

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

March 25, 2021

4:00 PM

BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center

One Columbus Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201

**ZOOM BOARD MINUTES**

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

Christine Hoyt, Adams; William Elovirta, Becket; John Boyle, Dalton; Bruce Bernstein, Egremont; Tate Coleman, Great Barrington; James Sullivan, Hinsdale; Sherry Youngkin, New Ashford; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Caleb Mitchell, Peru; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Rene Wood, Sheffield; Douglas McNally, Windsor; and Brian Morrison, Rider Representative.

James Sullivan, Hinsdale and Brian O'Grady, Williamstown came after roll call.

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

Peggy Rae Henden-Wilson, Alford; Edmund St. John IV, Cheshire; Ronald Boucher, Clarksburg; Neil Olson, Florida; Gordon Hubbard, Lanesborough; Andrea Wadsworth, Lee; Marybeth Mitts, Lenox; Don Coburn, Monterey; Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington; William Hiller, Otis; Alan Hanson, Richmond; John Tynan, Savoy; Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge; and Rose Borgins, Washington.

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

	Voting Shares	Present	
Adams	2.30	2.30	
Alford	1.00	0.00	
Becket	1.00	1.00	
Cheshire	2.56	0.00	
Clarksburg	1.00	0.00	33.00
Dalton	2.85	2.85	needed for
Egremont	1.00	1.00	quorum
Florida	1.00	0.00	
Great Barrington	3.25	3.25	38.04 present via
Hinsdale	1.33	1.33	ZOOM at roll call
Lanesborough	2.43	0.00	
Lee	3.48	0.00	42.04 present via Zoom
Lenox	3.27	0.00	after roll call
Monterey	1.00	0.00	
Mt. Washington	1.00	0.00	
New Ashford	1.14	1.14	
North Adams	5.49	5.49	
Otis	1.00	0.00	
Peru	1.00	1.00	
Pittsfield	19.00	19.00	
Richmond	1.00	0.00	
Savoy	1.00	0.00	
Sheffield	1.01	1.01	
Stockbridge	2.76	0.00	
Washington	1.00	0.00	
Williamstown	2.67	2.67	
Windsor	1.00	1.00	
Disability Community	1.00	0.00	
Rider Representative	1.00	1.00	

1) **ROLL CALL**

S. Irvin called the ZOOM meeting to order at 4:00 PM. S. Vallieres performed a roll call of the Advisory Board Members who were present on ZOOM.

2) **BRTA BOARD ORIENTATION**

R. Malnati presented BRTA and BTM/PMB's organizational chart and explained the various staff positions

3) **MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 21, 2021 MEETING-VOTE**

D. McNally made a motion to accept the minutes of the January 21, 2021 meeting. T. Coleman seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the minutes were passed unanimously, with 2 abstentions.

Town	Minutes	Bus Stop Project	Cash Reports
Adams	Abstained		
Becket	-		
Dalton	-		
Egremont	Yes		
Great Barrington	Yes		
Hinsdale	Yes		
New Ashford	Yes		
North Adams	Yes		
Peru	Yes		
Pittsfield	Yes		
Sheffield	Abstained		
Windsor	Yes		
Williamstown	Yes		
Rider Representative	Yes		

4) **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

**Zoom Board Meeting**

R. Malnati asked when Board Members receive the board packet via email to please respond if they plan to attend the meeting so the ZOOM link can be sent before-hand and it will be known if there is a quorum.

**COVID-19**

R. Malnati stated as of March 22, 2021 group 3 of phase 2 are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccination, including transit. The BRTA now has a Mask Exemption Form for riders that have a medical reason or condition which prevents them from wearing a mask. This form must be filled out by their medical doctor and returned to the BRTA. Once the form is returned and they are determined eligible, a BRTA staff member will provide them with a mask exemption card. This mask mandate is a federal requirement. The BRTA was instructed by TSA that if there was a problem with anyone refusing to

wear a mask, TSA can be contacted. A few forms have been issued but no one has returned the form at this time. R. Malnati shared that some staff continue to work from home. The BRTA has between 1-4 staff members in the building, while others take turns working remotely. Ridership is still down from the pandemic, but it remains stable. The YTD ridership through January is down 38.8%. Paratransit ridership is down 50.5% from FY20.

