

**MINUTES OF PVTA'S
ROUTE COMMITTEE MEETING
January 8, 2018**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Route Committee meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Monday, January 8, 2018 at 2:00 P.M. at the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority Administration Office located at 2808 Main Street in Springfield, MA.

PRESENT:

Members: Brian O'Leary, Belchertown; Paul Burns Johnson, Palmer; Nancy Talbot, Ware; Peter Miller, Westfield; Jim Czach, West Springfield;

Others: Paula Dubord, Wilbraham; Becky Moriarty, Hampden; Steve Huntley, Chicopee; Carolyn Brennan, East Longmeadow; Marilyn Ishler, South Hadley;

PVTA: Sandra Sheehan, Brandy Pelletier, Krystal Oldread; David Elvin, PVPC;

NOT PRESENT:

J.M. Sorrell, Williamsburg;

A quorum being present, Chairman of the Route Committee, Brian O'Leary called the meeting to order at 2:02 P.M.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were made.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman O'Leary asked for a motion from the Route Committee to approve the meeting minutes of December 13, 2017.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Talbot/Burns Johnson) to approve the meeting minutes of December 13, 2017.

Chairman O'Leary asked if there was any discussion, hearing none, asked for all those in favor to say aye.

Motion passed by a unanimous vote.

4. FARE INCREASE DISCUSSION

David Elvin, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission: At the last sub-committee meeting in December we presented the fare impact study. We looked at an increase of 20%, 25% and 50% for next year. Under the 20% scenario, basic cash fare would go from \$1.25 to \$1.50, the day pass would go from \$3.00 to \$4.00 and the monthly pass would go from \$45.00 to \$55.00. We will have a presentation to the Board at the January 24th meeting, which is when we will be asking the Board to approve holding public hearings.

Sandra Sheehan, PVRTA Administrator: Does the committee have a scenario for a fare increase that they would like to recommend?

Paul Burns-Johnson made the motion to adopt a 25% fare increase effective FY 2019 (starting July 1, 2018).

Motion: Moved and seconded (Burns Johnson/Talbot) to adopt a 25% fare increase effective FY 2019 (starting July 1, 2018).

Chairman O'Leary asked if there was any discussion, hearing none, asked for all those in favor to say aye.

Motion passed by a unanimous vote.

Sandra Sheehan: Does the committee have a recommendation for fares moving forward that includes one of the three percentages?

Paul Burns-Johnson made the motion to adopt a regular fare increase based on 5% annually to be implemented in FY2019 and then every three years including mitigation measures as needed and following the required public participation process.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Burns Johnson/Talbot) to adopt a regular fare increase based on 5% annually to be implemented in FY2019 and then every three years including mitigation measures as needed and following the required public participation process.

Chairman O'Leary asked if there was any discussion.

Becky Moriarty: Is the increase the same for paratransit?

Sandra Sheehan: The increase would be for both paratransit and fixed route.

Nancy Talbot: This could be a good method of going out to public hearings with a 25% fare increase and soliciting comments.

Paula Dubord: If you look at the comparison chart and we increased fares, we'd be higher than the other authorities.

Paul Burns Johnson: Need to look at having an increase beyond the ¾ mile. We are the only authority that does this.

Marilyn Ishler: Our increase is never going to get to what the others are.

Chairman O’Leary asked if there was any additional discussion, hearing none, asked for all those in favor to say aye.

Motion passed by a unanimous vote.

5. SERVICE REDUCTION DISCUSSION

Krystal Oldread, PVTA’s Director of Operations and Planning gave a presentation on the service reduction scenarios and stated the following:

PVTA has seven different scenarios for service changes:

- Scenario 1: Prioritize Geographic Coverage by Preserving Bus Routes Region wide
- Scenario 2: Prioritize High Ridership Routes
- Scenario 3: Reduce Non-required Van and Bus Services
- Scenario 4: Reduce Off-Peak Weekend and Holiday Service
- Scenario 5 Reduce Off-peak and Restructure Low Performing Routes and Services
- Scenario 6: Prioritize Weekday Geographic Coverage and Weekend High Ridership Routes
- Scenario 7: Return to FY13 Level of Service

Scenario one: This scenario prioritizes maintaining as many bus routes as possible across the entire PVTA service area, regardless of ridership and cost per rider. In order to maintain this level of service, reductions would be made to the frequencies and spans of service on Tier 1 and Tier 2 routes which operate in densely populated areas. This scenario would maintain service to suburban and rural communities, but would cause longer wait times, overcrowding, and possibly lower ridership on routes serving PVTA hubs in downtown Springfield, Chicopee, Holyoke, and at UMass-Amherst. This strategy would adversely impact (eliminate or significantly delay) approximately 2 million passenger trips per year, roughly 20% of all PVTA trips. This scenario is the second greatest rider impact of the seven scenarios presented.

Scenario two: This scenario would preserve the more frequent and longer spans of service on high-ridership routes that operate in densely populated areas. Service reductions would be made to lower ridership routes in suburban and rural areas. There would be greater cost savings on a per passenger basis because the outlying routes that would be reduced or eliminated have significantly higher costs per passenger. This is because while the cost of operating a bus is the same for any route, there are fewer riders on outlying routes. Cutting low ridership routes yields more savings per passenger while impacting fewer overall riders.

