

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority
Finance/Audit Committee

March 31, 2020 at 10 AM
BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center
One Columbus Avenue, Pittsfield, MA 01201

TELECONFERENCE FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES DUE TO COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Finance/Audit Committee Members present:

Sandy Lamb, North Adams; Peter Gallant, Lanesborough; and Doug McNally, Windsor
Also present: Robert Malnati and Sarah Vallieres.

1. **Approval of Minutes for September 19, 2019 -VOTE**

The Finance Committee members reviewed the minutes of September's meeting. Ms. Lamb made the motion to accept the minutes, was seconded by Mr. Gallant, and approved by all.

Member	1.) Minutes
Sandy Lamb, North Adams	Yes
Peter Gallant, Lanesborough	Yes
Doug McNally, Windsor	Yes

2. **FY 21 Draft Budget Assumptions-Bob**

Mr. Malnati started by saying a lot is in flux now with the State due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Governor Baker pushed off the tax revenue to July, approximately \$3.6B originally due in April. There could be a shortfall in the State budget and Governor is thinking of possibly a short-term borrowing. BRTA will taking the lead from the State when assembling our FY21 Budget. Here are budget assumptions used to craft the Draft FY 21 Budget:

- House 2- \$90.5M collectively; \$2.8M in State Contract Assistance.
- Over \$300K discretionary funding for evening pilot (Routes 1, 11, 22, and 34).
 - Route 34 will include Walmart through Greylock Ave. Apartments.
- Federal 5307- \$2M
- Small Urban (every 3 years) \$665K for capital items.
- Assume the fares to be similar to FY 20- \$622K. Anticipating ridership will bounce back next year after Covid-19.
- Raise for the staff.
- Labor costs will continue to rise under MA minimum wage and Collective Bargaining contract.
- Still unsure of the impact of the supplemental 2 weeks paid time off. Will it be funded? Is BRTA in the pool? There are a lot of unknowns remaining.

Ms. Lamb agreed that everyone is in the same position.

Mr. Malnati said there would be another meeting to review once a draft is created.

Mr. McNally asked if there were any plans for a drop in revenue for this fiscal year?

Mr. Malnati answered that we are still looking into this as we are still running service. If there are service cuts, that may help put the budget into alignment.

Mr. McNally shared the governors are reminding the federal government that states cannot do deficit spending and there would need to be a bailout from the feds.

Mr. Malnati mentioned that there may be more funding from the feds allocated in the 5307 line item that could be used operationally. More guidance will come out next Monday.

3. Ridership Review

Mr. Malnati reviewed the March ridership spreadsheet that was emailed to the group. The people now riding the bus are the ones that truly need the service for work or shopping. There are about 600-700/day and are transit dependent. The MBTA has had a 90% reduction on the T, assuming that the transit dependent riders are taking the bus. The evening Route 1 has had an average over the past 7 months of 241 customers. In March, so far, 234 people are still using this service. The 11N is still being used. The Route 22 is not being used. This is primarily used by Simon's Rock College and the students probably will not be back this semester. This is one of the routes that could be cut.

Mr. McNally had heard that all colleges would be resuming virtually.

Mr. Malnati emailed the different scenarios if there is a reduction of service. Scenario A would stop the 3S, the routes 4/11 would run on a Saturday schedule (every other hour) and we may institute this ahead of time. Operations need to bid on the work and this could free up some drivers as spares if a driver gets sick. We don't want to reduce service until after the 1st of the month. We may implement this next week.

Ms. Lamb asked if anyone has tested positive, to which Mr. Malnati answered, not that he knew of.

Mr. Gallant shared that both Dalton COA and Lanesborough COA has shut down their vans. Are there any others?

Mr. Malnati had requested this information recently and knew that Pittsfield COA was performing some trips and SBETC was closed. Egremont was looking into using their van, investigating the contract and the drug and alcohol portion

Ms. Lamb said that Williamstown COA and Adams COA was running, but North Adams COA was not.

Mr. Gallant asked if there was proper spacing on the bus. Mr. Malnati said there are signs up, customers cannot sit behind the driver, and the first couple of seats are flipped up. We are not carrying a lot of people. Other RTAs have instituted customers using the backdoor and not collecting fare. BRTA cannot do this and there is not a lot of interaction using our farebox. Operations will be providing ridership numbers for yesterday.

Mr. McNally suggested on certain routes that have shopping areas, the driver could poll customers by raising their hand if they are working or shopping.

4. Old Business

No old business

5. New Business

Mr. Malnati said on April 1st, this will be a new contract year for him and Ms. Irvin was looking for a Finance Committee recommendation. After discussion, it was decided that the members of the Finance Committee would reconvene and provide a recommendation to the Advisory Board Chair.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be determined at a future date and will have more definitive guidance about the budget. The MBTA is pushing back their budget deadline and the RTAs are asking for the same extension. All agreed and Mr. Malnati would distribute paperwork prior to the call.