

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

September 24, 2020

4:00 PM

BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center

One Columbus Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201

ZOOM BOARD MINUTES

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Present:

William Elovirta, Becket; John Boyle, Dalton; Bruce Bernstein, Egremont; Tate Coleman, Great Barrington; Andrea Wadsworth, Lee; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge; and Douglas McNally, Windsor.

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Absent:

Christine Hoyt, Adams; Peggy Rae Henden-Wilson, Alford; Edmund St. John IV, Cheshire; Ronald Boucher, Clarksburg; Neil Olson, Florida; James Sullivan, Hinsdale; Gordon Hubbard, Lanesborough; Marybeth Mitts, Lenox; Don Coburn, Monterey; Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington; Sherry Youngkin, New Ashford; William Hiller, Otis; Caleb Mitchell, Peru; Alan Hanson, Richmond; Rene Wood, Sheffield; Rose Borgnis, Washington; and Brian O'Grady, Williamstown.

Also, present: Robert Malnati, Sarah Vallieres, and Bridget Keegan-BRTA staff; Rauley Caine and Ron Andronaco, BTM/PMB staff; and Clete Kus and Anuja Koirala, BRPC.

	Voting Shares	Present	
Adams	2.20	0.00	
Alford	1.00	0.00	
Becket	1.00	1.00	
Cheshire	2.08	0.00	
Clarksburg	1.00	0.00	33.00
Dalton	2.20	2.20	needed for
Egremont	1.00	1.00	quorum
Florida	1.00	0.00	
Great Barrington	4.10	4.10	39.81 present via
Hinsdale	1.27	0.00	ZOOM
Lanesborough	2.89	0.00	
Lee	3.71	3.71	
Lenox	3.27	0.00	
Monterey	1.00	0.00	
Mt. Washington	1.00	0.00	
New Ashford	1.12	0.00	
North Adams	4.49	4.49	
Otis	1.00	0.00	
Peru	1.00	0.00	
Pittsfield	19.49	19.49	
Richmond	1.00	0.00	
Sheffield	1.04	0.00	
Stockbridge	2.82	2.82	
Washington	1.00	0.00	
Williamstown	2.31	0.00	
Windsor	1.00	1.00	
Disability Community	1.00	0.00	

1) **ROLL CALL**

Mr. Malnati discussed the memorandum and agenda before the meeting. He shared that if there is a request for an agenda item to be added to the Advisory Board, this has to happen at least a week before the Advisory Board meeting to provide people the proper notification. Then Ms. Irvin called the ZOOM meeting to order at 4:03 PM. Ms. Vallieres performed a roll call of the Advisory Board Members who were present on ZOOM.

2) **MINUTES OF MAY 28, 2020 MEETING-VOTE**

Mr. McNally made a motion to accept the minutes of the May 28, 2020 meeting. Ms. Wadsworth seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye with one abstention and the minutes were passed.

Town	2) Minutes	4) FY20 Financial Statements	5) BRTA Fare Policy MOU	6) Cash Reports
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Becket	Yes			
Dalton	Yes			
Egremont	Yes			
Great Barrington	Abstained			
Lee	Yes			
North Adams	Yes			
Pittsfield	Yes			
Stockbridge	Yes			
Windsor	Yes			

3) **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

ZOOM Board Meeting

Mr. Malnati thanked everyone for attending the ZOOM meeting. BRTA has transitioned from teleconference platform to a video/audio platform.

COVID-19

Mr. Malnati stated that BRTA has continued the cleaning protocols, wearing face coverings, practicing social distancing, and nightly disinfecting of vehicles and facilities. The BRTA has brought back hourly service for all routes and reinstated the 3S in Williamstown and the 22 in Great Barrington. He stated that in the larger buses, seating has been replaced with bilingual stickers promoting social distancing. The cutaways are too small to do this. BRTA has been talking weekly with the MARTA group about different topics and the latest conversation was about air quality. A few other RTA's are trying new products like the MERV-13 filter, which is a much thicker filter than the current ones on the buses. Mr. Malnati stated they have also discussed a UV light to disinfect the air as it goes through the ductwork and driving with open windows and open hatches to increase air flow.

