

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

April 28, 2022
4:00 PM

ZOOM BOARD MINUTES

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Present:

William Elovirta, Becket; Tate Coleman, Great Barrington; Gordon Hubbard, Lanesborough; Andrea Wadsworth, Lee; MaryBeth Mitts, Lenox; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Rene Wood, Sheffield; Douglas McNally, Windsor; and Brian Morrison, Rider Representative. Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge arrived during the Administrator's Report.

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Absent:

Christine Hoyt, Adams; Peggy Rae Henden-Wilson, Alford; Jennifer Morse, Cheshire; Ronald Boucher, Clarksburg; John Boyle, Dalton; Melanie Torrico, Egremont; Neil Olson, Florida; Richard Scialabba, Hinsdale; Justin Makuc, Monterey; Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington; Sherry Youngkin, New Ashford; William Hiller, Otis; James Welch, Peru; Alan Hanson, Richmond; Melanie Glynn, Savoy; Kent Lew, Washington; and Brian O'Grady, Williamstown.

Also, present: Robert Malnati, Sarah Vallieres, and Barbara White, BRTA staff; Rauley Caine and Leigh Boyd, BTM staff; Anuja Koirola and Clete Kus, BRPC; Brittany Polito, iBerkshires; Emily Reardon, FBWM; Jon Gould, Senator Hinds Office; Tracy Pace; and Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier.

	Voting Shares	Present
Adams	2.22	0.00
Alford	1.00	0.00
Becket	1.00	1.00
Cheshire	2.70	0.00
Clarksburg	1.00	0.00
Dalton	2.78	0.00
Egremont	1.00	0.00
Florida	1.00	0.00
Great Barrington	3.33	3.33
Hinsdale	1.33	0.00
Lanesborough	2.36	2.36
Lee	3.42	3.42
Lenox	4.22	4.22
Monterey	1.00	0.00
Mt. Washington	1.00	0.00
New Ashford	1.14	0.00
North Adams	5.42	5.42
Otis	1.00	0.00
Peru	1.00	0.00
Pittsfield	19.25	19.25
Richmond	1.00	0.00
Savoy	1.00	0.00
Sheffield	1.03	1.03
Stockbridge	2.74	2.74
Washington	1.00	0.00
Williamstown	2.58	0.00
Windsor	1.00	1.00
Disability Community	1.00	0.00
Rider Representative	1.00	1.00
		34.75 needed for quorum
		42.03 present via ZOOM at roll call
		44.77 present via ZOOM during Administrator's Report

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 FEBRUARY 24, 2022 MEETING - VOTE**

D. McNally made a motion to accept the minutes of the February 24, 2022 meeting. T. Coleman seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the minutes were passed unanimously.

Town	(2) Minutes	(4) Proposed Service Changes	(5) Administrators Review	(6) Cash Reports February and March 2022	12) Adjournment
Becket	Yes				
Great Barrington	Yes				
Lanesborough	Yes				
Lee	Yes				
Lenox	Yes				
North Adams	Yes				
Pittsfield	Yes				
Sheffield	Yes				
Stockbridge	---				
Windsor	Yes				
Rider Representative	Yes				

3) **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

R. Malnati shared the new Weighted Votes for the Board Members and will be reflected starting at today's meeting.

R. Malnati discussed COVID-19 and the mask mandate, was originally extended into May, but ended on April 18, 2022. The TSA would no longer require masks on transit and airlines. On this date, the BRTA stopped requiring masks, but are recommending following the CDC guidance to wear masks while indoors. Masks remain available to the riding public. As the current remote public meetings expire in July, there could be in-person Board Meetings soon.

Fixed Route Ridership is up 18.5% of almost 44,000 trips from last year. The year-to-date ridership is at the 75% of pre-COVID FY20. March riders are 21% increased from last year and 9.6% over previous years

R. Malnati explained the Governor's Budget is \$90.5M for the RTA's and \$3.5M for discretionary funding. Last year, BRTA's funding was \$94M for operations. The House voted on \$94M. The budget line item the RTA's are looking for is \$94 M with \$3.5 cost of living, and \$3.5 for workforce retention. MARTA held the annual Legislative luncheon in Boston last month. As a result of this luncheon, BRTA and the Berkshire Delegation

were able to meet via Zoom. The meeting was attended by the BRTA Advisory Board Chair and Vice Chair, who thanked the delegation for their past and future support for the RTA. T4MA (Transportation for Massachusetts) had a zoom meeting with the BRTA, Berkshire Legislative Delegation, Western Massachusetts agencies, and local businesses. T4MA, a Boston group, learned about how it is to collaborate in the Berkshires. Now they can bring back to Boston what our needs are and how important transportation is to us.

R. Malnati stated the submission of some requirements for our Triannual Review deficiencies. BRTA was not awarded the FTA grant for maintenance items from last year and we continue to apply for State and Federal grants.

R. Malnati remarked BTM's Assistant General Manager, Accem Scott, has been working with MassHire since March, teaching a Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) class on requirements and how to prepare for it. Twenty people started the class, ten finished, and a position was offered to one. A. Scott just finished the April class and the May class is already filled up. There were a lot of attendees from the City of Pittsfield that require a CDL for the vehicles they operate. I recorded a 3-minute Public Service Announcement at the PCTV studio outlining the services BRTA provides. The video will be aired on PCTV and posted to the BRTA's website. A PSA audio on BRTA's travel Training program was also recorded and will be inserted into the PSA rotation on WTBR radio this month.

There was discussion of the Governor's budget regarding inflation. It has been in the bill the House passed last year and that was part of the language in the amendment for this year. The RTA's were looking for a \$94M base and \$3.5M for a CPI, (Consumer Price Index) but that part of the amendment did not pass. There was discussion of the discretionary Federal grant applications for facility upgrades and electric vehicles. BRTA will continue to work with MassDOT on electrification.

4) PROPOSED SERVICE CHANGES – VOTE

R. Malnati discussed the Proposed Service Changes. BRTA had a collaborative meeting with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission on February 28th. There were three Zoom presentations, two in-person presentations, and a 45-day public comment period. The responses that were received (letters, emails, telephone calls) were included in the Board Packet. BRTA responded to the inquiries that needed clarifications on some points. The yellow highlights are what has changed from the initial presentation in response to the collaboration with BRPC and the public comments. Micro transit will be the Crane Avenue area to pilot and we can see what the demand is. The Paratransit fleet have extra capacity, and this will utilize the Paratransit Call Center and use RM Pay. Fares would be between three and four dollars, one way trip. There were some service questions and were clarified.

There was a discussion on the MassDOT discretionary grant for evening service and elimination of service. R. Malnati explained the BRTA is looking at our system as a whole and what makes sense for the system. The three evening routes that do make sense are the Route 1, 34 and 14. Instead of the pilot program, they will now be funded under this budget program. The elimination of Route 16 will be serviced by Routes 4 and 5B, and the Micro-transit program. These are data driven decisions to be more efficient and using the funds we have and to provide as much service as we possibly can.

There was a discussion on if the service changes were a decrease in service. D. McNally remarked I don't like us to portray what is going on with increase or decrease of service. Its effort to use data to optimize service with existing resources. There will be a decrease in service in certain areas because it was not being used and increase in other areas where it was a greater demand. It is an optimization process, not an increase, decrease in service overall. J. Gould shared his understanding from the presentation was the changes are a result of staffing shortages, financial constraints, and inefficiencies. What would you like me to take back to the Senator in terms of goals for BRTA budget FY23? R. Malnati remarked to fund the request of \$101M. \$94M is flat from what we had from last year. Last year we had a locked in fuel price at \$2.25 a gallon. Fuel costs are going to be a huge increase. When the contract expired, we went for a solicitation in January and didn't get a response back. Every time the RTA budgeted line item is increased by \$3.5M, BRTA receives a little over \$100,000. We are in a labor situation where we have collective bargaining. Those rates have gone up. How do you fix level funding and increase costs? Mr. Malnati remarked \$101M is for all RTA's. We are looking for the \$94M base, \$3.5M for CPI and \$3.5M for workforce retention. That language was in the House amendment. That will probably go on the Senate side as the House came back with \$94M which was an increase from the \$90.5 the Governor presented. R. Wood shared the MBTA budget got a CPI increase and RTA budget didn't. The CPI doesn't even begin to equate to the January inflation rate 9.5%.

There was a discussion on the BRTA budget. T. Coleman asked what happens if BRTA received an increase from the State. R. Malnati discussed work was continuing on the BRTA budget and remains conservative with State Contract funding, which may be at the \$94M level. If there is an increase, it would probably be spent on fuel and additional staff.

D. McNally made a motion to accept the Proposed Service Changes. B. Elovirta seconded the motion. Towns were individually called. There were seven Yes (33.45) and four No (11.32). The Proposed Service Changes for FY23 were accepted.

Town	(2) Minutes	(4) Proposed Service Changes	(5) Administrators Review	(6) Cash Reports February and March 2022	12) Adjournment
Becket		Yes 1.00			
Great Barrington		No 3.33			
Lanesborough		Yes 2.36			
Lee		Yes 3.42			
Lenox		No 4.22			
North Adams		Yes 5.42			
Pittsfield		Yes 19.25			
Sheffield		No 1.03			
Stockbridge		No 2.74			
Windsor		Yes 1.00			
Rider Representative		Yes 1.00			

5) ADMINISTRATORS REVIEW

S. Irvin explained the Finance Committee meets every March or early April to determine the salary for the Administrator. They are making a recommendation, given inflation, a 4% increase in salary going back to April 1st when the contract goes into effect. The Board has been requiring data analysis and a scientific approach for service changes.

