

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

May 24, 2018
4:00 PM
BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center
One Columbus Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201

MINUTES

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Present:

William Cooke, Great Barrington; Peter Gallant, Lanesborough; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Brian O’Grady, Williamstown; and Douglas McNally, Windsor.

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Absent:

Erica Girenti, Adams; Timothy Drumm, Alford; William Elovirta, Becket; Mark Webber, Cheshire; Carl McKinney, Clarksburg; Bill Drosehn, Dalton; Bruce Turner, Egremont; Neil Olsen, Florida; Harvey Drosehn, Hinsdale; Steve Moritz, Lee; Channing Gibson, Lenox; Kenneth Basler, Monterey; Jim Lovejoy, Mount Washington; Jason Jayko, New Ashford; William Hiller, Otis; Caleb Mitchell, Peru; Alan Hanson, Richmond; Nadine Hawver, Sheffield; Donald Chabon, Stockbridge; and Richard Grillon, Washington.

Also, present: Robert Malnati, Sarah Vallieres, and Barbara White - BRTA staff; Kirk Dand and Eli Grenier – BTM; Patti Annechiarico; Clete Kus-BRPC; Tate Coleman; Nancy Coleman; Amanda Drane, Berkshire Eagle; and Jonathan Levine, Pittsfield Gazette

	Voting Shares	Present	
Adams	2.18	0.00	
Alford	1.00	0.00	
Becket	1.05	0.00	
Cheshire	2.12	0.00	
Clarksburg	1.00	0.00	33.00
Dalton	2.12	0.00	needed for
Egremont	1.00	0.00	quorum
Florida	1.00	0.00	
Great Barrington	3.82	3.82	34.45 present
Hinsdale	1.29	0.00	
Lanesborough	2.87	2.87	
Lee	3.82	0.00	
Lenox	3.21	0.00	
Monterey	1.00	0.00	
Mt. Washington	1.00	0.00	
New Ashford	1.00	0.00	
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	0.00	
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.

2) **MINUTES OF APRIL 26, 2018 MEETING- VOTE**

Mr. McNally made a motion to accept the minutes of the April 26, 2018 meeting. Mr. Gallant seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, with one abstention from Mr. O'Grady.

3) **ADMINISTRATOR`S REPORT**

Mr. Malnati stated the Senate released a proposed budget on May 10, 2018 funding the RTA's at \$88 million, with \$84 million using an existing formula and the remaining \$4 million discretionary amount distributed by MassDOT with different criteria the RTA's would have to submit to. The next step is the Senate sending it into conference with the House and then presented to the Governor to decide upon. There was also talk of creating an RTA Task Force consisting of 11 members appointed to it, with three of them past or current RTA Administrators putting together a performance matrix. Currently BRTA provides MassDOT with a performance matrix, including monthly ridership.

Mr. Malnati specified that BRTA attended the annual FTA Drug & Alcohol conference in Ft. Lauderdale Florida from May 8-10. He was joined by Julie Davine, Compliance Coordinator; Eli Grenier, Assistant General Manager; and Tami Larimore, Director of Administration/HR. This national conference highlights federal and industry experts conducting session on relevant topics including: New Synthetic Opioids; Part 40 updates; and FTA Compliant Drug & Alcohol Policy. An interesting fact learned from the conference is the number one and number two drugs in America that safety sensitive positions fail are using marijuana and cocaine; not so much heroin. Mr. Malnati was able to interview vendors that perform alcohol and drug testing and request their proposals for service. He is looking for pricing and their locations. The main goal was to find out what progress is being made for testing for marijuana as it is now legalized in Massachusetts. Currently there is no testing for marijuana. It was a very informative conference, worth attending. Today, BRTA completed a drug and alcohol audit, with a few procedural issues that were cleared up. Otherwise it went very well.