All BRTA vehicles also have partitions separating drivers from the fare box and the rest of the vehicle and its passengers. Mr. Malnati shared that there is a 35-foot Gillig that BRTA will be ordering this year that will come with a MERV-13 filter as well possibly the inline UV filter. He stated these would be factory installed and not an add on.

Mr. Malnati said ridership numbers have been steadily increasing from June to August. Fixed route is still down about 40% from the pre-COVID numbers, but that BRTA is doing much better than some other areas. This shows people riding the buses in the Berkshires do not have other options and need our transportation services. Paratransit ridership has increased as well, but not as much as the fixed route service.

STATE

Mr. Malnati submitted to DOT the quarterly MOU matrix. The matrix includes trips, revenue miles, and fare revenue comparing the totals for each quarter. The BRTA was one of the few RTA's that collected fares during the COVID-19 pandemic as a deterrent for free riders. The BRTA was on target with a lot of the percentages and, in the fourth quarter when COVID-19 hit, is where numbers dropped.

Mr. Malnati explained that the Advisory Board would be voting on a BRTA Fare Policy. Part of BRTA's MOU with Mass DOT was for the Advisory Board to adopt a fare policy no later than December 31, 2020. This vote would allow BRTA to review the collection of fares periodically and make recommendations to the Advisory Board on any changes to the current fare structure for their consideration.

Mr. Malnati shared that the BRTA received the first quarterly payment for State Contract Assistance at the FY 20 level on July 30th. The next payment is scheduled for October.

FEDERAL

Mr. Malnati stated the BRTA had received \$5,678,543.00 from the Small Urban CARES Act grant. This grant will cover operating expenses and the BRTA's response to COVID 19. The BRTA also received \$908,620.00 in Rural 5311 CARES Act funding. The difference between the CARES funding and the normal Federal funding BRTA receives is the CARES funding is 100% Federal and the BRTA does not need a 50% state match for the funds. The BRTA has budgeted for FY 21 to use \$2.5 Million of the CARES Act funds for operating expenses.

BORROWING

Mr. Malnati specified the BRTA completed their annual borrowing process on July 29, 2020, with the bid accepted for a \$5.3 million revenue anticipation note at 1.25% from Oppenheimer & Co. There were only two bids this year, whereas in previous years there are usually three of four bids.

DRAFT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FY 20

The FY20 BRTA audit was completed by Adelson & Company the first week of August and the draft Financial Statements were issued on September 4th. The BRTA Audit/Finance committee reviewed the draft statements and the Advisory Board will vote to accept the Financial Statements today. If approved, the Financial Statements will be distributed to the state agencies and posted to the BRTA website.

4) FY 2020 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - VOTE

Mr. Malnati shared his computer screen for the Advisory Board members to see the draft Financial Statements via Zoom. The Finance Committee met with the Auditors. The Auditors gave BRTA a clean opinion, which included the COVID-19 impact that decreased revenue. Mr. Malnati described the Administration costs are 5% of the total and Transportation costs make up 95%. Mr. McNally made a motion to accept the minutes of the FY 2020 Financial Statements. He shared that the Auditor gave high praise to the entire BRTA staff for this clean financial report. Ms. Minacci seconded the

motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the FY 2020 financial statements were passed unanimously.

Town	2) Minutes	4) FY 2020 Financial Statements	5) BRTA Fare Policy MOU	6) Cash Reports
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Becket		Yes		
Dalton		Yes		
Egremont		Yes		
Great Barrington		Yes		
Lee		Yes		
North Adams		Yes		
Pittsfield		Yes		
Stockbridge		Yes		
Windsor		Yes		

5) BRTA FARE POLICY MOU – VOTE

Mr. McNally made a motion to accept the BRTA fare policy MOU. Mr. Coleman seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the BRTA fare policy MOU passed unanimously.

