

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority
Minutes of the Finance/Audit Committee

January 8, 2018 at 10 AM
BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center
One Columbus Avenue, Pittsfield, MA 01201

MINUTES

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Finance/Audit Committee Members present:

Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Peter Gallant, Lanesborough; and Doug McNally, Windsor

Also present: Robert Malnati and Sarah Vallieres, BRTA staff

1. **Approval of Minutes for September 28, 2017-VOTE**

Mr. Malnati introduced Mr. McNally as a new member of the Finance Committee.

The committee members reviewed the minutes of May's meeting. Mr. Gallant made the motion to accept the minutes, was seconded by Ms. Lamb, and Mr. McNally abstained.

2. **State Budget Update**

The State tax revenue has increased last month, more than was anticipated. The supplemental \$1.6M for the RTA's collectively will be released, but Mr. Malnati is unsure when. He is looking for more information at tomorrow's MARTA meeting.

3. **Program Preview report-fare increase**

BRTA met in Boston with Astrid Glynn and members of MassDOT to discuss the program preview report. BRTA had to submit budget, financials, and ridership, to which MassDOT created a Program Preview Report. This provided MassDOT with a 5 year look at BRTA: 2 years prior, present year, and 2 future years.

Ms. Glynn stated to expect \$80M in funding for FY19 (FY15 funding level) for all of the RTA's and asked about a fare increase for BRTA customers. Mr. Malnati discussed reducing the discount between the Charlie Card fare and cash fare; currently at 25%. He also discussed charging customers for the Charlie Card, such as \$1. He gave an example of Metrobus charging \$5 per card. Both of these scenarios will need to be researched and a cost analysis will need to be done to see how much revenue would be gained and the potential loss of riders.

Mr. Gallant asked if we would hold public meetings if BRTA raised the fare, to which Mr. Malnati answered yes. Mr. McNally asked for the percentage of riders using Charlie Cards and fares. Mr. Malnati provided the Fare Product paper to describe. Mr. Gallant asked if there is a separate account between cash fares and Charlie Card fares. Mr. Malnati stated Ms. Hunkler has a balance of what fares have not been used. Ms. Lamb asked how much the actual Charlie Cards cost the BRTA, to which Mr. Malnati stated he did not think MassDOT has charged for them yet. But as MBTA will be moving away from Charlie Cards, there could be a cost associated, maybe \$1 per card. The last order BRTA received was for 10,000 full fare cards and 8,000 reduced fare cards. Mr. McNally thought \$1 per card would be good, but anything higher would cause concern. Ms. Lamb was concerned that this would discourage ridership. Berkshire County is a poor community and is concerned if they are "nickel and dimed to death". Mr. Malnati proposed sharing the results of the cost analysis/ridership exercise at the next Financial Committee meeting.

Mr. Malnati discussed the year to date budget through November. Mr. Gallant spoke of BRTA using buses for the tourism community and having the Chamber of Commerce possibly buy bus passes.

4. **Asset Transfer BAT to BRTA-VOTE**

Brocton Area Transit (BAT) is selling two Gillig buses for \$5,000 each. When BRTA received the LRTA buses, the cost to refurbish them was approximately \$8,000. The Director of Maintenance will check the roadworthiness of them, but from the pictures he saw, the buses are in great shape and should only have to pay for the buses and the graphics. The funding would come from the \$40,000 proceeds from vehicles sold this year. Ms. Lamb asked how many miles, to which Mr. Malnati said he wasn't sure but he could get the numbers. Ms. Lamb also asked if our Gilligs were out of service. Mr. Malnati shared that 2 were out of service for engine repair, but these BAT buses would be placeholders. BRTA applied for a grant to replace 2 Gillig buses and are waiting for the decision.

Ms. Lamb made the motion to transfer the two Gillig buses from BAT to BRTA. Mr. Gallant stated the vote acceptance is to be pending the approval of the Director of Maintenance's sign off and then seconded the motion. This motion was approved by all.

5. **Old Business**

No old business.

6. **New Business**

Mr. Gallant asked about the customer's requests for Sunday service, but understands there is currently no funding for this. Mr. Malnati felt that this was a great segue into his new business.

The Berkshire Flyer, a passenger rail connecting Penn Station, NYC to Pittsfield, have been meeting and Mr. Malnati has been attending, with Astrid Glynn and Sen. Hinds. The train would arrive from NYC on Friday night and return on Sunday afternoon. They are going through the cost analysis phase. Part of the forum has been a conversation on transportation once passengers arrive in Berkshire County. There needs to be later evening and Sunday transportation and also a 1st mile/last mile network.

Sen. Hinds Design Thinking has consisted on transportation scenarios that include the 7 major downtowns in Berkshire County. BRTA would provide the "spine" going from Great Barrington to Williamstown as an express and only stopping at park and rides in the downtowns. To support the first/last mile transportation to the bus route, a Transportation Management Association (TMA) will be established with outside agencies. This would augment service already in place and would be a yearlong pilot. Mr. McNally discussed how employers in South County have a hard time transporting their employees and this may solve this issue if the company would only have to transport from a centralized hub. Mr. Malnati expressed the importance for a public and private partnership. Mr. McNally also said that as this pilot commences, BRTA may see the need for route modifications.

BRTA received New Ashford member community paperwork from MassDOT and the Board will need to vote on this at the next board meeting. If this goes through, the Net Cost of Service and voting shares will change.

Legislative Delegation annual meeting with BRTA is moving forward as BRTA contacts the Delegation to coordinate a date.

7. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be March 29, 2018 at 2:30 PM, with the Board Meeting to follow. Sandy made the motion to adjourn, was seconded by Mr. Gallant, and approved by all.