, Lee; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Rene Wood, Sheffield; Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge; and Douglas McNally, Windsor. Richard Grillon, Washington and Caleb Mitchell, Peru arrived after the minutes vote. Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington arrived after Ms. Wood's motion and left at #6 budget YTD.

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Absent:

Christine Hoyt, Adams; Peggy Rae Henden-Wilson, Alford; Mark Webber, Cheshire; Carl McKinney, Clarksburg; Bruce Bernstein, Egremont; Neil Olsen, Florida; Harvey Drosehn, Hinsdale; Edward Lane, Lenox; Donald Coburn, Monterey; Sherry Youngkin, New Ashford; William Hiller, Otis; Alan Hanson, Richmond; and Brian O'Grady, Williamstown.

Also, present: Robert Malnati, Sarah Vallieres, and Barbara White- BRTA staff; Eli Greiner and Rauley Caine- BTM/PMB staff; Patti Annechiarico; Mike Durst; Haven Orecchio, Berkshire Eagle; Clete Kus- BRPC; Jonathan Levine- Pittsfield Gazette; and Stephen Barrett.

| | Voting Shares | Present | |
|----------------------|---------------|---------|---------------------------|
| Adams | 2.16 | 0.00 | |
| Alford | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| Becket | 1.05 | 1.05 | |
| Cheshire | 2.11 | 0.00 | |
| Clarksburg | 1.00 | 0.00 | 33.00 |
| Dalton | 2.22 | 2.22 | needed for |
| Egremont | 1.00 | 0.00 | quorum |
| Florida | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| Great Barrington | 4.03 | 4.03 | 42.36 at the beginning |
| Hinsdale | 1.30 | 0.00 | of the meeting |
| Lanesborough | 2.60 | 2.60 | |
| Lee | 3.92 | 3.92 | Washington and Peru |
| Lenox | 3.39 | 0.00 | arrived after the minutes |
| Monterey | 1.00 | 0.00 | vote 44.36 |
| Mt. Washington | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| New Ashford | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| North Adams | 4.92 | 4.92 | |
| Otis | 1.00 | 0.00 | |
| Peru | 1.00 | 1.00 | |
| Pittsfield | 18.77 | 18.77 | |
| Richmond | 1.04 | 0.00 | |
| Sheffield | 1.08 | 1.08 | |
| Stockbridge | 2.77 | 2.77 | |
| Washington | 1.00 | 1.00 | |
| Williamstown | 2.65 | 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 NOVEMBER 15, 2018 MEETING- VOTE**

Ms. Wood made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 15, 2018 meeting. Mr. Elovirta seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, with Mr. Cooke abstaining.

3) **ADMINISTRATOR`S REPORT**

Mr. Malnati said the strike by the Paratransit Management of the Berkshires (PMB) was settled on December 18, 2018. The fixed route service resumed operation on December 19, 2018 and the paratransit service on December 20, 2018. The final contract provides a 17.2% increase for full time and 19.56% increase for part time staff over the life of the contract. Both contracts will expire on June 30, 2021. During the strike, BRTA subcontracted with other vendors for the paratransit rides.

Ms. Irvin stated that it was communicated to her that a lot of people were very impressed with how Mr. Malnati handled the public relations and the press. She stated it is difficult when you are not the negotiator and have to work between two sets of groups. Mr. McNally stated in the Finance Committee meeting, it was noted they were also impressed with how Mr. Malnati handled the public relations and it did not become something like the Berkshire Museum issue. The results seem to be no animosity between the two parties, which is a real plus. Ms. Irvin and Mr. McNally said the Board thanks you.

Mr. Malnati stated he attended some of the Task Force meetings in Boston and participated in the discussion at the November 8th meeting on the recent studies BRTA has conducted regarding work related transportation gaps. The Task Force has had 11 meeting so far and their final report is due to Governor Baker on February 15.

Three meetings (enclosed in the Advisory Board packet) on the Task Force have now been postponed. Part of the \$88 million collectively that was given to the RTA's, \$4 million was held back by the DOT as a discretionary fund and \$2 million held back to help out any RTA's with financial issues. The \$4 million is still undecided on how it will be distributed. BRTA submitted two funding applications for pilot programs from the \$4 million to be distributed by DOT.