### **State**

R. Malnati explained that AECOM released their Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan last week. This is BRTA's 5-year road map plan. Governor Baker submitted an RTA budget for \$90.5M in his House 1 Budget without the \$3.5M for discretionary funding by DOT. The BRTA was notified from Mass DOT from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA) \$101,848.00 will be received through the Governor's Rural apportionment.

R. Malnati stated that BRTA has submitted another letter of protest to EOHHS requesting Human Services Transportation (HST) contract awarded to Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) be set aside. The impact of COVID-19 on this solicitation and the material changes in service levels necessitated postponing the award. Representative Barrett has been looking into the issue as well as Representative Peake from Cape Cod. Earlier this week a letter was sent to the Governor signed by 77 other representatives across Massachusetts asking this to be set aside and for a Task Force be commissioned to review the process with a two-year moratorium before it can go out to bid again.

### **Federal**

R. Malnati spoke of the two executed grants awarded to BRTA for replacement vehicles and capital facility repairs this month in the amount of \$333,732 and \$616,071. Of the \$1.9T COVID relief bill signed by President Biden, \$30.5B was allocated for transit but details on BRTA's allocation amount is still unknown. The FTA will publish the allocation amounts when the information is available.

### **Draft Budget FY 21**

R. Malnati discussed meeting with the Finance Committee earlier in the month with a high overview of different scenarios and planning for the FY22 budget. They will meet again after additional details are known about what the expenses will be and staffing levels. The Advisory Board would be voting on the FY22 budget at the May Board Meeting.

### **Future BRTA Projects**

R. Malnati shared that BRTA has been working with operations on several projects for implementation. Operations will be making presentations to the Board as these various projects are ready for review and comment.

## **5) RM PAY PRESENTATION**

K. Wood presented a PowerPoint on RouteMatch Pay for the Paratransit Program. The BRTA would be implementing a new way for BRTA customers to pay for their paratransit rides. The new system would remove the need for customers to have to purchase tickets and provides customers and caretakers some different and easier options. The funds would be added to an account and the fare would be deducted from the customer's

balance when the trip is fulfilled. Customers would be able to add funds to their accounts via debit or credit card online, view trips, and monitor their balance at any time of the day. The BRTA Customer Service department would be able to answer questions, support their needs, and can add funds their accounts in person at the customer service window at the ITC with cash or a check or by mail. T. Coleman inquired about implementing a similar plan for the fixed route service, to which R. Malnati responded this is a future need.

**6) AECOM CRTP REPORT**

R. Malnati shared his screen to show the Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan (CRTP) executive summary. The summary was built on the 2015 Regional Transportation Plan and was recommended by the Task Force in their 2019 report that all RTAs have a 5-year plan. The plan was made up of primary goals, agency and service overview, markets and gaps in service, growth opportunities, and performance measures. The plan was launched in January 2020 and then COVID brought it to a halt. BRTA has implemented, over the last few years, some technology to improve passengers experience like the "Where's my Bus" Route Shout app, launching a new BRTA website, and providing new nightly bus service to Great Barrington and North Adams. The plan recognizes a need for later evening service, Sunday service, as well as additional service with areas not currently served. R. Malnati stated that rather than a 5-year plan, it would be more of a plan after the pandemic ends to look at the data.

**7) BRTA BUS STOP PROJECT -VOTE**

R. Caine presented a PowerPoint on the BRTA Bus Stop Project. He stated that the BRTA has a bit of an infrastructure issue that could be turned into an opportunity area. Currently there is very little BRTA owned or designated infrastructure, which in turn creates very little overhead in maintenance but also does not let the community know that BRTA exists. It has become evident that the BRTA needed to create definitive bus stops. The plan is broken down into subsections including safety, standardization, reliability, and data driven decisions. R. Malnati stated that currently the BRTA does not require passengers to board at a bus stop, which in turn relies on the driver and the passenger to decide what is deemed "safe." R. Caine explained that this project of designating a stop would eliminate that possible confusion and be a safer option. The BRTA currently has hundreds of destinations listed on bus schedules as bus stops, but that a vast majority of those stops have no signage declaring them to be a stop, leading to confusion. R. Caine showed an example of what a bus stop sign could potentially look like and what information could be on the sign including route information, days of service, and the BRTA's number and website. R. Caine stated that as funding becomes available BRTA would start on the smaller scale of the project and move forward.

