

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY  
VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

February 24, 2022  
4:00 PM

**ZOOM BOARD MINUTES**

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

Christine Hoyt, Adams; William Elovirta, Becket; John Boyle, Dalton; Tate Coleman, Great Barrington; Sherry Youngkin, New Ashford; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Rene Wood, Sheffield; Kent Lew, Washington; Brian O’Grady, Williamstown; Douglas McNally, Windsor; and Brian Morrison, Rider Representative.

MaryBeth Mitts, Lenox arrived during the Administrator’s Report and Andrea Wadsworth, Lee arrived during Proposed Service Changes.

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

Peggy Rae Henden-Wilson, Alford; Jennifer Morse, Cheshire; Ronald Boucher, Clarksburg; Melanie Torrico, Egremont; Neil Olson, Florida; Richard Scialabba, Hinsdale; Gordon Hubbard, Lanesborough; Justin Makuc, Monterey; Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington; William Hiller, Otis; James Welch, Peru; Alan Hanson, Richmond; Melanie Glynn, Savoy; and Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge.

Also, present: Robert Malnati, Sarah Vallieres, and Barbara White, BRTA staff; Rauley Caine, BTM staff; Anuja Koirola, BRPC; Brittany Polito, iBerkshires; and Tracy Pace.

	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
Dalton	2.85	2.85
Egremont	1.00	0.00
Florida	1.00	0.00
Great Barrington	3.25	3.25
Hinsdale	1.33	0.00
Lanesborough	2.43	0.00
Lee	3.48	3.48
Lenox	4.23	4.23
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	0.00
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	1.00
Williamstown	2.67	2.67
Windsor	1.00	1.00
Disability Community	1.00	0.00
Rider Representative	1.00	1.00
		34.75 needed for quorum
		40.71 present via ZOOM at roll call
		44.94 present via ZOOM during Administrator’s Report
		48.42 present via ZOOM during Service changes

1) **ROLL CALL**

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

2) **MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 27, 2022 MEETING - VOTE**

D. McNally made a motion to accept the minutes of the January 27, 2022 meeting. T. Coleman seconded the motion. Towns were individually called and the minutes were passed.

Town	(2) Minutes	(4) Proposed Service Changes	(5) Cash Reports January 2022
Adams	Yes		
Becket	Yes		
Dalton	Yes		
Great Barrington	Yes		
Lee	Yes		
Lenox	Yes		
New Ashford	Yes		
North Adams	Yes		
Pittsfield	Yes		
Sheffield	Abstain		
Washington	Yes		
Williamstown	Yes		
Windsor	Yes		
Rider Representative	Yes		

3) **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**  
**COVID-19**

R. Malnati shared that the mask mandate for all transit stations is still in effect until March 18, 2022, while the Pittsfield school system will be lifting their mask mandate on February 28, 2022. The remote public meeting allowance expires on July 15, 2022. The fixed route ridership has exceeded FY21 ridership each month through January, with a YTD 18.4% increase of 34,058 trips. The YTD ridership through January represents 72.4% of FY20, the first year of COVID's impact. Through January, Paratransit is 29% over last year with just under 6,000 trips of ADA, Non-ADA, and COA. The YTD ridership through January is still at 62% of FY20 pre COVID.

**STATE**

R. Malnati stated BRTA received the final quarterly payment for the State Contract Assistance of \$677,000. BRTA received just under \$3M total in State Contract Assistance. The FY23 Governor's budget does not include any increases. The Governor level funded at \$90.5M for the RTA's collectively with \$3.5M discretionary funding which would be administered through the DOT like the previous years. The RTAs are looking for the \$94M as a base to continue from the previous years, plus \$3.5M for cost of living and an additional \$3.5M for workforce retention and development. The BRTA is in the same position as other RTA's where the commercial driver's license holders are at a premium. Different companies, including trucking firms, have shortages of drivers also.

There was a meeting with the Secretary of Transportation in February, through the RTA Council, with a robust discussion on State funding. The Secretary of Transportation and RTA's have a difference of opinion of what the base level of funding should be. There will be additional federal funds available with the new Federal Infrastructure Law which is waiting to be fully appropriated.

#### **FEDERAL**

R. Malnati discussed the FTA Triennial Review's one remaining deficiency. BRTA contracted an outside firm to complete the vehicle inspections and asked FTA for an extension, to which they agreed. The two FTA grants applied for have not been awarded. One was for maintenance and the other was for future service ideas. R. Malnati will keep the Advisory Board in the loop.

#### **OPERATIONS.**

R. Malnati mentioned previously about the lack of commercial drivers' licenses. Accem Scott, the AGM, has been working with MassHire to teach a "Free CDL Permit Class" starting in March. Additional classes have been scheduled for April and May as the initial class filled up rapidly. There is a huge interest in the local community on how to get your CDL. The candidates will know of the current jobs available at BRTA.

