

**MINUTES OF PVTA'S  
SPECIAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
July 19, 2017**

The Advisory Board Meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Wednesday, July 19, 2017 at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Office located at 60 Congress Street in Springfield, MA, at 12:00 P.M.

**1. ROLL CALL**

	<i><u>Present (51.81 vote)</u></i>	<i><u>Not Present (10.18 vote)</u></i>
Agawam	Richard Theroux	
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown	Brian O'Leary	
Chicopee	Steve Huntley	
East Longmeadow	Carolyn Brennan	
Easthampton	Linda Talbot	
Granby		Jessica Langlois
Hadley	David Moskin	
Hampden	Becky Moriarty	
Holyoke		Mayor Alex Morse
Leverett		Peter D'Errico
Longmeadow	Richard Foster	
Ludlow		Carmina Fernandes
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz	
Palmer	Paul Burns Johnson	
Pelham		Mark Santos
South Hadley	Marilyn Ishler	
Springfield	Anthony Wilson	
Sunderland		Sherry Patch
Ware	Nancy Talbot	
West Springfield	Jim Czach	
Westfield	Peter Miller	
Wilbraham	Susan Bunnell	
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative		TBD
Rider Representative	Patrick Burke	

A quorum of 31.01 majority vote being present, Chairman Mayor Narkewicz called the meeting of PVTA's Advisory Board to order at 12:07 PM; majority vote of 51.81 present.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz opened the floor for public comments on PVTA's proposed service changes.

My name's David Stein, a Springfield resident. I've been riding the bus for 12 years and I am satisfied, but there's an issue of connecting busses. If you have to be at work at 8:00, people said they used to take the 7:30 bus. That's fine, but you can't get a connecting bus because a lot of people have two jobs.

Hi. I am Hope Canti and I am a resident of Springfield. I am asking that you don't cut or reduce service. I know that a lot of public schools have busses, which are actually PVTA busses. I don't understand why they can't just use regular school busses for that to get them home and to school. Also, for disabled folks, including my mother, she relies on this public transportation. Getting rid of routes like 90, P20, the B43, will make things difficult for me, for my family, and for a lot of people.

I'm Corine and live in Agawam. I really appreciate that you did change the plan for eliminating the R14E to pick up people in Springfield who work at Heritage Hall and the Industrial Park in Agawam. One of the women who work at Heritage Hall was telling us how she's worked there for 10 years and without a bus she would not be able to continue to work there. I think that tells us the huge impact these transportation changes have on people's lives. I really appreciate that you did take the public comments in consideration. All these busses have huge impact on people's lives.

My name's Eric Bauer. I represent an organization called Jobs for Justice, a state-wide coalition of labor unions and community groups. I want to echo Corine's sentiment in taking the public comments into consideration, particularly up in UMass, where the bus routes are going to be preserved. Jobs for Justice represents a number of low-income families, communities of color, and I'm here talking for them. They're working families that are going to be adversely affected by the cuts to the bus routes. The bus routes are going to affect 1200 riders per day, and a half a million riders per year, primarily low-income families and communities of color.

My name is Jennifer Lee. I'm the System's Advocate for Change. We've been serving individuals with disabilities for over 40 years. I hear the proposed changes and I appreciate the consideration, but also want to give a bit more room for suggestion. In regards to the proposed cuts for the M40, although it still is going to be providing some service, I want everybody to consider thinking about the students, as well as students with disabilities and how can we continue to foster a generation of future employees, future executives, future individuals sitting at this table, if we're debating cuts that's going to eliminate access to internships, job opportunities, and trainings. I would like to remind everyone that persons with disabilities are disproportionately unemployed, they're disproportionately under-representing them in the work force. I would especially like for you to consider that individuals who are minorities, LGBTQ, women of color, are also disenfranchised within the employment community. It's important to consider low income populations, the inner cities, those that don't have a voice here, minorities that aren't represented in other communities.