Due to racial and income segregation in our region as a whole, there are fewer riders of color and low-income on suburban routes, as compared to the urban routes. This means that reducing service on suburban and rural routes will require fewer mitigation services to assure that service reductions are not discriminatory.

Scenario three: PVTA has long recognized the critical mobility needs of seniors and people with disabilities and has provided additional van transportation for these residents of our region. This service is not required by federal law, but is directed by PVTA policy. Much of this service is “demand response” or fixed route with very low ridership. This is among the most costly service on a per passenger basis that PVTA operates.

One such “above and beyond” service involves PVTA’s ADA van policy. Instead of meeting the federal requirement to provide complementary accessible van service within ¼-mile of all bus routes, PVTA provides ADA van service to and from any destination within most PVTA municipalities. A second service is PVTA’s Senior Service, “Dial-a-Ride” program, which operates Monday through Saturday from 8:00AM to 4:30PM to provide accessible van rides to residents of twenty PVTA communities who are age 60 and older. PVTA also supports municipal senior van service in four PVTA communities through the local councils on aging. A third type of service is related to bus routes that travel outside PVTA’s service area: Route G5 travels to Enfield, Connecticut; Route 46 travels to Whately and South Deerfield; and the Nashawannuck Express travels to the Big Y in Southampton.

This scenario focuses on the potential savings if PVTA were to place greater priority on service which is federally required (ADA within ¼-mile of bus routes only); scale back Senior Services; and eliminate service outside the PVTA’s defined service area. The possible savings, while not eliminating the budget deficit in total, would make up approximately 75% of the deficit.

Scenario four: This scenario looks at reducing PVTA’s services during “off-peak” times when there is less overall travel demand, typically weekends and holidays. In the past, PVTA did not operate on Sundays. This scenario would also lessen the impact of service cuts on trips to school, work, and medical appointments, which are the three top trip purposes of PVTA riders. The majority of weekend bus service is provided by Tier 1 and Tier 2 routes, these routes would be disproportionately impacted by the reductions proposed in this scenario. Riders of ADA complementary service for those routes would also lose service. However, there would also be some impacts to non-Tier 1 and non-Tier 2 routes, as many do not run on Sunday. This scenario proposes reducing existing Saturday bus service to the levels that currently operate on Sundays and eliminating Sunday service system-wide. While the number of passenger trips affected in this scenario is less than Scenarios 1 and 2, the disruption to those customers would still be substantial. Increasingly, jobs held by PVTA riders are second and third shifts and, often on weekends.

Scenario five: To avoid the most severe impacts of Scenarios 1 through 4, this fifth scenario “Reduce off peak and restructure low performing routes and services” was developed. It draws upon the measures from the other scenarios that have the greatest cost savings and fewest rider impacts. Also, this scenario maintains service on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, within all PVTA member communities, and does not eliminate service in communities with limited service which experienced cuts in FY18.

This scenario impacts the least amount of passenger trips while achieving the necessary savings. It’s estimated to yield approximately \$3.6 million in savings, which exceeds the \$3.1 million deficit estimate. The additional savings are important, as many of the necessary major service changes involved will disproportionately affect large proportions of minority and low-income riders. In these cases, some service will have to be added back to reduce the impacts of all cuts to a fair level.

Scenario Six: To avoid the most severe impacts of Scenarios 1 through 4, this sixth scenario “Prioritize Weekday Geographic Coverage and Weekend High Ridership Routes” has been developed. It preserves weekday service for the outlying communities and weekend service on the core urban routes.

Scenario Seven: The strategy used was to eliminate service improvements that were implemented since 2013. Many of these improvements were the result of the Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA). CSA recommendations implemented by PVTA that were to reorganize service/routes and

did not incur additional costs are not included for elimination. Route reduction/eliminations that were recommended from the CSA and implemented by PVRTA were not reinstated.

Krystal Oldread asked if the Board had a scenario they would like to move forward with for public hearings.

Peter Miller made the motion to recommend going out to public hearings on scenario five; incorporating the changes of inserting no senior adult day health trips into the scenario, removing reduce service from 6 to 4 days per week (no Friday or Saturday) from senior service and changing the language relating to the Palmer Shuttle, Ware Shuttle, and Nashawannuck shuttle from reducing trips to reconfiguring service.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Miller/Talbot) to recommend going out to public hearings on scenario five; incorporating the changes of inserting no senior adult day health trips into the scenario, removing reduce service from 6 to 4 days per week (no Friday or Saturday) from senior service and changing the language relating to the Palmer Shuttle, Ware Shuttle, and Nashawannuck shuttle from reducing trips to reconfiguring service.

Chairman O'Leary asked if there was any discussion, hearing none, asked for all those in favor to say aye.

Motion passed by a unanimous vote.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

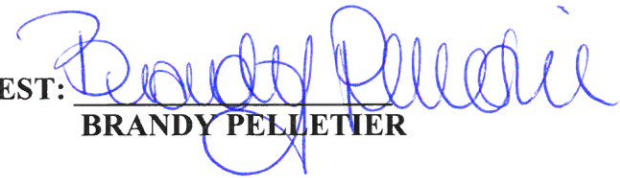
Chairman O'Leary reported that there is no other business to discuss.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Route Committee adjourned (Burns/Miller) at 3:42 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

ATTEST:


BRANDY PELLETIER

Documents filed with Route Committee meeting packet:

- December 13, 2017 Route Committee Minutes
- PVRTA FY19 Service Reduction Scenarios

Minutes Approved: April 5, 2018

