

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

October 24, 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:

William Elovirta, Becket; Ray Killeen, Cheshire; John Boyle, Dalton; Melanie Vicneire, Egremont; Mindi Morin, Lenox; Frank Abbott, Monterey; Sherri Youngkin, New Ashford; Mayor Peter Marchetti, Pittsfield; Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge; and Douglas McNally, Windsor
Stuart Lawrence, New Marlborough arrived after Minutes vote.

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Absent:

Sarah Fontaine, Adams; Charles Ketchen, Alford; Jeff Levanos, Clarksburg; Neil Olsen, Florida; Benjamin Elliott, Great Barrington; Sherman Derby, Sr., Hancock; Raymond Huntoon, Hinsdale; Mary Reilly, Lanesborough; Andrea Wadsworth, Lee; Brian Tobin, Mt. Washington; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Brandi Page, Otis; Terry Walker, Peru; Neal Pilson, Richmond; Justin Kaczowski, Savoy; Nadine Hawver, Sheffield; Michael Case, Washington; Andrew Potter, West Stockbridge; Brian O'Grady, Williamstown; and Brian Morrison, Rider Representative

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

	Voting Shares	Present	
Adams	2.8649	0.0000	
Alford	1.0000	0.0000	
Becket	1.0274	1.0274	
Cheshire	3.7233	3.7233	
Clarksburg	1.0000	0.0000	38.5000 needed for quorum
Dalton	2.5375	2.5375	
Egremont	1.0176	1.0176	
Florida	1.0007	0.0000	
Great Barrington	3.7475	0.0000	
Hancock	1.0000	0.0000	38.653 when called to order.
Hinsdale	1.3176	0.0000	39.653 after Minutes of 9/26/24 vote
Lanesborough	2.4182	0.0000	
Lee	3.6022	0.0000	
Lenox	4.4327	4.4327	
Monterey	1.0000	1.0000	
Mt. Washington	1.0000	0.0000	
New Ashford	1.0954	1.0954	
New Marlborough	1.0000	1.0000	
North Adams	6.5767	0.0000	
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	0.0000	
Windsor	1.0093	1.0093	
Rider Representative	1.0000	0.0000	
Disability Community	1.0000	0.0000	

1) **ROLL CALL**

D. McNally 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 SEPTEMBER 26, 2024 MEETING-VOTE**

S. Youngkin made a motion to accept the Minutes of September 26, 2024 meeting, B. Elovirta seconded the motion. The Minutes of September 26, 2024 meeting were passed with M. Morin's abstention.

3) **ADMINISTRATORS REPORT**

R. Malnati reported that Governor Maura Healey held a press conference this afternoon (10/24/24) in Greenfield announcing the \$30M of Fair Share Funds from the FY2025 State Budget for the Fare Free grant has been awarded to 13 RTAs joint grant application. BRTA will receive \$699,733 in grant funding for fare free service from January 1, 2025 through September 30, 2025 which was based off of past ridership. These grant funds will offset the amount of fare revenue in the BRTA budget and we may adjust the budget fare line. Customers riding the BRTA fixed route bus and/or the complementary ADA paratransit service will be fare free from January through September 2025. BRTA was already awarded funding to provide free rides for the 2024 Holiday season, November 29, 2024 to December 31, 2024.

Discussion: Advertising to ensure customers don't buy passes, to which R. Malnati stated, BRTA will do an immediate press release and signage.

R. Malnati announced Rauley Caine, General Manager of Berkshire Transit Management (BTM), will be leaving to take a position as the General Manager of the PVRTA in Springfield at the start of the new calendar year.

R. Malnati stated the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) issued their final report of the BRTA's paratransit program on October 4, 2024. There were two findings, in which BRTA had a difference of opinion, which was reported to the auditors. BRTA has been working with OSA on the areas identified in their report including changing the on-time performance reporting, separating the pickup and the drop-off data. The updated reporting has been posted to BRTA's website for FY25, conforming to Mass OSA's recommendation.