My name is Sticky and I'm with Out Now and I'm also born and raised in Springfield and have been an avid bus user practically my whole life. One thing that I wanted to say that follows some of the sentiments that my fellow commuters could say, is that Out Now'ers, as Springfield's only LGBTQIA youth organization, we have a lot of young folks who don't have much money who come to our program. Also, there are a lot of folks from Holyoke, South Hadley, and Springfield who come to try to join our group. Already the transportation within the city and the surrounding cities is limited. Our young folks don't necessarily have the opportunity to meet with other young folks around the community. A lot of them are low wage workers at the mall; because it tends to be one of the only places they can find work. The P21 Express is a lifeline, especially in the mornings.

John Wright from Springfield. I'm an employee at the Baystate Medical Center. I've taken the bus for years. The frequency is the reason why the ridership may not be there. You need to consider improving



the frequency of service and then see what happens before you make some of these cuts. We've got a new bus station which is a very good facility for the bus riders. The busses can pull right in and out without having to back up and hold up the other busses that are coming in, including people who are trying to transfer onto those busses that are leaving. We've got a better situation, let's take care of it. Let's take advantage of it, and I think you'll see that your ridership would increase, and you wouldn't be faced with having to cut bus service.

I'm Kevin McCaffrey, the Director of Government Community Relations at Mount Holyoke College. I attended yesterday's group sub-committee hearing and am grateful that the PVRTA heard the concerns of so many in the Five College community, and the wider community, recommending keeping the 39. The Five College routes are key to our academic mission. Five thousand students a year take courses on our campuses and they are key to both colleges and the town in meeting transportation needs in serving both local residents and members of the Five College community. One million riders a year take Five College busses. These routes also contribute to the economic vitality of the valley, as students and other riders travel to surrounding towns and cities for recreation, cultural events, and to shop at local businesses. We are also heartened by the decision to maintain some weekend service on the R29. It is very important to maintain ties between Holyoke, South Hadley and Amherst. We are disappointed at the recommended loss of the Tiger Trolley which serves both students and residents. If service cannot be maintained at this time, we hope to see this revisited in the years ahead. The PVRTA towns and cities, and Five Colleges have worked together for years to try to serve the entire community. At Mount Holyoke, we're very supportive of continued discussion and improvements to ensure services throughout the valley that meet the needs of all riders.

Kathy Shay, I am a PVRTA rider. I take the bus just about every day and I ask that you keep the service and don't make any service cuts.

My name is Lilly Wallace. I am the vice president of the student government at U Mass Amherst and I'm Ryan Mayhan, we're here on behalf of the undergraduate student body. Routes 34, 35, 39, 46 and 40, serve our students. These routes help students climb slippery hills during the winter, navigate dark and dangerous parking lots during the night. These busses not only provide jobs for students as bus drivers, but also help students to get to their jobs and back home. They're a resource for students, but as well as those working at the university. We are one of the largest employers in Western Mass and many workers count on the busses to get in. Cutting a lot of these routes will affect people's ability to get in on time. These routes are vital in our student body. I thank you for the work that you've been doing to outreach for comments and communicate these cuts so they can be easily understood.

I'm Rich Devine and work for the Sheriff's Department. I'd like to speak about the importance of what happens with our returning citizens as they come back to our communities. Many of the folks that have already talked echoed some of the concerns that our folks have as they come home. The importance of busses in family reunification, the family having the ability to come out and visit their folks. It's very important to keep that family whole. Also, for treatment purposes, we've got a serious problem with opioids and being able to get to their meetings and things like that. A lot of these cuts will certainly impact their ability to get there. The main thing is employment. Many people have mentioned about the malls and the industrial parks. This is huge for us. We know, on national levels, 67% of the people go back to jail within three years. Here in Hampden County, it's 34%. We place about 400 to 500 people a year. With these cuts, if they can't get to the industrial parks, this is really going to negatively impact people getting a job, because we know that if a person has a living wage, they're less apt to go back to jail. That's part of our concern with those cuts because if they can't get to the Agawam Industrial Park, or East Longmeadow, it really does hurt us.

