
**MINUTES OF PVTA'S
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
November 15, 2023**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Advisory Board Meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Wednesday, November 15, 2023, at 12:00 P.M. remotely in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, supplemental state budget provisions for Fiscal Year 2023, authorizing public bodies to continue to hold entirely remote meetings, or so-called “hybrid” meetings, upon the provision of “adequate, alternative means” of public access, until March 31, 2025.

	<u>Present (36.32 votes)</u>	<u>Not Present (25.68 votes)</u>
Agawam		Mayor Christopher Johnson
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary	
Chicopee	Steve Huntley	
East Longmeadow		Erin Koebler
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail	
Granby		Glen Sexton
Hadley	David Moskin	
Hampden		Becky Moriarty
Holyoke		Gloria Caballero-Roca
Leverett		Peter D’Errico
Longmeadow	Mark Gold	
Ludlow		Derek DeBarge
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra	
Palmer	Benjamin Hood	
Pelham	David Shanabrook	
South Hadley		Jeff Cyr
Springfield	Brian Connors	
Sunderland		Geoff Kravitz
Ware		Nancy Talbot
West Springfield		Allyson Manuel
Westfield		Peter Miller
Wilbraham		Paula Dubord
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative		Vacant
Rider Representative		Vacant

A quorum of 31.01 votes being present, Chairman of the Advisory Board, Doug Slaughter, called the remote meeting of PVTA's Advisory Board to order at 12:12 PM; majority vote of 36.32 present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Slaughter asked if any members of the public would like to make a public comment on an agenda item.

No public comments were made.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to approve the meeting minutes from the September 20, 2023 Advisory Board Meeting.

Motion: Moved and seconded (O’Leary/Huntley) to approve the meeting minutes from the September 20, 2023 Advisory Board Meeting.

Chairman Slaughter 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			
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow			
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
Palmer			Benjamin Hood
Pelham	David Shanabrook		
South Hadley			
Springfield	Brian Connors		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield			
Westfield			
Wilbraham			
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 35.20 with 1 abstention (Palmer, 1.12 vote).

4. **REPORT OF THE ROUTE SUB-COMMITTEE**

J.M. Sorrell reported that the committee met on Monday, November 13th. The committee received an update on PVRTA’s 2023 Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan and 2024 Safety Targets and voted to approve and recommend approval to the full Board. The committee also voted to approve meeting minutes from June 16, 2023 as well as approved conducting public hearings on route adjustments and a Title VI Analysis for the P21E, G73, and Ware-Palmer Route.

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion from the Board to approve the Report of the Route Sub-Committee.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/Huntley) to approve the report of the Route Sub-Committee.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam			
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow			
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham	David Shanabrook		
South Hadley			
Springfield	Brian Connors		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield			
Westfield			
Wilbraham			
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 36.32.

5. APPROVAL OF THE 2023 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AGENCY SAFETY PLAN (PTASP) UPDATE

Paul Burns, Director of Transit Operations stated the following:

Included in your Board packet is the 2023 update to the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan. PVRTA is required to review the (PTASP) annually with a focus on the answering the following three questions;

1. Does the Agency Safety Plan address all relevant requirements?
2. Does the Agency Safety Plan reflect PVRTA's transit system as it operates today?
3. Are the activities and processes described in the plan suitable to manage safety at PVRTA?

The answer to all three questions was yes, this year. However, the Safety Committee felt that the document would benefit from a general revision to eliminate redundancies and streamline references in the document to make it more user friendly. The result is an updated plan that is about 48% shorter than that of the prior year. The committee is hopeful that this updated document will be more user friendly than the previous document.

To comply with federal regulations, several categories of safety targets were added this year. New categories include;

Category	Target
Physical assaults on operators	22
Non-physical assaults on operators	142
Physical assaults on other transit workers	1
Non-physical assaults on other transit workers	4
Customer injuries	85
Worker injuries	4
Other injuries	0
Major NTD incidents	4
motor vehicle accidents	85
pedestrian accidents	1
bicycle accidents	1

These categories continue to be tracked as in prior years:

Fatalities	0
Miles between breakdowns, fixed route	13,000
Miles between breakdowns, paratransit	35,000

Due to issues with the data in many of the new categories, the targets set for these categories are based on best estimates. Changes in the way data has been tracked through the claims system and changes in federal reporting requirements requiring us to track data we had not tracked previously. We are adjusting all our tracking systems to more accurately track real time data for 2023 and going forward.

Target setting in these categories is further complicated by changes in the operating environment and general changes in society at large. The rate of violent crime and bias crime appears to have increased overall over the last few years which seems to be contributing to what appears anecdotally to be an increase in assaults that include bias assaults across our system. FBI statistics show a 7% increase in bias crime from 2021 to 2022. FBI crime statistics show increases in violent crime rates

since the pandemic. While the targets set reflect what we believe is the current state of assaults in our system, our goal is always zero assaults on our operators and our passengers.