The first pilot is evening service to and from BCC between January 22 and May 24. The 11N Berkshire Community College Night Loop will travel between the Intermodal Transportation Center, BCC, Tyler Street and East Street. The application requested \$361,128 and to extend evening hours to BCC and the Tyler Street corridor with connections to Route 1 – North Adams and Route 21X – Gt. Barrington.

The second project is in cooperation with Peter Pan who is considering servicing Great Barrington to New York instead of Williamstown to Great Barrington then to New York. BRTA would be the feeder route from Williamstown to Great Barrington and back. The application requested \$150,000 for weekday BRTA feeder service. The submitted grant application have been included in the board packet. The results should be in by the end of the month.

Mr. Malnati explained the Federal government partial shutdown has affected the BRTA slightly. There was notification prior to the shutdown, so we requested and received a portion of the funds used to operate. We cannot request federal matching reimbursements for capital items purchased during the shutdown until the situation is resolved. This was discussed at the Finance Committee meeting about speaking to our financial institution to set up a line of credit.

Ms. Wood asked if we needed board authorization to get a line of credit, to which Mr. Malnati remarked he wasn't sure. Ms. Wood asked what is the maximum line of credit we would need, to which Mr. Malnati replied, maybe a half million to million.

AUTHORIZATION FOR LINE OF CREDIT-VOTE

Ms. Wood made a motion to authorize the Administrator to take a line of credit up to a half million dollars. Mr. Gallant stated that Mr. Malnati mentioned it could be up to one million. This should be amended to authorize it up to one million.

Ms. Wood amended her motion to authorize our Administrator to take a line of credit up to one million. Mr. Boyle seconded the motion.

Mr. Moritz asked if it was safe to assume that any interest would be negligible in terms of the overall budget. Mr. Malnati stated he assumed but he doesn't know what the going rates are. Mr. McNally remarked it won't be significant for short term. Ms. Irvin said if you don't have money, you can't operate. Mr. Gallant stated if we don't use it, the interest rates could be very small. Mr. McNally remarked that most boards or organizations have a standing line of credit with banks. If we don't have one, now is the time to do it. This motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Malnati stated the BRTA used the recent customer survey results formulating the grant application to MassDOT for a portion of the \$4 million. 173 responses were received and the majority of the responses wanted later evening service on Routes 1, 11, and 21X.

Mr. Malnati met with the Select Board of New Ashford on December 17 to discuss what services they are eligible to receive and provided cost estimates for fixed route bus and paratransit service. On December 19, BRTA participated in the second annual "Shop with a Cop". (Mr. Malnati passed photos around.) 15 students and 15 law enforcement participated and were given pizza and refreshments before heading out to WalMart. Two volunteer bus drivers transported them to WalMart for holiday shopping with decorated buses. They returned to the ITC to wrap their gifts before returning home. Mr. Malnati stated he attended the Poverty Forum at Williams College on January 11. It was very informative and interesting as there was a live poll taken. There were a couple hundred people in attendance, along with elected officials. Transportation was the number one issue.

BRTA was asked to participate in the Southern Berkshire Chamber discussion on Transportation in the Berkshires at their event scheduled for January 24.

4) EXTENDED EVENING SERVICE-BCC VOTE

Mr. Malnati explained the proposed extended evening hours project and presented both the new schedule and the press release. BCC promoted this transportation during their Spring Semester signups. The college will be starting a Hospitality certification program in March during the evening that will hopefully provide ridership on this route. Mr. Gallant stated the Finance Committee is in full support of this. Ms. Wood asked if there was any way to gather data through a voluntary survey including the frequency of riding, if they are part of the certification program, and where they will work at the end of the program. Mr. Malnati stated that yes, this could be put it on the bus. Mr. McNally stated that we should arrange for our drivers, or, have someone ride the route, to keep track of the stops. This way BRTA would know where to adjust the routes and provide specific data. Mr. Malnati remarked that we could certainly alter the routes based upon the data. Ms. Wood remarked we should have a way to collect data. Mr. Moritz remarked we should certainly include the drivers in on where they pick up passengers.