The United Way for the Free Fun Friday program has decided this year they are not going to promote free bus passes to cultural events throughout the Berkshires. However, the BRTA will still promote the events and put posters up downstairs. An agency out of Boston puts together cultural events every Friday from the end of June through September. The venues are: Berkshire Theater Group; Clark Art Institute; Hancock Shaker Village; Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center; Berkshire Museum; MASS MOCA; and Norman Rockwell Museum. Ms. Irvin asked, what is the free part was. Mr. Malnati, replied entrance into the event but they have to pay for the bus. Mr. McNally replied a lot of people went to the event but didn't use the bus.

4) **SCENARIO IMPLEMENTATION – VOTE (Route Change Proposal)**

Mr. Malnati gave a presentation to the Advisory Board on service cuts to the based on the current budget situation. The comments from the public meetings, emails, and letters sent in were prioritized. Creating scenarios and ranking them, narrowed the field down to two scenarios, A and B. Scenario A would be a \$231,000 savings, Scenario B a \$250,000 savings, Scenario C a \$236,000 savings, Scenario D a \$365,000 savings, Scenario E, a \$243,000 savings, Scenario F a \$251,000 savings, and Scenario G, a

\$274,000 savings. Mr. Malnati asked if the Board had any questions or needed any clarification. Ms. Lamb stated the Finance Committee limited it to A and B.

Ms. Irvin remarked that Scenario B doesn't include fare increases. Mr. Malnati stated this was correct. Mr. McNally explained the impact the fare increases would have and affect 73% of our customers. The Berkshire economy is still struggling and it is not the time to raise fares. Ms. Irvin agreed with Mr. McNally.

Mr. Malnati stated DOT's response was that RTAs don't need additional funding. They also stated we shouldn't be waiting ten years to do fare increases and BRTA should do modest increases over a number of years. The last fare increase/fare change was in 2014. With the Senate budget and more oversight of the RTAs, the first thing MassDOT is going to say is you need to do a fare increase.

Mr. McNally stated we sat here with the Legislative Delegation and they pointed out that we have the most expensive fares in the state and the least wealthy areas. If DOT did that, he thought that the Delegation would stand up and yell. Mr. Malnati explained this at the BRTA program preview with MassDOT in November. The last time we spoke about a fare increase was last year when the Finance Committee said there is no way we are going to do that. There is a 5 cents increase on reduced fare and from \$1.40 to \$1.50 increase on full fare. There is still going to be a discount for the Charlie Card customers. Ridership has been increasing but revenue has not. Last year we lost 6% of our ridership. There is not a lot of ways to gain additional revenue. This will help BRTA balance the budget, but also keeps a discount to the customers. BRTA is not going up past the \$1.75 cash fare.

Mr. McNally stated there are two ways to raise revenue: either raising fares or increase ridership. We have to use this opportunity to look at under-performing routes and make changes. I think the negative impact of raising fares is going to have a negative impact on ridership. Mr. Gallant remarked they are still getting a good discount on the Charlie Card and BRTA won't lose riders. Mr. Cooke agreed that BRTA won't lose ridership about that. Mr. Malnati shared that Great Barrington has just placed dedicated bus stops within the community and doesn't want the decrease of Route 21 to curtail this. Mr. Cooke stated Great Barrington is in the process of promoting ridership and this would be undercut by cutting service. He anticipates the Route 21 ridership increasing due to this promotion. Mr. Malnati spoke of investigating a circulator route in Great Barrington. There would be more talk on this down the road but it is an important conversation. Mr. Malnati remarked we are promoting ridership in Pittsfield and North Adams.

Mr. Gallant made a motion that we do not accept either Scenario until we have time to study them. Mr. Malnati explained the need to have a balanced budget before the end of May. The only way to get the balanced budget is to recommend and implement either Scenario A or Scenario B. Mr. Gallant stated he will modify his suggestion and recommend Scenario A.

