

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

May 23, 2024

4:00 PM

BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center, Second Floor Board Room

One Columbus Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201

**ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

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

Ray Killeen, Cheshire; John Boyle, Dalton; Melanie Vicneire, Egremont; Frank Abbott, Monterey; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge; Brian O'Grady, Williamstown; and Douglas McNally, Windsor. Sarah Fontaine, Adams arrived after the Minutes.

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

Charles Ketchen, Alford; William Elovirta, Becket; Jeff Levanos, Clarksburg; Cynthia Bosley, Florida; Benjamin Elliott, Great Barrington; Sherman Derby, Sr.; Hancock; Earl Peck, Hinsdale; Rob Reilly, Lanesborough; Andrea Wadsworth, Lee; Mindi Morin, Lenox; Eric Mendelsohn, Mt. Washington; Sherri Youngkin, New Ashford; Tara White, New Marlborough; Brandi Page, Otis; James Welch, Peru; Alan Hanson, Richmond; Andrew Provost, Savoy; Nadine Hawver, Sheffield; Kent Lew, Washington; Andrew Potter, West Stockbridge; and Brian Morrison, Rider Representative.

**Also, present:** Robert Malnati, Sarah Vallieres, and Barbara White, BRTA; Rauley Caine, BTM; Patti Annechiarico; Anuja Koirola, BRPC; and Brittany Polito, iBerkshires.

	Voting Shares	Present	
Adams	2.8649	2.8649	
Alford	1.0000	0.0000	
Becket	1.0274	0.0000	
Cheshire	3.7233	3.7233	
Clarksburg	1.0000	0.0000	38.5000
Dalton	2.5375	2.5375	needed for
Egremont	1.0176	1.0176	quorum
Florida	1.0007	0.0000	
Great Barrington	3.7475	0.0000	
Hancock	1.0000	0.0000	41.4061 when called to order.
Hinsdale	1.3176	0.0000	44.271 after the Minutes vote.
Lanesborough	2.4182	0.0000	
Lee	3.6022	0.0000	
Lenox	4.4327	0.0000	
Monterey	1.0000	1.0000	
Mt. Washington	1.0000	0.0000	
New Ashford	1.0954	0.0000	
New Marlborough	1.0000	0.0000	
North Adams	6.5767	6.5767	
Otis	1.0000	0.0000	
Peru	1.0353	0.0000	
Pittsfield	19.7465	19.7465	
Richmond	1.0007	0.0000	
Savoy	1.0000	0.0000	
Sheffield	1.0512	0.0000	
Stockbridge	3.0633	3.0633	
Washington	1.0000	0.0000	
West Stockbridge	1.0000	0.0000	
Williamstown	2.7319	2.7319	
Windsor	1.0093	1.0093	
Rider Representative	1.0000	0.0000	
Disability Community	1.0000	0.0000	

1) **ROLL CALL**

S. Irvin called the Advisory Board Meeting to order at 4:00 PM stating this meeting will be recorded for the purposes of the notes of the Board Minutes.

2) **MINUTES OF MARCH 28, 2024 MEETING - VOTE**

D. McNally made a motion to accept the minutes of the March 28, 2024 meeting. J. Boyle seconded the motion, and all stated aye. The Minutes of the May 28, 2024 Advisory Board Meeting passed unanimously.

3) **ADMINISTRATORS REPORT**

R. Malnati asked if there were any questions regarding the Administrator's Report from the Advisory Board packet that was emailed to the Board Members. There were no questions.

4) **DRAFT FY 2025 BUDGET – VOTE**

R. Malnati discussed the meeting with the Finance Committee today reviewing the Draft FY 2025 Budget line by line. He provided an overview to the Advisory Board of Draft FY25 Budget starting with income. Fare revenues have increased 5% over last year. Ridership has increased 10% through April. Two new fare Free events in this Draft Budget are in July and again for the 6-week holiday season November/December. He discussed the local assessments, state contract assistance, grant funding includes the Fare Free initiatives, and federal funding is the apportionment. The document Budget Assumptions show rent, an increase in maintenance costs due to rising labor costs, an increase in interest income, and a level funded state income. BRTA conservatively is using the Governor's budget and added the three new grant awards to it. 1. BRTA connections to PVTA and FRTA. 2. Evening paratransit service in Pittsfield. 3. Senior medical trips in rural communities. There was a change in the federal allocation due to the 2020 Census, decreasing from \$2.9M in FY24 to \$2.4M in FY25. BRTA is not the only transit authority to be affected by that, explaining that last year there were three small urban areas in the state and now there are four.

Expenses show a small increase in Administrations due to apportioned cost centers. Borrowing is budgeted for 4.5% this year. Fixed route operations went from \$7.1M in FY 24 to 8M in FY 25, an increase of \$918,000. Paratransit operations went from \$1.1M in FY 24 to \$1.6M in FY 25, an increase of \$461,000. This is a total increase of \$1.38M. This includes 2 new fixed route operators and 5 new paratransit operators for the 3 new grant services. The majority of the increase is from the collective bargaining contracts for operators' wages. A three-year contract was ratified last week and will start on July 1. Rising fuel and insurance is also a contributor to these increases. There is a remaining \$222,946 which is part of the expenses for grant reimbursement. The \$11.7M budget is balanced and has increased \$1.7M this year. The Finance Committee has recommended the Draft FY 2025 Budget to be approved by the BRTA Advisory Board.

D. McNally made the motion to accept the FY 2025 Budget as presented. Ms. Lamb seconded the motion. There was discussion on clarification of the total expenses for the budget. All stated aye and the Draft FY2025 BRTA Budget passed.