D. McNally remarked that part of the problem is because marijuana is legal and candidates cannot pass the required drug test. S. Irvin stated this information should be given to the candidates before they go for their test. R. Malnati stated he is sure R. Caine has that topic covered. Downing Parkway is now surrounded by two growing facilities.

R. Wood would like to know if R. Malnati is requesting the members of this Board to send a letter to the Governor regarding the issue of cutting the budget amount. Mr. Malnati stated he can put something together. There a legislative luncheon in Boston and can speak to the Delegation then. It seems to be a regular occurrence with the Governor's budget with both the House and Senate voting to override the amount in the past. D. McNally stated he spoke to Rep. Mark and Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier and are on board.

#### **4) PROPOSED SERVICE CHANGES – VOTE**

R. Malnati clarified the agenda item. The Board packet included draft outlines of the service changes proposed for the start of the new fiscal year. The one-year discretionary grant awarded by MassDOT expires on June 30, 2022 without a replacement grant to fund the evening pilot programs for FY2023. What is needed is a sustainable statewide transportation program that addresses base service levels for the RTAs and incorporates incremental increases for cost of living increases. BRTA needs to approve a balanced budget at the end of May. The proposed service changes take into consideration incorporating some pilot evening service into the BRTA annual budget. It also addresses some schedule conflicts and sets the foundation for future projects like fleet electrification, express bus, and micro transit.

BRTA will be presenting this slideshow to the public and gathering their comments and concerns. The agenda vote today is to grant BRTA permission to proceed with the public participation process. R. Caine presented the slideshow. A lengthy discussion followed with a motion to collaborate with BRPC, followed by a motion to release the proposed service changes for public comment.

R. Wood made a motion for the BRTA to collaborate with BRPC regarding the proposed service changes. D. McNally seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the Proposed Service Changes to collaborate with BRPC were passed unanimously.

Town	(2) Minutes	(4) Proposed Service Changes Collaborate with BRPC	(5) Cash Reports January 2022
Adams			
Becket		Yes	
Dalton			
Great Barrington		Yes	
Lee		Yes	
Lenox			
New Ashford		Yes	
North Adams		Yes	
Pittsfield		Yes	
Sheffield		Yes	
Washington		Yes	
Williamstown		Yes	
Windsor		Yes	
Rider Representative		Yes	

R. Wood made a motion to release the proposed service changes for public comment. T. Coleman seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the Proposed Service Changes for Public Comment were passed unanimously. In the Chat Box, Adams would support it. Lenox would not.

Town	(2) Minutes	(4) Release Proposed Service Changes for Public Comment	(5) Cash Reports January 2022
Adams			
Becket		Yes	
Dalton			
Great Barrington		Yes	
Lee		Yes	
Lenox			
New Ashford		Yes	
North Adams		Yes	
Pittsfield		Yes	
Sheffield		Yes	
Washington		Yes	
Williamstown		Yes	
Windsor		Yes	
Rider Representative		Yes	

5) **CASH REPORTS FOR JANUARY 2022 - VOTE**

R. Malnati shared the cash reports for January 2022. R. Wood made a motion to accept the cash reports for January 2022. T. Coleman seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the Cash Reports for January 2022 were passed unanimously.

Town	(2) Minutes	(4) Proposed Service Changes	(5) Cash Reports January 2022
Adams			
Becket			Yes
Dalton			
Great Barrington			Yes
Lee			Yes
Lenox			
New Ashford			Yes
North Adams			Yes
Pittsfield			Yes
Sheffield			Yes
Washington			Yes
Williamstown			Yes
Windsor			Yes
Rider Representative			Yes

6) **BUDGET YTD**

R. Malnati provided an overview of the budget through January 2022. Fixed Route and Paratransit fares together is approximately \$27,000 over budget. The State and Federal grants will balance out. R. Malnati gave an overview of expenses which are about \$9,000 over budget.

7) **RIDERSHIP YTD**

Mr. Malnati discussed the ridership through January. Fixed Route ridership is 18.5% over, which is 34,000 additional riders, still at 28% under FY20 amount. There have been some increases in Paratransit ridership at 62%. Wheelchair ridership was a little less than a year ago, 900 compared to a little over 1,000.

T. Coleman asked if in the future to include a route by route breakdown, to which R. Malnati agreed.

8) **OLD BUSINESS**

None

9) **NEW BUSINESS**

None

10) **NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME**

R. Malnati scheduled the next meeting on April 28, 2022 at 4 PM.

12) **ADJOURNMENT**

S. Youngkin made a motion to adjourn the Zoom Advisory Board meeting. R. Wood seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the Adjournment was passed unanimously.

Towns	(2) Minutes	(4) Proposed Service Changes for Public Comment	(5) Cash Reports January 2022	(12) Adjournment
Adams				
Becket				Yes
Dalton				
Great Barrington				Yes
Lee				Yes
Lenox				
New Ashford				Yes
North Adams				Yes
Pittsfield				Yes
Sheffield				Yes
Washington				Yes
Williamstown				Yes
Windsor				Yes
Rider Representative				Yes