Melissa Pitchouli from UMass Amherst. I'm here on behalf of my students. We are in charge of educating the students, the next generation of transportation officials and transportation workers. They've prepared a statement. These are high school students, 10<sup>th</sup> graders to 12<sup>th</sup> graders. They're interested in



transportation. Cutting the bus routes of 35, 34, and 40, 39, and 46 will leave a huge impact on Amherst and surrounding communities. Though many can agree and disagree, there are several defensible pros and cons to the proposed PVTA service cuts that should all be thoroughly debated before any choice is made. Along with the positive and negative outcomes of these cuts, there are also alternative solutions to consider. Though some may see this cut as the end of many vital transportation routes, there are alternates, if less convenient ways, for PVTA travelers to navigate to and from their classes. The profits from these cuts could also be dedicated to another state-run project or program, meaning the money could also benefit other forms of transportation. Service can be reduced when demand for these routes are low. New cost-effective and expendable routes can be found, and other steps should be taken to save money instead of cutting these routes completely.

I'm Neil Abram, Executive Director of the Five College Consortium. I'd like to emphasize three points that have appeared in various correspondences and testimony. One is that shortly after PVTA was formed, a partnership among the towns, the local communities, the Five Colleges, and PVTA, allowed for the addition of new routes, and the expansion of service on other routes. For 38 years that partnership was based on the principle that the colleges would provide support for those routes and covered those additional costs not covered otherwise by state and federal funding. We have happily paid those amounts identified by PVTA as our appropriate share. The local communities pay nothing to those routes, and the riders do not pay fares. We have adequately covered the cost of those additional routes or the expanded routes, and we are happy to continue conversations about what those costs are and what those appropriate contributions should be. The other consideration of a partnership is that we work together. I think for a decade or more, unfortunately, the colleges, PVTA, and the towns have allowed the partnership to run on fumes, if you'll pardon the analogy and not to get together to discuss how to adjust the routes to be most efficient and best in serving the various community members and campus members. I'm particularly pleased; the new PVTA administrator has agreed to resume regular conversations that will allow us to look for the best efficiencies and the best adjustments to schedules that best served all members of the ridership and the Five Colleges.

My name is Jesse Letterman. I'm the director of Public Health and Environmental Initiatives that arise here in Springfield. I'm also a candidate for the Springfield City Council. I just wanted to raise two points. One we just completed, here in Springfield, the development of the Springfield Climate Action Plan. One of the aspects that that plan looked at was how we can reduce pollution in the city by 80% over the next 30 years. One thing that was suggested is improving and expanding public transportation, so it's hard for us to consider reducing it at this time. This is really somewhere we need to make progress, where we don't need to take a step back. The other thing that we are all aware of is in development of Union Station just down the street, which is an incredible transportation hub for our city and for our region. We should be, again, utilizing that to the fullest extent. We all know that PVTA was short-changed in the state budget, and that's unfair. I think everybody here is committed to standing up to that, as well, but this is an area where we can't afford not to make a bigger investment and we have to seek innovative solutions.

My name is J.J. Crest. I live in the Forest Park area, and I've been a resident of Springfield for most of my life. One thing I didn't hear talked about was what is this going to look like in the summertime, because the schedule then again changes and I know that our young folks are desperately waiting for the summer time in order to get jobs. When I was a college student, I was living in Chicopee, going to school in Holyoke, and I was working in Springfield. It was about a three-hour bus ride from my home to Springfield. Then do the same thing back home. We're not talking about cost to riders. They all don't ride the bus. There's a whole room of people at this table who don't ride the bus. Can you imagine what it would feel like if you woke up tomorrow and they said you're going to add a four-hour drive to your day every morning. The bus system isn't great as it is. There are not enough stops. Access as a disabled rider is not easy. In the wintertime the bus stops don't get plowed. We have to wait in the street because



there's no where we can stand. The system has already not been working, and now you're talking about cutting all these busses.

## **2. FINALIZE PROPOSED SERVICE CHANGES**

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz stated that both the Finance & Audit Committee and the Route Committee met to discuss the service changes and asked the chairperson of each committee to give a brief overview.

Brian O'Leary, Chairman of the Route Committee stated that the Route Committee met yesterday to discuss the proposed service changes and voted in favor (4-1) to recommend the Advisory Board approve the proposed service changes based on public comment as a group.

