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**MINUTES OF PVTA'S  
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
June 21, 2023**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Regular Advisory Board Meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Wednesday, June 21, 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 (37.72 votes)</u>	<u>Not Present (24.28 votes)</u>
Agawam		Michael Squindo
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	Tim Sheehan	
Sunderland		Geoff Kravitz
Ware		John Carroll
West Springfield	Allyson Manuel	
Westfield	Peter Miller	
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord	
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative		Vacant
Rider Representative		Jake Hasson

A quorum of 31.01 votes being present, Chairman of the Advisory Board, Douglas Slaughter, called the remote meeting of PVTA's Advisory Board to order at 12:03 PM; majority vote of 37.72 present.

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Slaughter asked if there was anyone that would like to make a public comment. 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 May 17, 2023, Advisory Board Meeting.

**Motion:** Moved and seconded (Sorrell/Mayor Sciarra) to approve the meeting minutes from the May 17, 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			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton			Cindy Tarail
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow			
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
Palmer			
Pelham	David Shanabrook		
South Hadley			
Springfield	Tim Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield	Allyson Manuel		
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham			Paula Dubord
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 35.07 with two abstentions.

## 4. REPORT OF PVTA’S SUB-COMMITTEES

Peter Miller reported that the Route Sub-Committee met remotely on Friday, June 16<sup>th</sup>. The committee voted to approve the minutes from November 15, 2022, and discussed schedule adjustments that will be made effective June 25<sup>th</sup> as well as the Eastfield Mall bus stop relocation due to the mall closing in July.

Doug Slaughter reported that the Administrator's Compensation Committee voted at its May meeting, to recommend to the Advisory Board, extending Ms. Sheehan's Administrator Contract (July 1, 2020 - June, 30, 2025) by one year, through June 30, 2026. This is a way of acknowledging that we feel she is doing a great job and ensuring we are able to keep her committed to the Authority.

Chairman Slaughter asked the Board for a motion to accept the reports of PVTA's Sub-Committees.

**Motion:** Moved and seconded (O'Leary/Sorrell) to accept the report of PVTA's Sub-Committees.

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			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow			
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
Palmer			
Pelham	David Shanabrook		
South Hadley			
Springfield	Tim Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield	Allyson Manuel		
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 37.72.

**5. APPROVAL OF ADMINISTRATOR’S 1-YEAR CONTRACT EXTENSION THROUGH JUNE 30, 2026.**

Chairman Slaughter asked the Board for a motion to approve a 1-year extension to Administrator Sheehan’s Contract.

**Motion:** Moved and seconded (O’Leary/Miller) to approve a 1-year extension to Administrator Sheehan’s Contract.

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			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow			
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
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Pelham	David Shanabrook		
South Hadley			
Springfield	Tim Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield	Allyson Manuel		
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 37.72.

**6. CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER’S REPORT**

Chief Financial Officer, Lisa Seymour, reported the following:

Farebox revenue is above projection. We had budgeted \$4,744,442 for the year and the yearly projection is (\$5,174,719) over \$5 million. This line item contains fare box revenue collected directly from the vehicles, passes sold on our mobile pass platform, passes sold by the Information Center, and College route billings (Westfield State, HCC and STCC).

Interest and Insurance Recoveries are above budget. SATCo recoveries were budgeted for \$200,000 for the year. As of April, the insurance recoveries for SATCo are \$316,774. Paratransit was budgeted at \$50,000 and are at \$55,000. Administration was not budgeted for insurance recoveries but did have \$28,474 in this category due to a vehicle reimbursement from a town utilizing a van being involved in an accident.

The Federal Operating Grant line item has not been completely billed. This grant is for ADA and Preventative Maintenance of the fleet. Since the ARPA grant expires and PM/ADA grant does not, we will be using more of the ARPA grant to balance the budget. The last drawdown with ARPA funds will be done during the audit by the calculation from the auditors to not overdraw this line item. This does cause cashflow issues in July and August until the State provides the State Contract Assistance..

The Operating Subsidy category contains the UMass offset that the University pays above our budget allowance, if the expenses warrant. There is \$519,101 in this line item but the University is under budget thus they will not be utilizing this subsidy. This also means that their budgeted expenses will be lower by the same amount. This category also contains billing for our Travel Trainers through a Mobility Grant offered by the state. This year we utilized the rest of a federal grant for Mobility Training so we will not be utilizing the \$108,240. The expenses are not in this budget due to a federal grant being used to fund the program. The expenses are moved from Operating to Capital therefore offsetting the amount.

Administration Other is up by 3%. This line item contains utilities, professional services, plowing etc. The price of electricity has gone up substantially, but PVTA has enrolled in Power Options that will decrease the utilities by almost \$700,000 next year.

