

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

August 28, 2024

9:00 AM

BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center, Second Floor Board Room

One Columbus Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201

EMERGENCY ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Present:

Sarah Fontaine, Adams; William Elovirta, Becket; Ray Killeen, Cheshire; John Boyle, Dalton; Mary Reilly, Lanesborough; Andrea Wadsworth, Lee; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Mayor Peter Marchetti, Pittsfield; Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge; Brian O'Grady, Williamstown; Douglas McNally, Windsor and Brian Morrison, Rider Representative.

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Absent:

Charles Ketchen, Alford; Jeff Levanos, Clarksburg; Melanie Vicneire, Egremont; Neil Olsen, Florida; Benjamin Elliott, Great Barrington; Sherman Derby, Sr.; Hancock; Raymond Huntoon, Hinsdale; Mindi Morin, Lenox; Brian Tobin, Mt. Washington; Frank Abbott, Monterey; Sherri Youngkin, New Ashford; Stuart Lawrence, New Marlborough; Brandi Page, Otis; Terry Walker, Peru; Neal Pilson, Richmond; Justin Kaczowski, Savoy; Nadine Hawver, Sheffield; Mike Case, Washington; and Andrew Potter, West Stockbridge.

Also, present: Robert Malnati and Sarah Vallieres, BRTA; Rauley Caine and Accem Scott BTM; and Anuja Koirola, BRPC.

	Voting Shares	Present	
Adams	2.8649	2.8649	
Alford	1.0000	0.0000	
Becket	1.0274	1.0274	
Cheshire	3.7233	3.7233	
Clarksburg	1.0000	0.0000	38.5000
Dalton	2.5375	2.5375	needed for
Egremont	1.0176	0.0000	quorum
Florida	1.0007	0.0000	
Great Barrington	3.7475	0.0000	
Hancock	1.0000	0.0000	50.3012 when called to order.
Hinsdale	1.3176	0.0000	
Lanesborough	2.4182	2.4182	
Lee	3.6022	3.6022	
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	1.0000	
Disability Community	1.0000	0.0000	

1) **ROLL CALL**

D. McNally called the Advisory Board Meeting to order at 9:00 AM stating this meeting will be recorded for the purposes of the notes of the Board Minutes.

2) **Submit Grant Application- year round, system wide, fare free- VOTE**

R. Malnati explained the reason for the Emergency Advisory Board Meeting to vote whether or not BRTA is included in a grant application to MassDOT for RTAs to implement year-round fare free service. There is \$30M in the State budget, specific to this application and is due September 20, 2024. This is either an in or and out situation that is the result of the past pilot fare free events. BRTA's Approved Budget Income line item for fares is \$763,107, which includes both the projected fares for the new commuter service and the fare free events in July 2024 and Holiday 2024. Backing both values out, the projected fare revenue for FY 25 is \$629K. There will be one grant application for the RTAs, using the FY23 NTD certified information. BRTA's share of the \$30M would be \$700K. As the application is due towards the end of September and may not be awarded until October or November, BRTA would like to apply for up to 9 months of fare free funding (Jan-Sept. 2025). BRTA has already been awarded grant funding for fare free during the Holiday season (part Nov-Dec. 2024). If this is offered again in FY 26, BRTA will have already started this process for the first quarter of FY26.

J. Minacci made a motion to apply for this funding and B. O'Grady seconded the motion.

Discussion:

A concern was raised of increased ridership could increase undesired activities on the bus and riders taking the ride, instead of a short walk. The idea of a ½ fare initiative rather than full fare, with seniors even more reduced. This way "there is skin in the game" to encourage ridership rather than a free ride. There wasn't a lot of time to research all of the transit authorities to find out the progress. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has recommended applying for this grant as this will benefit many people in Berkshire County, as both MassDOT and the State have researched fare free. There was great sentiment in the group that fare free would be very beneficial to the residents of Berkshire County. Another concern was voiced that BRTA's fleet lacked enough larger vehicles to handle the increased capacity. Many of the Board agreed that the grant funding description was specific to fare free and BRTA is either in or out. The public perception if other RTAs in the state are free but BRTA is not, may be an issue. There is a little administrative cost savings with fare free and the previous fare free events have provided double digit increases.

J. Boyle said, "call the question". Votes were 11 ayes and 1 nay.

R. Malnati will apply for grant funding for 9 months of fare free service for fixed route and Complementary ADA services beginning January 1, 2025 through September 30, 2025.

3) **ADJOURNMENT**

B. O'Grady made the motion to adjourn. S. Lamb seconded the motion. All stated aye and the meeting ended at 9:28 AM.

Meeting Materials:

BRTA Advisory Board Packet

BRTA Public Notice and Agenda

BRTA Approved FY 25 Budget page 1 (handed out at meeting)

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Main Budget Section 2E and Section 2F (handed out at meeting)

BRTA Advisory Board Votes from August 28, 2024:

Town	2) Submit Grant Application - VOTE
Adams	Yes
Becket	Yes
Cheshire	No
Dalton	Yes
Lanesborough	Yes
Lee	Yes
North Adams	Yes
Pittsfield	Yes
Stockbridge	Yes
Williamstown	Yes
Windsor	Yes
Rider Representative	Yes