Town	2) Minutes	4) FY 2020 Financial Statements	5) BRTA Fare Policy MOU	6) Cash Reports
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Becket			Yes	
Dalton			Yes	
Egremont			Yes	
Great Barrington			Yes	
Lee			Yes	
North Adams			Yes	
Pittsfield			Yes	
Stockbridge			Yes	
Windsor			Yes	

6) CASH REPORTS MAY, JUNE, AND JULY 2020 – VOTE

Mr. McNally made a motion to accept the cash reports for May, June, & July 2020. Ms. Minacci seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the cash reports for May, June & July 2020 passed unanimously.

Town	2) Minutes	4) FY 2020 Financial Statements	5) BRTA Fare Policy MOU	6) Cash Reports
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Becket				Yes
Dalton				Yes
Egremont				Yes
Great Barrington				Yes
Lee				Yes
North Adams				Yes
Pittsfield				Yes
Stockbridge				Yes
Windsor				Yes

7) BUDGET YTD

Mr. Malnati stated the current budget was through July 2020. Fixed route fares were \$12,000.00 more than what BRTA budgeted for. William's College made a payment making the fixed route fares overbudget. State grants were over budget as BRTA had budgeted to receive a payment in August, but it was received in July. Professional services were \$5,000.00 below budget, as well as interest expense, because BRTA budgeted for 2% interest rate and the actual was 1.25%. Operating funds were a little different because usually there are federal grants and reimbursements but BRTA did not do any draw downs in July. Mr. Malnati stated that HST was underbudget because many services were shut down due to COVID-19.

8) RIDERSHIP YTD

Mr. Malnati explained the current ridership packet was through July. Fixed route ridership was at 61% compared to the prior year and this drop was due to COVID-19. He received August's numbers and from July to August there was a 10% increase in ridership. He hoped for more ridership in the coming months with hybrid learning starting in many of the Berkshire County schools. The number of wheelchair passengers transported in July this year was 146 and the previous July was 254 and the highest wheelchair routes were the Routes 1 and 34. The brokerage trips and ridership were way down as DDS programs have not opened since COVID-19 began. Mr. Coleman asked if there are trends and certain routes that are close to pre pandemic levels of ridership or routes that have not seen much ridership. Mr. Malnati answered the Routes 1 and 2 are still doing decent, BCC is down, as well as the Route 22. He added that all routes were not anywhere near pre-COVID-19 numbers.

9) OLD BUSINESS

None discussed.

10) NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Malnati acknowledged the BRTA has been looking over the paratransit fare structure and will be changing a few of the town to town costs throughout the county. This will be impacting Dalton, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, and Lenox and customer prices would be going down \$0.50 (\$7.50 to \$7.00). This affects 10 fares out of 169.

Advisory Board member, Peter Galant of Lanesborough, passed away. Mr. Gallant was an active Board member and sat on the Pension and Finance Committees for BRTA. Both of those seats will need to be filled and asked the Board if there was any interest. If Board members are interested, please email himself and Ms. Irvin. Ms. Irvin requested for Mr. Malnati to email this information out to all Board members so those who were not present at the meeting could be made aware of the vacancies. Mr. Boyle questioned if Mr. Gallant's position on the board would be filled by the Lanesborough selectman. Ms. Irvin responded that yes it would be.

Mr. Coleman wanted to apologize regarding the email he had sent to Board members regarding the meetings agenda items protocol and requested that his agenda item be considered for the next Board meeting.

11) NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME

Mr. Malnati tentatively set a date for the next board meeting for November 19, 2020 at 4 PM based upon the State budget.

12) ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Wadsworth made a motion to adjourn the ZOOM Advisory Board meeting. Mr. Boyle seconded the motion which passed unanimously.