Steve Huntley, Chairman of the Finance & Audit Committee stated that the Finance & Audit Committee met prior to today's Board Meeting and voted in favor (5-1) to balance the budget reducing the deficit by the approved service reduction amount before reducing our contribution to the Insurance Reserve account and the remainder of the deficit out of the Restricted Reserve account for Extraordinary Expense (pending the Mass DOT Secretary Pollack's approval).

Josh Rickman Manager of Planning & Operations reported on the proposed service changes and stated the following:

PVTA's approved budget anticipated the Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) receiving \$82M in State Contract Assistance (SCA). PVTA would receive \$23.5M of the \$82M. On July 7th the Conference Committee approved SCA for the RTAs at \$80,400,000. On July 17th the Governor vetoed that budget and set SCA at \$80,000,000. PVTA anticipates receiving \$22,980,428.00 of SCA according to the Governors budget.

This new funding level means PVTA's adjusted deficit went from \$1.2M to \$1.675M. The proposed service changes PVTA went to public hearings on has a total value of \$1.5M. The expectation was that not all of the \$1.5M was needed to balance the budget and public comment would direct the service changes.

An option PVTA could pursue to balance the budget would be eliminating the contribution to the insurance reserve this fiscal year. Another option PVTA is looking to pursue is to use PVTA's restricted reserve funds, which requires approval by the state.

### Deficit if Service Changes are approved individually

Total Deficit	\$1,789,592.00
CMAQ Grant	\$400,000.00
Deficit After CMAQ	\$1,389,592.00
Stand Alone Service Changes	\$728,100.00
Deficit After Service Changes	\$661,492.00

### Deficit if Service Changes are approved as a group

Total Deficit	\$1,789,592.00
CMAQ Grant	\$400,000.00
Deficit After CMAQ	\$1,389,592.00
Stand Alone Service Changes	\$858,287.00
Deficit After Service Changes	\$531,305.00

Greater efficiencies and savings can be achieved when service changes are combined into a group and are mostly the result of labor cost savings. These efficiencies are attained through the driver's job being aligned with other routes which maximizes shift hours of the drivers.

Mr. Rickman presented the proposed service changes approved for public hearings, the proposed service changes based on public comments, all proposed service changes and savings if approved individually, and all proposed service changes and savings if approved as a group.

PVTA received public comments through a total of 22 public hearing sessions as well as through emails, voicemails, and letters. All Transcriptions and comments were provided to the Advisory Board on July 12, 2017.

PVTA's operations team (PVTA staff, PVPC staff, and operators) recommendation is to approve the service changes as modified based off public comment. Furthermore, the operations team encourages the Board to approve the changes as a group. Approving them separately will increase the cost by an additional \$130,000.

<b>Route</b>	<b>Proposed Service Change (Based on Public Comments)</b>
M40	Replace M40 weekday service with 8 one-way express trips on the B43 (4 in morning peak to UMass Amherst; 4 in afternoon peak to Smith College).
M40*	Eliminate Saturday service
P20E	Eliminate route
P20E*	Retain Saturday Service
P21E	Funded for 1 year via CMAQ Grant
P21E	Funded for 1 year via CMAQ Grant
39	Retain Route and current service levels
39*	Retain Route and current service levels
46	Retain 4 trips per weekday (2 in morning peak; 2 in afternoon peak).
G5	Retain 4 trips per weekday (2 in morning peak; 2 in afternoon peak).
X98	Retain 3 trips per weekday to Survival Center during food distribution hours; modify R44 to serve Jackson and Barrett Streets
Tiger Trolley	Eliminate route
R14E	Eliminate route and revise Route R14 to serve Heritage Nursing Home and Agawam Industrial Park
R27	Add 3 former R27 trips to the B17 schedule to provide the same number of trips per day to Wilbraham.
B23	Eliminate Saturday service
R29	Retain 2 trips per day (1 in early morning; 1 in late afternoon).
B48	Reduce Saturday frequency from 30 to 60 min
B4	Retain first 3 weekday morning trips as inbound only service; retain first 3 Saturday morning trips as inbound only; retain last 2 Sunday evening trips as outbound only.
X90	Eliminate first 2 early morning trips;
X90	Eliminate Sunday service north of Memorial Dr
34 CS	Retain Route and current service levels
35 CS	Retain Route and current service levels

A complete copy of "PVTA FY18 Service Changes" presentation has been filed with the minutes of this meeting.