The Paratransit vendor is under budget by 9.8% which is in line with ridership numbers. Williamsburg is over budget due to a budget error in FY23. They should have had more monies allocated to this line item. Hadley is over budget due to their performance being significantly higher than the past two years.

Fuel is over budget for all modes due to the current market value prices. We expect this to decrease due to the fixed route contractor locking in a lower fuel rate for the rest of the year.

Allocated IT Support will be brought within budget by the end of the fiscal year as funds are transferred from our capital program to the operating budget. This is a calculation that is conducted with the Chief Information Officer, Carolyn Hart-Lucien, at the end of the year.

## **7. DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT OPERATIONS REPORT**

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

Fixed route ridership systemwide in April was at 598K, up 3% from 579K in April of 2022. Ridership for all garages was higher than in April 2022, with a 2% increase at SATCo, an 11% increase at VATCo, and a 3% increase at UMass.

Paratransit ridership continues to increase steadily when compared to the previous year. While April showed the lowest year-over-year ridership increase of any month this year at 9.7%, May is showing a 14.3% increase over last year. Ridership for all of FY23 to date is up 18.5%. We anticipate paratransit ridership to be approximately 68% of pre-pandemic levels for all FY23.

The following schedule adjustments will be made effective June 25, 2023:

G1: On Saturdays, the 6:50am departure from Union Station to Chicopee Center has been moved earlier to 6:30am and includes service to Chicopee Big Y. The return trip will leave Chicopee Big Y at 6:55am and arrive at Union Station at 7:20am. This change was made in response to requests from drivers on behalf of passengers hoping to access these stops earlier on Saturdays.

R10: As you may recall, runtimes for this route were streamlined in December to allow for quicker service end to end with less slack time in the run and a reduction in travel times of as much as 30 minutes. As part of the process, we committed to analyzing the impacts of the changes and adjusting as needed. The updated schedule will reflect adjustments to weekday departure times to improve schedule reliability.

Eastfield Mall Closure related changes: The Eastfield Mall in Springfield will be closing in July. As a result, we need to relocate the stop there. This is complicated by the fact that the Mall also served as the endpoint for several routes and any new location needs to accommodate layover, multiple connections and allow for vehicles to safely be able to turn around.

- Extend the route to the Big Y in Wilbraham with the route turning around there and returning on Boston Road with the next stop on Boston Road near Liquors 44.
- Re-route the route to travel along Fernbank Road to Kent Road then returning to Boston Road with the final stop being on Boston Road near Liquors 44.
- Moving the last stop for the B17 only, from the current Eastfield Mall location to Walmart on Boston Road.

We received 148 responses from both drivers and passengers and ultimately arrived at the following decisions regarding stop locations.

Eastfield Mall Survey Results Analysis:

- Over 92% of passenger respondents rode at least 3 times per week
  - Of those, 62.37% felt that the extension of the route to Wilbraham Big Y was a significant or slight improvement.
  - 46.81% of passenger respondents felt the Fernbank Road option was a significant or slight improvement.
  - 53.46% of passenger respondents indicated that they thought moving the last stop for the B17 to Walmart was a significant or slight improvement.
- Driver had somewhat different responses
  - 45.46% of drivers felt that the Wilbraham Big Y extension was a significant or slight improvement.
  - 54.28 % felt that the Fernbank Road option was a significant or slight improvement.
  - 46.51% felt that moving the last stop to Walmart for the B17 was a significant or slight improvement.

When asked to compare options head-to-head:

- B7 route adjustments
  - Drivers preferred Fernbank Road over the Wilbraham Big Y by 60.47% to 39.53%

- Passenger preferred Wilbraham Big Y over Fernbank Road by about 80% to 20%
- B 17 route adjustments
  - Drivers ranked the Fernbank Road stop by first by small margin, 38.10 %
  - Big Y Wilbraham came in 2nd at 33.33% with Walmart ranked last at 28.57
  - (note these responses will not add to 100 because of the nature of the ranked scale)
  - Passengers ranked Wilbraham Big Y first with a score of 60%
  - With Walmart coming in 2nd at 21.11% and Fernbank Road last at 18.89%
- 45.45% of passengers indicated that they would ride to Wilbraham at least once per week

For both the B7 and the B17, the Eastern end of the route will change from Eastfield Mall to Wilbraham Big Y. We will also be adding two new stops located near Boston Road / Dudley Street in Wilbraham, near Friendly's main plant to address expected demand for service here.

To ensure we have enough time to allow a reasonable layover for drivers with the slightly expanded route, we will be eliminating deviations into the Price Rite parking lot on Boston Road and the MassMutual offices on State St.

