

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority  
Minutes of the Finance/Audit Committee

May 24, 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; Peter Gallant, Lanesborough; and Doug McNally, Windsor  
Also present: Robert Malnati and Sarah Vallieres, BRTA staff

1. **Approval of Minutes for May 11, 2018-VOTE**

The committee members reviewed the minutes of May's meeting. Ms. Lamb made a motion to accept the minutes. Mr. McNally seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

2. **FY 19 Fare & Service level scenarios-VOTE**

Mr. Malnati emailed the Fare and Service Level Scenarios to the Advisory Board and changed the wording from "Route 21 to 1 bus" to "Route 21 to 2 hour service", as this was less confusing. The Project Ranking 1-5 is a \$148,000 savings without any many service changes. These are things we should be doing when reviewing the BRTA service. The Public Comments are bolded with the highest amount of negative responses and included: 21 weekday service cuts, paratransit and whole service elimination on Saturdays, 3S, and the Route 1 to 2 hours on Saturdays. Mr. Malnati discussed the projected customer impact and explained the methodology of how the revenue loss was created using a worst case scenario.

Mr. McNally asked how BRTA would figure out how many trips would be lost. Mr. Malnati explained the formula he used. Mr. McNally stated these are misleading numbers and Mr. Malnati said these are the worst case scenarios. Mr. McNally asked if there was any word on Williams funding to which Mr. Malnati replied not yet, he would follow up.

Mr. Malnati's recommendation to move forward with is Scenario A. The Senate is asking for \$88M; \$4M would be allocated by MassDOT at their discretion, creating a task force, and using performance standards. Secretary Pollack has stated that more money is not the answer for the RTAs; reimagine transit using services like Uber and Lyft. Mr. Malnati said that Berkshire County is a depressed area with not a lot of economic vitality. Our riders cannot afford an Uber or use the smart phone component to this type of ride sharing services. Mr. Gallant agreed and said that Uber is costly. Mr. Malnati shared that BRTA is following MassDOT's recommendation of raising fares systematically and in small increments. The last change in fares for the Charlie Card was in 2014; this has been 5 years. Lessening the Charlie Card discount will increase BRTA revenue and show DOT route efficiencies to save money. BRTA is looking at this holistically. Mr. McNally stated that using averages doesn't give operable data. When does BRTA track trips on each run? Mr. Malnati said that BRTA performed this task last year for NTD using on/off counts. Mr. McNally explained that the average doesn't tell the story. BRTA needs to look at every run, using the productivity to look at the data in a more granular way. Mr. Malnati said he would have Kirk investigate.

Mr. Malnati said he needs a recommendation from the Finance Committee for the Advisory Board to present a balanced budget using the \$80M funding level. The deficit elimination would be accomplished by adopting a scenario and implementing on

September 1<sup>st</sup> after the funding picture was finalized. Mr. Malnati stated he needs a motion to choose a scenario. Mr. McNally is opposed to just choosing one. He would like the Advisory Board to consider both Scenario A and Scenario B. He disagreed with the fare increase referencing the Legislative Delegation saying the BRTA is too costly. Mr. Malnati said the cash price would remain the same; this is lessening the discount. Ms. Lamb said at the public meetings she attended there were no negative comments about raising the fare, that people were more concerned about the proposed service cuts. Mr. McNally felt that the public did not understand the service runs. He spoke of how the runs have been underperforming on the Route 21 during the weekends and questioned if this was the best way to spend money. Mr. Malnati illustrated how Great Barrington has created a bus stop sign project and promotion and is concerned about the impact that cutting the Route 21 would have. He stated that he will research a possible circulator loop in Great Barrington. Mr. McNally said that the Route 21 on Saturdays is the lowest performing route; eliminate this and create a circulator loop. Mr. Gallant asked if summer ridership and winter ridership is different for the Route 21. Mr. Malnati said he would check. Mr. McNally said he would like to give a choice of Scenarios A and B to the Advisory Board. The other scenarios have significantly negative issues. Mr. Malnati spoke of the BRTA revenue being down this year. Ms. Lamb asked if BRTA received the full amount from the State, what would happen with the ADA program. Mr. Malnati said that there would be a tightening the weekday hours. Mr. McNally would like this looked at a granular level. Mr. Gallant liked Scenario A, but would like to discuss Scenarios A and B and revisit this the first week of August to see what changes and the whole Board can vote. Mr. Gallant made a motion of both Scenarios A and B to be discussed at the Advisory Board and re-opening this the first week of August to assess the impact of the budget (review of ridership). Mr. McNally seconded this motion, which passed unanimously.

3. **FY 19 Draft Budget- VOTE**

Mr. Malnati explained that there were no changes made to the budget from the last Finance Committee meeting on May 11, 2018. He said that Fixed Route negotiations should be done by next week and the Paratransit negotiations would be next. There is a 2% increase in wages for all staff, except for Sarah as there has been a learning curve in her position reflective in her wage. The HST draft proposal budget is included and is a money in and money out methodology. BRTA is reimbursed by the HST management fee and there is a ride share incentive that pays for both overhead and staffing.

Mr. Malnati asked if there were questions and seeing none asked the Finance Committee to accept and present the draft budget and with the recommendation to endorse at the Advisory Board meeting. Mr. McNally made the motion and Ms. Lamb seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

4. **State Budget Update- Bob**

The State Budget update was discussed in 2. FY 19 Fare & Service level scenarios.

5. **Old Business**

No old business.

6. **New Business**

Mr. Malnati discussed the FTA Drug and Alcohol audit that had been completed earlier that day. There were 2 minor glitches and BRTA has 90 days to fix them. Senator Hinds legislation in regards to the Berkshire Flyer has been accepted and is in conference. There will be a subcommittee for the Berkshire Flyer to include: 1Berkshire, BRPC, and

BRTA. Work has been progressing on the TMA and will be tying into the Berkshire Blueprint.

7. **Next Meeting**

The next Advisory Board meeting will be at 4 PM on July 26, 2018. The Finance Committee will meet once more information about the State Budget comes in. Ms. Lamb made a motion to adjourn, to which Mr. Gallant seconded, and passed unanimously.