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion from the Board to approve PVTA’s 2023 Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Update.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/O’Leary) to approve PVTA’s 2023 Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Update.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam			
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow			
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham	David Shanabrook		
South Hadley			
Springfield	Brian Connors		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield			
Westfield			
Wilbraham			
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 36.32.

6. **APPROVAL OF 2024 SAFETY TARGETS**

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion from the Board to approve PVTA’s 2024 Safety Targets.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/O’Leary) to approve PVTA’s 2024 Safety Targets.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam			
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow			
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham	David Shanabrook		
South Hadley			
Springfield	Brian Connors		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield			
Westfield			
Wilbraham			
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 36.32.

7. APPROVAL TO CONDUCT PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR ROUTE ADJUSTMENTS ON THE P21E, G73, AND WARE-PALMER ROUTE

Paul Burns reported that with the increase in funding in this year’s budget, we are beginning to add service where possible in both the short and long term. Given the staffing situation, we are taking an incremental approach to adjusting service on our routes. Ultimately our goal is to expand weekend service throughout the region, restore service that was reduced in response to staffing shortages, and increase frequency on all routes to 30-minutes or less across the system.

Initially, our focus is on enhancing service on the following routes as these changes can be implemented quickly with only limited impact on labor.

P21E: Improve frequency from 60-minutes to 45-minutes effective December 24, 2023, and further improving frequency to 30-minutes for the Spring Bid. This change will affect service Monday through Sunday.

G73E: All trips will serve Northampton with 45-minute frequency effective December 24, 2023, and further improving to 30-minute frequency for the Spring Bid. This change will affect service Monday through Saturday and will include adding new service on Sundays beginning December 24, 2023. This change will initially result in five fewer trips each day serving the Holyoke Mall; however, the frequency change results in significantly more service to Northampton and eliminates confusion among some riders when not all trips go to Northampton now. As we increase frequency to 30-minutes in the spring, service to both the Holyoke Mall and Northampton will increase significantly.

Ware-Palmer: Changes include reinstating the previous Ware and Palmer Circulators using two separate vehicles and providing a more comprehensive service in each town. Additional service to the Wilbraham Big Y will be added bringing the total number of connections to Springfield to six each day.

These changes will take effect in December with the addition of weekend service planned for early Spring. New routes will provide similar service to what was provided prior to the 2017 service reductions.

In addition to the changes requiring a public hearing and Title VI analysis, we are also making changes to the following routes:

B17: minor schedule adjustments to provide consistent 45-minute service all day on Saturdays. Will eliminate a 90-minute service gap on Saturday mornings.

G1: All trips will service the Chicopee Big Y.

R10: Schedule will be realigned to provide consistent 45-minute frequency weekdays with all trips serving Walmart and all but the first early morning trip serving Westfield State University.

R14: Minor schedule adjustments to increase efficiency and improve on time performance.

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion from the Board to approve conducting public hearings on the route adjustments for the P21E, G73, and the Ware-Palmer Route.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/Gold) to approve conducting public hearings on the route adjustments for the P21E, G73, and the Ware-Palmer Route.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam			
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow			
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke			

Leverett	
Longmeadow	Mark Gold
Ludlow	
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra
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Pelham	David Shanabrook
South Hadley	
Springfield	Brian Connors
Sunderland	
Ware	
West Springfield	
Westfield	
Wilbraham	
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell
ADA Representative	
Rider Representative	

Motion passed by a vote of 36.32.

8. **APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A TITLE VI ANALYSIS ON P21E, G73, AND WARE-PALMER ROUTE**

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion from the Board to approve conducting a Title VI Analysis on the route adjustments for the P21E, G73, and the Ware-Palmer Route.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/Gold) to approve conducting a Title VI Analysis on the route adjustments for the P21E, G73, and the Ware-Palmer Route.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam			
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow			
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
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Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
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Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
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Williamsburg
ADA Representative
Rider Representative

Brian Connors

J.M. Sorrell

Motion passed by a vote of 36.32.

9. **DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT OPERATIONS REPORT**

Paul Burns, Director of Transit Operations, reported the following:

Fixed Route September 2023 ridership was at 780K, up 9% from 716K in September of 2022. SATCo and VATCo ridership was at 442K up 7.8% from 410K. UMass was at 336K up 10.9% from 303K.

Paratransit ridership continues to increase steadily when compared to the previous year. September ridership was 15,547. A modest increase over the prior year of 2.5%.

Systemwide Recovery: September systemwide ridership was 73.8% of ridership in September 2019. UMASS ridership was 81% of ridership in September of 2019. While SATCo and VATCo combined was 69% of September 2019. Paratransit ridership was 70.5% of September 2019.

Staffing continues to be a problem for many transit systems. With support from MassDOT in the form of a comprehensive advertising campaign, we are beginning to see improvement in hiring. Additionally, each of our operators has stepped up hiring efforts including by offering CDL licensing as part of our training program. We are beginning to see the efforts pay off and are hopeful that staffing will increase consistently over the next few months to support ongoing service enhancements.

Dial A Ride: As overall paratransit ridership continues to recover, Dial A Ride users are creating some capacity constraints in the system during peak times. As you may recall, Dial A Ride is a service that PVTA provides in addition to paratransit service which is federally mandated. As a result, we are able to negotiate trips for Dial A Ride service if needed since it is not a federally required service.

Given the increasing number of Dial A Ride users relative to total users we believe it is necessary that we take a proactive approach to ensure that there are no capacity constraints for paratransit users. Prior to the pandemic, Dial A Ride users represented 32% of all demand response trips. Currently for FY 24 Dial A Ride users represented 51% of demand response trips.

To address this and avoid capacity constraints, we are implementing the following procedures to ensure that all ADA trips are made in accordance with PVTA and federal standards and to minimize any disruption to Dial A Ride users.

- Dial A Ride trips for non-medical purposes are subject to trip negotiation and may not be scheduled during peak times (8:00 AM to 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM)
- Dial A Ride users attempting to schedule non-medical trips during peak times will be offered alternative trip times during off peak hours.
- Dial A Ride medical trips will not be subject to time restrictions.

These changes will take effect with the start of service on November 27, 2023.

7. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator, Sandra Sheehan, reported the following:

The PVTA's Finance & Audit Sub-Committee met on October 4th to review the audit report with staff from Adelson and Company, PVTA's auditors. The Sub-Committee approved the FY23 Audit on behalf of the Advisory Board. The FY23 Audit was a clean audit with no findings. There were two recommendations from the auditing team including having the accounting department assume responsibility for the fixed asset software and for recording additions, disposals, and depreciation in the system instead of the IT Department. PVTA has held an internal meeting to officially remove the IT Department staff from any responsibility associated with the fixed asset module in the Abila accounting software system. The last recommendation was to update the authorized signers on all of the bank and short-term investment accounts to remove former employees. That has also been accomplished. The Finance & Audit Sub-Committee had a chance to speak to the Auditor's without management staff being present.

MassDOT has notified PVTA of the FY24 Community Transit Grant Program grant award. PVTA has received \$209,391 for the Beyond ADA Program. That is the assistance to the Councils on Aging that provide transportation for the elderly in their communities and includes: Agawam, Hadley, Tri-Town, Ware and Williamsburg. The award also includes \$107,073 for the Travel Training Program that requires a \$26,768 match from PVTA. PVTA's Travel Training Program performed one-to-one training with 43 individuals. The Travel Trainer also oriented 25 group trainings (group trainings include schools and refugee/immigrant services), They also participated in 51 outreach events including train-the-trainer sessions with agencies, transition fairs/community fairs, and meetings with new agencies.

PVTA was also notified that it was not awarded funds for the PVTA Connecting Rural Communities, a grant in partnership with FRTA and the South Deerfield Senior Center. It was suggested that PVTA pursue the Regional Transit Innovation Grant for this project. This grant funding opportunity provides a broader funding stream. PVTA will be modifying its application with the intent to submit for this grant program and is meeting with planning staff from FRTA and BRTA regarding a possible joint application that will allow for the connection of the three RTAs service areas.

PVTA fixed Route contractors have successfully transitioned to the new CDL training course. The new course layout has been painted at the Liberty Street Training Site as well as at UMass Transit site. Staff received training on the new course and testing procedures. MARTA continues to work with the RMV and the MSP to address issues all RTAs are having with CDL permits and tests.

PVTA and the other RTAs submitted a joint application to MassDOT for the Try-Transit pilot program in response to the success of last year's program and the additional monies allocated by the Legislature in the state budget. The Try-Transit pilot program has been approved for this fiscal year.

PVTA used data to determine the most appropriate times for PVTA to offer pre-paid fares in our region. PVTA will offer pre-paid service on both fixed route and paratransit starting on Black Friday, November 24th through December 31st. Beginning in January, PVTA would pilot pre-paid weekend service as well as pre-paid transportation to students 18 years or younger after 3:00 p.m. and pre-paid service during the lowest ridership months of June, July, and August.

11. NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Slaughter reported that there is no new business to discuss.

12. OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Slaughter reported that there is no old business to discuss.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion without objection to adjourn.

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

Chairman Slaughter stated this meeting is adjourned.

The meeting of the Advisory Board adjourned at 12:47 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

ATTEST: _____
BRANDY PELLETIER

Documents filed with Board Meeting packet:

- Roll Call Votes
- Advisory Board Minutes of 9-20-23
- PVTA’s 2023 Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Update
- 2024 Safety Targets
- Route Adjustments

Minutes Approved: January 24, 2024