5) **ELECTION OF OFFICERS - VOTE**

R. Malnati stated the current BRTA Advisory Board Officers are S. Irvin as Chair and D. McNally as Vice-Chair and the yearly slate of BRTA Advisory Board Officers is up for a vote. S. Irvin is resigning as Chair and Board Member of the BRTA Advisory Board. S. Irvin asked if anyone was interested in becoming Chair. D. McNally and B. O'Grady both stated yes, and Sheila made the motion. R. Malnati said we would vote for one candidate and then the other, with each community voting once by weighted votes. R. Killen seconded the motion. S. Vallieres read a roll call for D. McNally for chair and the total weighted votes were 29.0342. Total votes for B. O'Grady were 12.3719.

Town	D. McNally Chair
Adams	
Cheshire	Yes
Dalton	Yes
Egremont	Yes
Monterey	Yes
North Adams	No
Pittsfield	Yes
Stockbridge	No
Williamstown	"I'm withdrawing, he can have it. He already has the votes."
Windsor	

S. Irvin stated D. McNally is the next BRTA Advisory Board Chair. S. Irvin stated nominations are being accepted for Vice-Chair. J. Boyle made a motion to be nominated for Vice-Chair and B. O'Grady announced he wanted to be nominated also. S. Irvin stated the need for a roll call vote for Vice-Chair starting with J. Boyle. S. Vallieres started the roll call vote. Cheshire was the only vote, which was no. D. McNally asked if this is the way this should be done? J. Boyle stated he is withdrawing and only volunteered as no one else did. D. McNally made a recommendation for a unanimous vote for B. O'Grady as Vice-Chair. S. Fontaine seconded the motion. All stated aye and B. O'Grady is the next BRTA Advisory Board Vice-Chair.

**6) CASH REPORT MARCH AND APRIL 2024-VOTE**

D. McNally made a motion to accept the Cash Reports for March and April 2024. J. Minacci seconded the motion. All stated aye and the Cash Reports for March and April 2024 were passed.

**7) CAMBRIDGE SYSTEMATICS FARE POLICY REVIEW**

R. Malnati stated BRTA has been working with Cambridge Systematics on a study to help simplify BRTA's fare structure for our customers. Once the study is complete, the BRTA Advisory Board will review different scenarios and the cost analysis. The Governor's, House, and Senate budget have funds set aside for free fare/low-income funding. Cambridge Systematic's final report is due prior to June 30, 2024. This will be a voteable item on how to move forward with BRTA's fare structure. This will be an agenda item at the September meeting. There was a discussion questioning if a fare study has been done before, with the answer of not in a long time.

**8) BUDGET YTD**

R. Malnati provided an overview of BRTA's FY 24 budget. Overall, the budget looks good with expenses below budget and revenue shifting to state funding for the fare free event. There is one more month of fare revenue and ridership is still strong. June will be a fare free event. Interest expense is under budget by \$50K, 5.25% that we budgeted. The total administrative expenses are under budget by \$44K. Fixed routes are under budget by \$39K and Paratransit is over budget by 36K. In total through April, BRTA is under budget by \$39,000.

**9) RIDERSHIP YTD**

R. Malnati reviewed the ridership year to date. Fixed route is up 41,800 through April, over 10% from last year. Paratransit is over 9.5%, almost 4,000 riders. June of last year, there were only 44,000 riders. BRTA is projecting to have 51,000 customers. A new ridership thermometer will be put up downstairs and at BTM. This has the new 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary graphic logo that will be used throughout the year. There are 2,300 fixed route

wheelchair transports to date. Last year there were 1,600 and two years ago 1,200. This has doubled in two years. Route 34 has the highest amount of wheelchair transport, and Route 1 is the second highest. D. McNally mentioned hats off to our employees, hearing from people that they feel comfortable and well served taking the bus.

**10) DISCUSSION ON REMOTE MEETINGS**

R. Malnati discussed for a hybrid meeting solution, the purchase of an Owl camera is about \$1100. He will look into internet bandwidth. Currently BRTA uses Microsoft Teams, as it is free. There was a discussion on the benefits of Zoom and Teams. A large screen would be needed to recognize people who are raising their hand to participate, and this room would work well. S. Irvin stated it seems people want to explore hybrid meetings to improve attendance. D. McNally mentioned that the state’s Open Meeting law amendment allowing remote meetings is set to expire March of 2025, unless it is extended. R. Kileen asked if it would increase the Advisory Board members’ participation. S. Irvin stated it seems people would like to explore hybrid meetings so we would have to look at costs and the technology involved and ask for a report back at the September meeting.

**11) TOPICS FOR FUTURE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

The floor was open for topics for future advisory board meetings. D. McNally stated he would like a discussion on Micro-transit. R. Killeen asked for an update on the connecting service between BRTA, FRTA, and PVTA.

**12) NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME**

R. Malnati scheduled the next meeting for Thursday, September 26, 2024, at 4:00 PM.

**13) ADJOURNMENT**

J. Boyle made the motion to adjourn. D. McNally seconded the motion. All stated aye and the meeting ended at 4:43 PM.

**Meeting Materials:**

- BRTA Advisory Board Packet
- BRTA Public Notice and Agenda
- Budget Assumptions (handed out at meeting)
- BRTA Draft Budget FY 2025 (handed out at meeting)

**BRTA Advisory Board Votes from May 23, 2024:**

<b>Town</b>	<b>2) Minutes of March 28, 2024 Meeting</b>	<b>4) Draft FY2025 Budget</b>	<b>6) Cash Reports for March and April 2024</b>	<b>13) Adjournment</b>
<b>Adams</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Cheshire</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Dalton</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Egremont</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Monterey</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>North Adams</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Pittsfield</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Stockbridge</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Williamstown</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Windsor</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes