

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

March 28, 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; Peter Gallant, Lanesborough; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Rene Wood, Sheffield; Brian O’Grady, Williamstown; and Douglas McNally, Windsor.

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; William Cooke, Great Barrington; Harvey Drosehn, Hinsdale; Steve Moritz, Lee; Edward Lane, Lenox; Donald Coburn, Monterey; Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington; Sherry Youngkin, New Ashford; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; William Hiller, Otis; Caleb Mitchell, Peru; Alan Hanson, Richmond; Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge; and Richard Grillon, Washington.

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

	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	0.00	29.37
Hinsdale	1.30	0.00	quorum not met
Lanesborough	2.60	2.60	
Lee	3.92	0.00	
Lenox	3.39	0.00	
Monterey	1.00	0.00	
Mt. Washington	1.00	0.00	
New Ashford	1.00	0.00	
North Adams	4.92	0.00	
Otis	1.00	0.00	
Peru	1.00	0.00	
Pittsfield	18.77	18.77	
Richmond	1.04	0.00	
Sheffield	1.08	1.08	
Stockbridge	2.77	0.00	
Washington	1.00	0.00	
Williamstown	2.65	2.65	
Windsor	1.00	1.00	
Disability Community	1.00	0.00	

1) **ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM. Ms. Irvin made noted the quorum was not met and no voting items could be voted upon.

2) **MINUTES OF JANUARY 17, 2019 MEETING-VOTE**

3) **ADMINISTRATOR`S REPORT**

Mr. Malnati stated in a press release dated March 5, 2019, BRTA was awarded \$361,128 for evening bus service for BCC, North Adams, and Great Barrington. He just received the memorandum of understanding from DOT yesterday afternoon (March 27) and he had some questions as it did not give details of when it begins and ends, and if monies could be carried over from this year to the next.

The Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Funding and Performance issued a draft report on March 13. He attended a public meeting in Amherst where members of the task force, DOT, and some state representatives were also present. A slide show presentation was given at the meeting and time was allotted for public comments. Mr. Malnati spoke at the meeting and provided those statements to the Board. There could be a collaboration between HST and the fixed bus route. This would increase riders on the bus and give these customers more independence to go to the pharmacy, grocery store, or socially. By increasing ridership, this would decrease tax payer money for the HST program. The Task Force recommendation for the RTAs budget is \$90.5M with a price escalator. The Task Force members will have a vote to accept the draft after reviewing the public's comments. Comments were still being welcomed until tomorrow (March 29.) Advisory Board member, Rene Wood, had emailed the task force with comments as well as Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. This report will be used by both the House and Senate when formulating their budgets.

Mr. Malnati shared that the government shutdown had prompted him to start making inquiries at local banks about possible lines of credit should the shutdown proceed longer. The shut-down ended shortly after the last Board meeting. As such, the line of credit was not necessary and the BRTA was able to access their funds.

The BRTA has been working on the draft budget for FY20. Mr. Malnati received the federal appropriation levels and the governor has proposed \$86M to fund the RTAs. Mr. Malnati explained that he was unsure of the governor's direction. The May board meeting is when voting will be taking place for the FY20 budget.

The BRTA will host the annual meeting with the Legislative Delegation to discuss the future of transportation. The meeting is scheduled for April 12, 2019 at 9:15AM. Mr. Malnati invited members of the board to attend this meeting. Representative Pignatelli had a previous engagement and will not be there.

Two new 35' Gillig replacement buses have been ordered with the funding from the 5339 Bus and Bus Facility Discretionary grant program that was awarded last fall. Mr. Malnati stated the buses were schedule for delivery in September 2019. Mr. McNally asked if the buses would be electric, to which Mr. Malnati responded that they are not electric buses. BRTA has applied for a feasibility study through MassDOT. This is one of the first steps BRTA needs to do before entering the electrical bus pool. This will help BRTA

look at the area, routes, and weather to find out which routes would best be suited for electric buses. Smaller electric buses are not in production yet.

The BRTA continues to participate as a member of the working group for the Berkshire Flyer project. Senator Hinds had his kick off press release at the BRTA. The project still needs a sponsor agency to be named which would be the back stop for funding of the project. If there were a deficit with funding, the sponsored agency would make sure there was funding to pay for the Flyer services. Mr. Hinds had suggested CMAQ funds be used as a possible funding source.

“The Shared Ride Access to Work Study Phase II” has just been released by McMahon and Associates. Mr. Malnati stated that this was a continuation of the first part of their study done in November 2017. A suggestion from the study was the route 1 bus, Pittsfield to North Adams, run every 30 minutes during peak hours where as its currently every hour and possibly change the “transfer” point, from ITC to possibly Downing Park or Walmart. Another example was the route 21 express becoming an all-day service. Another idea was the route 11 BCC bus have extended evening service. Mr. Malnati pointed out that this is something BRTA is already testing out with the new route 11N.

4) CASH REPORTS DECEMBER 2018 AND JANUARY 2019-VOTE

5) BUDGET YTD

Mr. Malnati stated that fixed route fares and paratransit fares were continuing on a downward trend. The fixed route fares were affected by the strike more than the paratransit fares were. In the budget there is some non-transportation revenue and reimbursement from maintenance for vehicles such as the Council on Aging. Mr. Malnati explained that the administrative costs were a little over budget and the fringe benefits were under budget. He explained the utilities were under budget as the telephone contract was renegotiated. Paratransit expenses had some items over-budget due to the strike and some items under.

6) RIDERSHIP YTD

Mr. Malnati explained that fixed route ridership through January was down 8% and a big factor was the strike. He hopes the new service of the 11N will increase the fixed route ridership. Mr. Boyle questioned if the ridership loss from the strike would recover. Mr. Malnati said he believed it would take a while to increase ridership over time. He noted that paratransit ridership has increased 2%, while the wheelchair ridership on the fixed route and the number of bicycles was down compared to other years.

7) OLD BUSINESS

None discussed.

8) NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Malnati stated that BRTA was in the process of creating new schedules. BRTA listened to customers and BTM's AGM, Mr. Caine crafted schedules that are more user friendly and show a small map. They have created new schedules for three routes so

far, routes 11N, 11, and 4. Ms. Wood stated that the new schedules looked similar to schedules in larger cities, and were much easier to read.

9) **NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME**

May 23, 2019 at 4:00PM.

10) **ADJOURNMENT**

DRAFT