D. McNally made the motion for the 4% raise for the Administrator. S. Lamb seconded the motion.

There was a lengthy discussion on the Open Meeting Law and the lack of the Finance Committee meeting in open **session** (as amended on 5/26/22). There were questions on the lack of transparency of the Finance Committee and how members were in their positions. R. Wood stated “I want to go on the record and have it in the minutes that if the Open Meeting Law is not adhered to, I will file a complaint every time meetings are not posted where the public and advisory board members have access to the login information rather having to respond. I made my comments and I think there should be an election of the Finance Committee going forward and how we adhere to the Open Meeting Law.” T. Coleman isn’t against a 4% increase but wanted to know the rationale of how this was decided. D. McNally shared he was appointed to the Finance Committee. The annual reviews have been a discussion among the members of the Finance Committee and the Administrator. Prior to the Finance Committee meeting, there was a discussion with the Berkshire Delegation to get a sense of what they feel the direction the BRTA should be going in and get more data. The Finance Committee takes that input, his performance, and the Administrator’s response to the directions that have been given the prior year. For instance, the year before last, the direction was to find some way to expand evening service and to use a more diligent deeper dig. This year the Finance Committee felt he upped his game. There was discussion of reviewing the by-laws of the Finance Committee.

A. Wadsworth called the question.

Town	(2) Minutes	(4) Proposed Service Changes	(5) Administrator’s Review Call the Question	(6) Cash Reports February and March 2022	12) Adjournment
Becket			Yes		
Great Barrington			Yes		
Lanesborough			Yes		
Lee			Yes		
Lenox			Yes		
North Adams			Yes		
Pittsfield			Yes		
Sheffield			Yes		
Stockbridge			Yes		
Windsor			Yes		
Rider Representative			Yes		

S. Lamb made a motion for the 4% salary increase for the Administrator. D. McNally seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, the motion was accepted.

Town	(2) Minutes	(4) Proposed Service Changes	(5) Administrators Review	(6) Cash Reports February and March 2022	12) Adjournment
Becket			Yes		
Great Barrington			Yes		
Lanesborough			Yes		
Lee			Yes		
Lenox			---		
North Adams			Yes		
Pittsfield			Yes		
Sheffield			Yes		
Stockbridge			Yes		
Windsor			Yes		
Rider Representative			Yes		

6) CASH REPORTS FOR FEBRUARY AND MARCH - VOTE

R. Malnati shared the cash reports for February and March 2022. D. McNally made a motion to accept the cash reports for February and March. J. Minacci seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the Cash Reports for February and March were passed unanimously.

Town	(2) Minutes	(4) Proposed Service Changes	(5) Administrators Review	(6) Cash Reports February and March 2022	
Becket				Yes	
Great Barrington				Yes	
Lanesborough				Yes	
Lee				---	
Lenox				Yes	
North Adams				Yes	
Pittsfield				Yes	
Sheffield				Yes	
Stockbridge				Yes	
Windsor				Yes	
Rider Representative				Yes	

7) BUDGET YTD

R. Malnati provided an overview of the budget through March. Fixed route and paratransit fares are both over budget. The State contract assistance, was paid a month early. Federal grants have not drawn down yet. Year to date, BRTA is \$38,000 under budget and \$48,000 over in revenue. There was a discussion if BRTA remains under budget if there could be a fare free week. R. Malnati discussed it would depend on if it stayed that way but would have to be before June 30th and the issues of increases of fuel and supplies.

8) RIDERSHIP YTD

R. Malnati stated fixed route is up 18.5% through March, almost 44,000 extra passenger trips. March was an almost 21% increase from previous year and 10% over the year before for March. Paratransit had Increases with the ADA trips and COA and is 8,000 trips ahead of last year, 68% of pre COVID numbers.

9) OLD BUSINESS

None

10) NEW BUSINESS

R. Malnati shared Gina LePage King was hired on April 1, 2022 to work in the Information Center. R. Malnati has been appointed to the Pittsfield Taxi Commission after checking with Ethics. The Berkshire Flyer will start July 8th, with the first train out of New York leaving at 3 PM and arriving in Pittsfield at 7:12 PM. Then the Flyer will leave Pittsfield on Sunday at 3 PM to be back in New York. May is the election for the slate of officers for the Advisory Board.

NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME

R. Malnati scheduled the next meeting, May 26, 2022 at 4 PM.

12) ADJOURNMENT

T. Coleman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. B. Elovirta seconded the motion. Towns were individually called, all stated aye, and the adjournment was passed.

Towns	(2) Minutes	(4) Proposed Service Changes	5) Administrators Review	(6) Cash Reports February and March 2022	(12) Adjournment
Becket					Yes
Great Barrington					Yes
Lanesborough					Yes
Lee					Yes
Lenox					---
North Adams					Yes
Pittsfield					Yes
Sheffield					Yes
Stockbridge					Yes
Windsor					Yes

Rider Representative					Yes
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FINAL