In addition, weekday, Saturday, and Sunday departure times have been adjusted throughout to improve schedule reliability and ensure ample layover time at Big Y in Wilbraham.

WP: We will be moving the endpoint for the Ware-Palmer Route from the Eastfield Mall to the Wilbraham Big Y. All connections to the B7 and B17 that were made at the Eastfield Mall will now be made at the Big Y.

WS: Similarly, service on the Wilbraham Shuttle will adjust to make connections with these routes at the Wilbraham Big Y.

## **8. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Administrator, Sandra Sheehan, reported the following:

The U.S. House of Representatives on May 31<sup>st</sup> overwhelmingly passed legislation negotiated by President Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy to suspend the debt ceiling and set federal spending limits. The U.S. Senate approved the compromise on June 1<sup>st</sup>. President Biden signed the legislation on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The legislation establishes budgetary caps on both defense and nondefense spending for FY24 and FY25. In FY24, total nondefense spending, which includes public transportation funding, is \$703.7 billion, which is a \$40.2 billion (5.4 percent) cut compared to FY23 funding levels. The House and Senate Committees on Appropriations are working on dividing the total funding among the 12 appropriations subcommittees and provide each subcommittee with an allocation for its bill. The total allocation for the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) Appropriations subcommittees will be critical to efforts to fund public transportation at the authorized levels of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. It is unclear what level of funding cut the THUD subcommittees may have. This will impact PVTA's Capital Improvement Plan funding levels as well as discretionary grants we plan to apply for as part of the electrification of the fleet.

On the state side, the next phase of the budget process has started. The Budget Conference Committee was officially convened. House and Senate conferees have met to negotiate the differences between the House and Senate bill which is roughly a \$56 billion budget. The committee

is led by House Ways and Means Chairman Aaron Michlewitz and Senate Ways and Means Chairman Michael Rodrigues. The Conferees include the committee's ranking Republican Representative Todd Smola and Ways and Means Vice Chair Ann-Margaret Ferrante. On the Senate side, Ways and Means Vice Chair Cindy Friedman and ranking Republican Patrick O'Connor make up the committee.

This year the concerns with the budgets are over a proposed a \$600M tax relief the House introduced as a companion bill to their budget. It is understood the House and Senate factored in \$587 million and \$575 million impacts, respectively, to their spending bills due to the tax relief proposal. However, the Senate still hasn't taken it up for discussion. Another area for debate is how the state should spend its newest source of funding, the Fair Share Amendment. Of the \$1 billion in surtax spending the House and Senate budgets include, only \$449 million is on shared priorities. How to spend these funds is still debatable. RTA funding needs are included in both budgets at increased amounts. The next few weeks are critical to the RTAs funding.

The RTAs have been working with MassDOT Rail and Transit Division staff on the MOU that includes Performance Metrics. Signed MOUs are required to receive the State Contract Assistance awarded to the RTAs through the budget process. PVTA and PVPC staff worked on developing targets for each of the fiscal years of the MOU.

Secretary of Transportation Gina Fiandaca and Undersecretary Monica G. Tibbits-Nutt visited the Springfield Operations and Maintenance Facility at Cottage Street. The tour of the facility included an update on the status of PVTA's electrification plans for Cottage Street as well as a status report on the solar array being installed on the roof of the facility.

MassDOT has provided funding for a statewide Driver Recruitment Campaign. The firm selected by MassDOT, ASG, is working with a Working Group that includes several Administrators. The campaign is expected to kick off on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

PVTA currently has two vacant positions. A Grants Manager position and a Procurement Officer position. We have a new employee that will be starting next week filling the Manger of Planning and Analysis position, Alex Forrest.

## 9. NEW BUSINESS

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

## 10. OLD BUSINESS

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

## 11. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion to adjourn.

**Motion:** Moved and seconded (Sorrell/O'Leary) to adjourn.

Chairman Slaughter asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam			



Amherst	Douglas Slaughter
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary
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Easthampton	Cindy Tarail
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Longmeadow	
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Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra
Palmer	
Pelham	David Shanabrook
South Hadley	
Springfield	Tim Sheehan
Sunderland	
Ware	
West Springfield	Allyson Manuel
Westfield	Peter Miller
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell
ADA Representative	
Rider Representative	

Motion passed by a vote of 35.98.

The meeting of the Advisory Board adjourned at 12:56 P.M.

**A TRUE RECORD**

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**BRANDY PELLETIER**

Documents filed with Board Meeting packet:

- Roll Call Votes  
Advisory Board Minutes of 5-17-23

**Minutes Approved: August 23, 2023**