Mr. McNally suggested that we don't have to have a vote a final budget as the State hasn't voted a final budget. The State may come up with the funding and BRTA will have a balanced budget. The Board can vote either A or B pending final state funding. Mr. O'Grady asked Mr. Malnati which one he preferred and Mr. Malnati stated A.

Mr. Cooke made a motion to accept Scenario A. Mr. Gallant seconded the motion.

Mr. Irvin asked, "don't we have a lot of motions out there?" Mr. Gallant remarked he withdrew his first one. Mr. Malnati stated we have a motion to accept A and a motion to second A. Mr. McNally asked why we didn't second the motion to go with A and B. Ms. Lamb remarked it was just a suggestion. Ms. Irvin asked Mr. McNally if it was a motion or suggestion. Mr. McNally stated it was a motion. Ms. Irvin seconded the motion. Ms. Lamb asked if there is any discussion.

Ms. Irvin stated "we are in a situation to ask riders, who are not economically advantaged, to pay when we are having a legislature, governor and MassDOT not paying their fair share what they promised. It is not ethical for MassDOT to put pressure on us to ask poor people to pay more to ride when they haven't met their obligations to fund what they promised to fund. I think that message has to go out to them. We know we have to do either A or B because you have not done what you are supposed to do." Mr. Gallant stated ethically it may not be right, but legally it is, this is done through the legislature.

Mr. Malnati stated his objection to that is Great Barrington has made strides six months ago on how to get customers energized to ride the bus. If we pick Scenario B, we will cut the legs out of that before it starts. That is why we are tending towards A. BRTA would implement in September until BRTA is sure of funding.

Ms. Lamb asked if there was any more discussion. Ms. Lamb, Mr. Gallant, Mr. Cooke, Mr. O'Grady all opposed. Ms. Vallieres stated the weighted vote for Scenario A and B is 19.95 and the weighted vote against both Scenario A and B was 14.5. The motion passes to keep both Scenario A and B pending final state funding.

5) FY 2019 BUDGET – VOTE

Mr. Malnati gave an overview of the budget. The Finance Committee met twice to discuss the budget. The Federal Appropriations came out earlier this month and BRTA received a higher funding level. State funding is at \$80 M level for this exercise. Health insurance went up this year. BRTA is trying to stay as lean as possible. The HST budget is revenue in and expenses out.

Mr. McNally made a motion to accept the FY 2019 Budget as presented. Mr. O'Grady seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

6) ELECTION OF OFFICERS – VOTE

Sandy said, "We do have some interest in this, I don't know if there is anyone else that would like to..." Mr. McNally said, "I would like to make a motion for Ms. Irvin for Chair." Mr. Gallant said, "I would like to nominate Mr. O'Grady as Chairman." Ms. Lamb stated, "Ms. Irvin had contacted her about Vice Chair, has this changed?" Ms. Irvin said, "I wasn't expecting to be nominated at all, but she would accept this nomination." Mr. Malnati explained that normally the slate is presented and then nominations come from the floor. He then said there are 2 nominations for Chair but they need a second. Mr. Cooke seconded Mr. McNally's motion for Ms. Irvin as Chair and Ms. Irvin agreed (weighted vote of 23.77) Ms. Lamb seconded Mr. Gallant's motion for Mr. O'Grady as Chair and Mr. O'Grady agreed (weighted vote of 10.68).

Ms. Irvin was elected as Chairman of the Board.

Ms. Irvin made a motion to nominate Mr. McNally as Vice Chairman of the BRTA board, Mr. Cooke seconded this motion and Mr. McNally agreed (weighted vote of 23.77). Mr. Gallant made a motion to nominate Ms. Lamb as Vice Chairman of the BRTA board, Mr. O'Grady seconded this motion and Ms. Lamb agreed (weighted vote of 10.68).

Mr. McNally was elected Vice Chairman of Board.

7) **OLD BUSINESS**

None

8) **NEW BUSINESS**

None

9) **NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME**

July 26, 2018 at 4:00 PM

10) **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Gallant made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Cooke seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.