Mr. McNally made a motion to authorize the Route 11N evening service to BCC. Mr. Gallant seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

5) CASH REPORTS OCTOBER 2018 AND NOVEMBER 2018 VOTE

Mr. McNally made a motion to accept the October 2018 and November 2018 cash reports. Ms. Wood seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

6) BUDGET YTD

Mr. Malnati gave an update on the budget through November. Both fixed route fares and paratransit fares are under budget. Any money received from grants, doesn't go to this budget. BRTA has received \$375,000 for the previous period. The strike will impact the budget and create a fluctuation. Without the buses running, fuel and labor expenses will be down. The auditor will review this and create an end of the year adjustment.

7) RIDERSHIP YTD

Mr. Malnati gave an update on ridership and remarked fixed route ridership was down 1,400 through November; paratransit was over 800 rides; and non-ADA trips are down. Wheelchairs on the fixed route buses are up, with Route 34 at the top with 193 trips and the Pittsfield shopping routes, 12 and 14, are up. BRTA carries bicycles on the buses every day throughout the year and the MassHealth HST Brokerage is up.

8) OLD BUSINESS

None discussed.

9) NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Malnati remarked that when the strike was coming to a close, BRTA had printed 2,000 complimentary rides for customers who had BRTA passes that could not use them during the strike period. He signed approximately 1,000 complimentary rides and so far gave out 11 complimentary rides and received 6 back. Policies and procedures were created and when redeemed the bus driver would add the date and the bus route. Also, if it was their birthday during the strike and they had proof, they received a complimentary pass.

Mr. Gallant asked about the 2nd grant project: Peter Pan who is considering servicing Great Barrington to New York. If Peter Pan customers use this service, would they get a special rate? Mr. Malnati remarked he was proposing to Peter Pan to have the customers pay a flat fee and then invoice Peter Pan. Mr. Elovirta asked why we would take them to Great Barrington. Mr. Malnati stated that the drivers could only drive so many hours a day and this route was putting them over their hours. If BRTA covered the Williamstown to Great Barrington portion, this would reduce the number of drivers Peter Pan would need. This will be weekdays and the New York bus only. Ms. Wood asked what about weekends. She would hate to see them eliminate it. Mr. Malnati stated they didn't specify. The application is only for Monday to Friday. Ms. Irvin remarked she hopes they don't cancel weekends as that is a major source of people getting into the Berkshires. They still have a lot of planning to do.

Mr. Moritz asked why are some of the Charlie Cards expiring? Mr. Malnati there is an expiration date on the Charlie Card and also an expiration date on the internal part of the Charlie Card. At the MBTA the Charlie Card is expected to be phased out in about 2 years and will no longer be supported by the MBTA as they are doing away with cash. That can't happen here. BRTA is currently researching other options.

Mr. Gallant stated that the Scheidt and Bachmann fare system will be obsolete. Mr. Malnati remarked yes. We have allocated funding in the TIP to plan either for upgrade or replace the system.

Mr. Moritz remarked that the drivers in South County have lousy radio reception on their radios. Mr. Malnati remarked it is worse up near Mt. Greylock. BRTA is exploring other ways of communications.

Ms. Minacci asked if there was any talk of transportation to Wassaic. Mr. Malnati said that is interstate. Years ago, there was a shuttle but was unsure if it was still operating. Ms. Wood feels that Boston spends our money and thinks BRTA will suffer from the change from the Charlie Card system. This needs to be mentioned to our representatives and the governor about the upcoming expenses with the Charlie Card being eliminated and we need funding with this change. Ms. Wood thinks this is one of the hidden costs that all the RTAs will have to absorb with no more additional funding. Mr. Malnati mentioned we have 15 RTA across the state that about nine RTA's signed on for Scheidt & Bachmann. Ms. Wood remarked that we all pay for MBTA changes and thinks this issue needs to be escalated in terms of awareness of the cost. Ms. Irvin remarked that we should start with our Legislative Delegation and make them aware of it. Ms. Wood remarked that they are spending all this money on east west trains and now we are under cutting our RTA further. Ms. Irvin stated the structure is set up for an urban system. It is not set up for an open system like ours.

AUTHORIZATION TO NOTIFY STATE LEGISLATURE ABOUT THE FARE BOX SYSTEM CHANGE-VOTE

Ms. Wood made a motion to authorize our Administrator to notify our Legislative Delegation and copy the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, MassDOT, and BRPC. Mr. Moritz seconded the motion.

10) NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME

March 28, 2019 at 4:00 PM.

11) ADJOURNMENT

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