

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority
Minutes of the Finance/Audit Committee

March 31, 2018 2:30 PM
BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center
One Columbus Avenue, Pittsfield, MA 01201

MINUTES

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Finance/Audit Committee Members present:

Sandra Lamb, North Adams and Peter Gallant, Lanesborough

Also present: Robert Malnati and Sarah Vallieres, BRTA staff

1. **Approval of Minutes for January 7, 2018-VOTE**

The committee members reviewed the minutes of January's meeting. Ms. Lamb made the motion to accept the minutes and was seconded by Ms. Gallant.

2. **State Budget Update**

Mr. Malnati stated that Governor Baker's FY19 budget for all Regional Transit Authorities is \$80.4M. MassDOT recommended to all of the RTA's to use the collective \$80.4 M amount for the budget and not to expect any additional funding. BRTA is following this directive as the budget develops. PVTA has a deficit of \$3M and WRTA has a deficit of \$1M. These RTAs and others have held public meetings for both cutting service and increasing fares.

3. **FY19 Draft Budget**

Mr. Malnati explained that there is a \$378,000 deficit from the FY18 budget to the FY19 budget. This is due to a decrease in State Contract Assistance (\$115,000), a decrease in federal funding (52,000), and an increase in fixed route wages (192,000). BRTA wants to go out to public comment on how to close this gap.

4. **FY19 Public meetings-Fare & Service Levels**

Mr. Malnati discussed for BRTA fares, lessening the discount between cash fares and Charlie Card fares. Many BRTA customers use the stored value on their Charlie Card; only about 6% use BRTA passes. There are a couple of scenarios where the Charlie Card fare is increased, but the passes will receive a discount; a better break-even point. This will provide BRTA \$31,156 in additional revenue; but about 3% of ridership will be lost.

Mr. Gallant was concerned about the availability of money from our customers to purchase passes. Ms. Lamb thought that this would not be a huge amount of money gained. Mr. Malnati responded that MassDOT is pushing for fare increases across the Commonwealth. This fiscal year, BRTA has had an 8% decrease in revenue. Mr. Gallant mentioned that in the summer ridership could be lower.

Mr. Malnati explained the various service levels:

- Route 21X- cancel the 4:30PM run as there aren't many riders
- Route 5,13,15,16 would only have one bus
- Mid-day run elimination

As well as others. Mr. Malnati was to present the power point presentation to the Finance Committee near the conclusion of the meeting.

Mr. Gallant mentioned getting rid of overtime and using more part-time employees to fill in for the overtime as a way to cut costs. First Transit should be negotiating with their staff and questioned if BRTA should go back out to bid. BRTA needs to be tough.

Mr. Gallant also discussed a collaboration between the western part of the state; PVTA, BRTA, and FRTA as our needs here are different than in Boston.

5. **Old Business**

No old business.

6. **New Business**

Ms. Lamb and Mr. Gallant informed Mr. Malnati that they will not run for Chair and Vice Chair in the May election. They will remain on the Finance Committee. Ms. Lamb stated that Mr. O'Grady was interested in Chair of the Advisory Board.

7. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be May 24, 2018 at 2:00 PM, with the Board Meeting to follow. Sandy made the motion to adjourn and was seconded by Mr. Gallant.

Mr. Malnati presented the Powerpoint that the Advisory Board members would be viewing for the potential service cuts and fare changes. Mr. McNally was present.

Mr. Gallant stated that changing the fare structure is not a lot of money. Can we do this for a limited time and see what happens; a 4 month trial period. Mr. Malnati responded that BRTA needs to increase revenue.

Mr. McNally reminded the committee that the Legislative Delegation earlier this year said that the BRTA fare is too high. Why would we go higher? In looking at the various options, Mr. McNally wants to nip and tuck on the routes that have light usage, rather than eliminated all of Saturday or paratransit service. He doesn't want to undercut legislative support. He asked if there could be community forums for South County as there has been a decrease in ridership. Mr. Malnati said that BRTA is currently working with Great Barrington on a bus signs project.