
**MINUTES OF PVTA'S
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
August 18, 2021**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Advisory Board Meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Wednesday, August 18, 2021 at 12:00 P.M. and was held remotely in accordance with the Governor's State of Emergency Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, Section 20, relieving from the requirement of section 20 of chapter 30A that it conduct its meetings in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, permitting a public body to allow remote participation by all members.

	<u>Present (37.56 votes)</u>	<u>Not Present (24.44 votes)</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo	
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown **		Brian O'Leary
Chicopee *		Steve Huntley
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler	
Easthampton		Nicole LaChapelle
Granby		Glen Sexton
Hadley		David Moskin
Hampden		Becky Moriarty
Holyoke	Aaron Vega	
Leverett		Peter D'Errico
Longmeadow	Mark Gold	
Ludlow		Tony Goncalves
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz	
Palmer	Benjamin Hood	
Pelham	David Shanabrook	
South Hadley	Michael Sullivan	
Springfield	Timothy Sheehan	
Sunderland		Geoff Kravitz
Ware	John Carroll	
West Springfield		Mayor William Reichelt
Westfield ***		Peter Miller
Wilbraham		Paula Dubord
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative		Vacant
Rider Representative		Vacant

A quorum of 31.05 vote being present, Chairman of the Advisory Board, Mayor David Narkewicz, called the remote meeting of PVTA's Advisory Board to order at 12:09 PM; majority vote of 37.56 present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if any members of the public would like to make a public comment.

Eddie Lopez of Agawam: Would like to have a bus stop put in at the carriage house apartments. The closest stop to go towards Springfield from my apartment complex is approximately .3 miles which is about a seven-minute walk.

Paul Burns, Director of Transit Operations: The request is on our radar. Agawam is a community that requires city council approval for any type of stop implementation. There are also other elements that PVRTA needs to consider, such as the effect on abutters, ridership, public hearings etc.

** Chicopee Designee (Steve Huntley) joined meeting at 12:12pm. Quorum present: 42.08*

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to approve the meeting minutes of the June 23, 2021 Regular Advisory Board Meeting.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/Gold) to approve the meeting minutes of the June 23, 2021 Regular Advisory Board Meeting.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote to approve the minutes.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown			
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton			
Granby			
Hadley			
Hampden			
Holyoke	Aaron Vega		
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz		
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham	David Shanabrook		
South Hadley	Michael Sullivan		
Springfield	Timothy Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware	John Carroll		
West Springfield			

Westfield
Wilbraham
Williamsburg
ADA Representative
Rider Representative

J.M. Sorrell

Motion passed by a vote of 42.08/0. 13-0.

**** Belchertown Designee (Brian O’Leary) joined meeting at 12:14pm. Quorum present: 43.42**

4. APPROVAL OF CHANGES TO AMHERST/WORCESTER ROUTE

Paul Burns, Director of Transit Operations stated the following:

The Amherst/Worcester Intercity Route implementation has been delayed due to staffing shortages. Until recently, Quaboag struggled to find drivers for this route. However, they currently have two qualified drivers, one full-time and one part-time. We anticipate being able to begin operating this route in early September.

We ask that the Board approve a modification to the originally approved schedule for this route from 7-days per week to 5-days per week due to funding constraints. Below is a sample 5-day schedule and PVRTA is requesting approval and the ability to adjust the schedule as ridership demand indicates.

This change is required for several reasons, including financial considerations. While initial planning for this route proposed a seven-day schedule based upon preliminary budgets, changes to the fare structure, a slight reduction in the amount of anticipated grant funds available and increasing operational costs have impacted our ability to fund this route at the originally proposed level.

***** Westfield Designee (Peter Miller) joined the meeting at 12:19pm. Quorum Present: 46.09.**

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to approve the changes presented to the Amherst to Worcester Route.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sullivan/Huntley) to approve the changes presented to the Amherst to Worcester Route.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any discussion.

Brian O’Leary: Is there still a stop at the Belchertown Commons.

Paul Burns: Yes, there is a stop at the Belchertown Commons. There are no changes to stops that were approved at the last Board meeting. The only change is going from a seven-day schedule to a five-day schedule.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any further discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote to approve the changes presented to the Amherst to Worcester Route.

Yes

No

Abstained

Agawam	Michael Squindo
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary
Chicopee	Steve Huntley
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler
Easthampton	
Granby	
Hadley	
Hampden	
Holyoke	Aaron Vega
Leverett	
Longmeadow	Mark Gold
Ludlow	
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz
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South Hadley	Michael Sullivan
Springfield	Timothy Sheehan
Sunderland	
Ware	John Carroll
West Springfield	
Westfield	Peter Miller
Wilbraham	
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell
ADA Representative	
Rider Representative	

Motion passed by a vote of 46.09/0. 15-0.

5. CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER’S REPORT

Lisa Seymour, stated the following:

The FY21 12-Month Budget to Actual as of June 30, 2021, is a preliminary end of year budget based on pre-audited books. This budget is the amended budget that was reduced due to the pandemic.

Fare Revenues are usually \$7.6 million. Fares are down by \$4 million this year. Without the CARES Act funding, PVRTA would have not been able to sustain service.

Administration is down due to new employees that did not qualify for the pension and others that elected to not take health insurance which was a considerable cost savings.

Paratransit expenses reflect the number of trips that were performed as well as the maintenance of the paratransit fleet and fuel.

The interest is down significantly due to the State Contract Assistance funds being delayed and not received until April. Currently, we are managing cash flow to keep funds in our investment account as long as possible to earn interest.