Paul Burns Johnson made the motion to approve the service changes presented as a group before reducing our contribution to the Insurance Reserve account and the remainder of the deficit from the Restricted Reserve



account for Extraordinary Expense, authorizing PVTA's Administrator to contact Mass DOT Secretary Pollack for approval to use funds from the Restricted Reserve.

**Motion:** Moved and seconded (Burns Johnson/Theroux) to approve the service changes presented as a group before reducing our contribution to the Insurance Reserve account and the remainder of the deficit from the Restricted Reserve account for Extraordinary Expense, authorizing PVTA's Administrator to contact Mass DOT Secretary Pollack for approval to use Restricted Reserve.

Chairman Narkewicz asked if the Board had any discussion.

Patrick Burke made the motion to postpone the motion on the table indefinitely. Mr. Burke stated he believes there are other options like making up the deficit using only the Reserve Accounts with no reduction of service.

**Motion:** Moved. Motion did not receive a second.

Motion Failed.

Mayor Sarno stated that he appreciates the public comments. He spoke with Administrator Sheehan and these changes were based on facts. Administrator Sheehan agreed to be and think creatively moving forward. Adjustments have to be made and cutbacks have to be done.

JM Sorrell stated that she is a rider and does use the bus as a choice. She appreciates the organization's need to take action with the budget shortfall. Have we looked at staff cuts or other options. Riders are our bread and butter. Currently this decision is conflicting to me; my role of Board Member versus as a rider.

Sandra Sheehan, PVTA Administrator, stated that the Finance & Audit Committee met and discussed in detail the Administration and Operations budget. The budget deficit of \$1.8M was reduced to \$1.2M. The committee has gone through each line item and made any cuts that could be made.

Marilyn Ishler stated speaking for South Hadley; the Selectboard has decided not to vote in favor of the cuts. I support the motion with regret.

Paul Burns Johnson stated that he made the motion not because he wants to make these cuts but structurally, we need to preserve the entire system and keep it viable and need to eliminate routes that are not making it.

Richard Foster stated as a member of the Longmeadow Selectboard, I'm asking that you retain the G5 service and not eliminate trips to Enfield CT and south Longmeadow. This is our only link to CT Transit.

Doug Slaughter stated we need to advocate for a tax policy that works.

Peter Miller asked what plans are for next year if the numbers don't change.

Ms. Sheehan stated to look at holiday and weekday service that is under performing. Look at staff and the possibility of a fare increase. Trying to formulate a plan and be proactive.

Mayor Sarno stated regarding Patrick's comment to use all reserves. He appreciates the passion but wiping out reserves is fiscally irresponsible.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any further discussion. We have motion and a second on the table that incorporates both the Finance & Audit Committee's recommendation as well as the Route Committee's to approve the service changes presented as a group before reducing our contribution to the

Insurance Reserve account and the remainder of the deficit from the Restricted Reserve account for Extraordinary Expense, authorizing PVTA's Administrator to contact Mass DOT Secretary Pollack for approval to use Restricted Reserve.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked the PVTA Clerk for a Roll Call Vote.

	<u>Yes (49.66 vote)</u>	<u>No (1 vote)</u>	<u>Abstention</u>
Agawam	Richard Theroux		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O'Leary		
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow	Carolyn Brennan		
Easthampton	Linda Talbot		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden	Becky Moriarty		
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Richard Foster		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz		
Palmer	Paul Burns Johnson		
Pelham			
South Hadley	Marilyn Ishler		
Springfield	Anthony Wilson		
Sunderland			
Ware	Nancy Talbot		
West Springfield	Jim Czach		
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg			J.M. Sorrell
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative		Patrick Burke	

Motion passed by a majority vote (49.66 in favor to 1.00 not in favor).

### **3. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting of the Advisory Board adjourned (Burns Johnson/Huntley) at 1:54 P.M.

**A TRUE RECORD**

ATTEST:

  
**BRANDY PELLETIER**



Documents filed with Board Meeting packet:

- PVRTA FY18 Service Changes

**MINUTES APPROVED: 8/23/17**