T. Coleman raised a question regarding how much space is needed for each bus stop. R. Caine explained that the diagram was based off a larger scale bus and explained a smaller bus would need less space. S. Irvin questioned where the funding for this project would come from. R. Caine explained that it is dependent on where the site is located. He explained that it could be a split cost between the BRTA and or it could be a private business, an example being Walmart or Stop and Shop. D. McNally added that there could be grants at the state level for a project like this. T. Coleman questioned what the cost of this project would be. R. Caine explained the cost would be a lot if doing it all at once but explained the intention would be to identify the needs for each site

one at a time, as each site could have different needs. R. Wood added that Representative Neal is very heavy into the new infrastructure bill that would be coming from the Biden Administration and suggested BRTA send a letter to Rep. Neal as well as the State Senators requesting some inclusion in the forthcoming bill.

D. McNally made a motion to endorse and accept the BRTA Bus Stop Project and for BRTA to proceed. T. Coleman seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the BRTA Bus Stop Project was passed unanimously.

Town	Minutes	Bus Stop Project	Cash Reports
Adams		Yes	
Becket		-	
Dalton		-	
Egremont		Yes	
Great Barrington		Yes	
Hinsdale		Yes	
New Ashford		Yes	
North Adams		Yes	
Peru		Yes	
Pittsfield		Yes	
Sheffield		Yes	
Windsor		Yes	
Williamstown		Yes	
Rider Representative		Yes	

S. Youngkin asked R. Malnati who the contact person would be if their town wanted to engage in a discussion about bus stops. R. Malnati said that he would be the contact and if they needed to include R. Caine or the State Highway Department depending on the site.

**8) CASH REPORTS DECEMBER 2020, JANUARY 2021, and FEBRUARY 2021-VOTE**

D. McNally made a motion to accept the cash reports from December 2020, January 2021, and February 2021. S. Youngkin seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the cash reports were passed unanimously.

Town	Minutes	Bus Stop Project	Cash Reports
Adams			Yes
Becket			Yes
Dalton			-
Egremont			Yes
Great Barrington			-
Hinsdale			Yes
New Ashford			Yes
North Adams			Yes
Peru			Yes
Pittsfield			Yes
Sheffield			Yes
Windsor			Yes
Williamstown			Yes
Rider Representative			Yes

**9) BUDGET YTD**

R. Malnati wanted to point out that combined, fixed route fares and paratransit fares were below budget by \$58, 000. He stated that BRTA had been more aggressive when budgeting ridership return from the pandemic. R. Malnati stated that the state grants are over \$200, 000 due to the additional discretionary funds BRTA received. R. Malnati stated that professional services are under budget and paratransit is over budget.

**10) RIDERSHIP YTD**

R. Malnati stated that fixed route ridership is still down compared to pre-pandemic levels. R. Malnati stated that the pilot evening ridership has risen considerably. He stated that the average rider per service day is 19.3, compared to 12.5 for last month. R. Malnati stated that paratransit is still below last year's ridership due to the pandemic as well. R. Malnati stated that wheelchair transports on the bus are at 1200, where this time last year we were at 1700. Through February, Route 34 has the most wheelchair transports. R. Malnati stated HST transports are down 18% compared to last year, but explained some programs were still closed.

**11) OLD BUSINESS**

None discussed.

**12) NEW BUSINESS**

R. Malnati stated that he received notification on March 23<sup>rd</sup> that BRTA was awarded \$488,880 to continue the pilot evening service. The new funding would add an additional evening pilot service for the Route 14. R. Caine presented the route 14 pilot service area. R. Malnati stated that we he would be presenting new route ideas with the board at the July board meeting.

**13) NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME**

R. Malnati set a date for the next Advisory Board meeting tentatively for April 29, 2021 at 4 PM dependent on funding or HST information. If the Board does not meet on this date, the next Advisory Board meeting will be May 27, 2021. He would confirm later in the month the meeting date.

**14) ADJOURNMENT**

S. Younkin made a motion to adjourn the ZOOM Advisory Board meeting. J. Sullivan seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

FINAL