Federal Operating Assistance: We will wait until the end of the fiscal year audit to determine the amount of funds need from the CARES Act. Preliminary finances show an additional \$3 million will need to be utilized from the CARES Act funding.

Other Operating Subsidy: The balance of the CMAQ funding for the P21E was just approved by FTA, PVTA will draw that down in FY22.

6. DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT OPERATIONS REPORT

Paul Burns reported the following:

Fixed Route Ridership continues to be impacted by the pandemic although ridership levels are increasing steadily. The total annual ridership in FY21 was 3.9 million which was just under 38.5% of FY19 ridership.

At the end of the fiscal year, system-wide ridership was at about 58% of pre-covid ridership levels; SATCo at 60%, VATCo at 55% and UMass at 44%.

11 of 21 SATCo routes recovered more than 60% ridership. The college routes had the lowest recovery with no college route regaining more than 36% ridership. The Ware-Palmer had the highest recovery of all PVTA routes, at 110%, exceeding its pre-covid ridership.

Paratransit ridership continues to increase steadily and has rebounded to just over 50% of pre-pandemic levels in June. With the return of in-person classes at area colleges, we anticipate that ridership will approach 65% of pre-pandemic levels in the fall.

Contractor staffing continues to be a problem for many transit systems and PVTA is no exception. These shortages are exacerbated by the newly instituted PMFLA and staff who put off medical care during the height of the pandemic that are now attending to those needs. We are working with the operators to recruit staff at all levels.

As approved by the Advisory Board on May 19th, the Ware-Palmer Route began operating the new schedule on July 6, 2021. These changes include enhanced service in the area as well as the implementation of a flex route that will allow deviations of up to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the fixed route in Palmer and Ware. In addition, the Quaboag Connector began providing micro-transit service in the towns of Ware and Warren on July 26th.

Route G73E, Brennan Express (Northampton-Springfield via the Holyoke Mall) was introduced on June 28, 2021, replacing the former route P20E. The G73E provides faster travel between Northampton and Springfield than other routes. The G73E currently carries an average of 210 passengers daily. The highest ridership day with 298 passengers was July 31st. Ridership is still trending up. The G73E impacted ridership on the B48 by -10% and on the P21E by -23%. Overall, ridership in the Springfield-Holyoke Mall-Northampton corridor increased by 2% between June and July.

7. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Sandra Sheehan, Administrator, reported the following:

Since our last meeting, the House and the Senate approved override bills for the RTAs. The Senate unanimously overrode the Governor's reduction setting the line-item amount to \$94M. The legislature also rejected the outside amendment for the distribution of the funds.

The Governor on August 3rd returned House Bill 4041 unsigned. The Governor vetoed the outside bill that sought to distribute \$3.5 million of the \$94 million allocated for RTAs based on factors such as ridership, territory size and population. As you know, the Governor had tried to reduce the funding levels for RTAs in the budget to \$90.5 million, with \$3.5 million distributed through grants based on performance metrics. The Legislature overrode his funding veto, and then reacted its version of the grant program.

The House will be taking up the Governors vetoes on the operating assistance to the RTAs in the next full formal session in September as the House is in informal sessions until then. MARTA will be working with the RTAs to override this veto. MARTA has drafted a letter to be sent to Secretary Tesler indicating the RTAs objection to statements made by the Governor that are not accurate.

The Senate passed the "Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act" on August 10th. The bill reauthorizes surface transportation programs and appropriates specific funding for certain categories of programs. It is unclear when the House of Representatives will consider this measure and what support it has in the U.S. House as the debate continues over the bill's size and funding sources and whether its fate hinges on a separate \$3.5 trillion domestic spending bill.

The bill as passed provides \$106.9 billion for public transit, an increase of \$41.1 billion from current levels. According to a White House summary issued, Massachusetts under the bill could over the next five years expect to receive \$4.2 billion for federal-aid highway programs, \$1.1 billion for bridge replacement and repairs, \$2.5 billion to improve public transportation options, \$63 million to expand electric vehicle charging networks, and \$100 million to provide broadband coverage, including access to the at least 137,000 people here who lack it.

PVTA is currently in the procurement process associated with selecting a firm to provide Fixed Route Management Services. The selected firm is expected to start service on October 1st. The existing contract with First Transit Inc. ends on September 30th.

Given the evidence of the current Delta variant that is circulating in the country, PVTA expects the CDC guidelines requiring individuals to wear a mask on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation to continue for the foreseeable future. PVTA is strongly encouraging its employees to wear masks in all indoor common areas.

PVTA is expanding its mobile ticketing system to include Springfield Technical Community College. Starting this fall semester eligible students will receive their PVTA semester pass electronically using the BusPlus platform. In addition, PVTA will be including retail networks in the region to provide a cash funding option for customers to add mobile fare products to their accounts.

The operations staff has been working diligently in order to be ready for fall service which is to include most of the regular PVTA service.

Two new staff members have joined PVTA. Ben St. Amand is the new Safety & Compliance Officer and Jeff Lynes is our new Procurement Officer.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz reported that there is no new business to discuss.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz reported that there is no old business to discuss.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sullivan/Sorrell) to adjourn.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote to adjourn.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
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West Springfield			
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Wilbraham			
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 46.09/0. 15-0.

The PVTA Advisory Board Meeting adjourned at 12:48pm.

A TRUE RECORD

ATTEST: _____

Documents filed with Board Meeting packet:

- Roll Call Votes
- Regular Advisory Board Minutes of 6-23-2021

MINUTES APPROVED: September 22, 2021