4) **CASH REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER 2024 -VOTE**

R. Malnati gave an update on the cash reports.

Discussion:

There was a question on why there were two payments to Gillig. BRTA paid Gillig for the 2 new hybrid electric vehicles received and wanted to show each vehicle cost, needed for future audits. There was a question why BRTA paid a check for \$26,000 to First Transit which no longer exists. R. Malnati answered that instructions are followed from the invoice to remit payment. There was a follow-up question on what this money is for, to which R. Malnati explained it is a contract management fee.

J. Minacci made a motion to accept the Cash Report September 2024 as presented in the BRTA Advisory Board Packet. M. Morin seconded the motion. All stated aye and the Cash Reports for September 2024 were unanimously passed.

5) **BUDGET YTD**

R. Malnati provided an overview of the Budget. The fixed route revenue is over \$11,000 and BRTA didn't collect fares in July. This is two months' worth of fares. This fare revenue overbudget issue may be changed with the budget adjustment in January. Some of the negative expenses are timing issues of the bills and grant drawdowns. Overall, quarter 1 is in good shape.

D. McNally called for a vote. J. Minacci made a motion to approve the Budget year to date. S. Youngkin seconded the motion. All stated aye and the Budget was approved.

6) **RIDERSHIP YTD**

R. Malnati went over the Ridership Report through September 2024 which including showcasing the months that were Fare Free events and how the ridership continued to grow after the free events. YTD fixed route had 154,000 riders, over last year's 132,000. July was the 2nd highest ridership month in 30 years, with a 34% increase, August was a 10% increase, and September was a 6% increase. Route 34 continues to be the

highest for wheelchair transport on fixed route buses as using the bus is less costly than the paratransit program.

Discussion: This increase in use proves BRTA is meeting the needs of people. What happens if there is not enough room for multiple wheelchairs. R. Malnati discussed the procedure that an extra bus would pick up that person.

R. Malnati shared there have been 2,222 bikes transported on the buses this year, proving the need to extend people's route to their destination or origin.

7) MICRO-TRANSIT DISCUSSION

R. Malnati stated Sarah graduated from the leadership program and attended their annual conference in June. S. Vallieres explained she attended the CTAA expo in Florida and she secured a Micro-Transit study at no cost through CTAA. The study would determine how Micro Transit can fit in our service area and where would be the best place to start. The study final report should be issued at the end of March.

Discussion:

What is Micro-Transit, to which S. Vallieres shared it can be first and last mile transportation and transportation in rural communities using smaller vehicles with shared rides. A. Koirola remarked BRPC is doing a similar study and gave a short presentation on it. There was a question on the necessity for duplicative studies, to which S. Vallieres explained BRTA's study is fiscally constrained whereas BRPC's is not. This should provide different strategies and phases. D. McNally remarked he has been on the MassHire board since 1996 and every year they do data research with employers and employees on what the biggest challenges are. Transportation is number one every year. Last mile and rural areas in transportation is probably the biggest hindrance to economic development in Berkshire County right now.

8) TOPICS FOR FUTURE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

- Berkshire Flyer- update on success, ridership, meeting expectations, and future.
- Canyon Ranch- additional bus service to employee entrance.
- Security- issues at BRTA.

There was discussion on all 3 topics that were introduced for a future advisory board meeting.

A. Koirola will provide information to BRTA about the Berkshire Flyer.

R. Malnati will review with the GM about additional bus service.

Security issues were discussed primarily at the ITC, with remarks of Security RFP not awarded; Pittsfield Police increasing bike patrol, undercover, and police coverage all on overtime; and other agencies working with BRTA.

9) NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME

R. Malnati tentatively scheduled the next meeting for November 21, 2024 at 4:00 PM if needed. He will let everyone know by the second week in November.

10) ADJOURNMENT

J. Boyle made a motion to adjourn, seconded by S. Lawrence. All stated aye and the meeting ended at 4:47 PM.

Meeting Materials:

BRTA Advisory Board Packet

BRTA Public Notice and Agenda

BRTA FY24 Oper Budget to Actual July-September 24 (handout at meeting)

Town	2) Minutes of September 26, 2024, Meeting-VOTE	4) Cash Report September 2024 VOTE	5) Budget YTD	10) Adjournment
Becket	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cheshire	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dalton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Egremont	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lenox	Abstained	Yes	Yes	Yes
Monterey	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Ashford	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Marlborough	---	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pittsfield	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stockbridge	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Windsor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes