
**MINUTES OF PVTA'S
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
March 20, 2024**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Advisory Board Meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Wednesday, March 20, 2024, 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 (41.26 votes)</u>	<u>Not Present (20.74 votes)</u>
Agawam		Mayor Christopher Johnson
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown		Edward Boscher
Chicopee	Steve Huntley	
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler	
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail	
Granby		Glen Sexton
Hadley	David Moskin	
Hampden	Becky Moriarty	
Holyoke		Gloria Caballero-Roca
Leverett		Tom Hankinson
Longmeadow	Mark Gold	
Ludlow		Derek DeBarge
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra	
Palmer	Benjamin Hood	
Pelham	David Shanabrook	
South Hadley		Andrea Miles
Springfield	Amanda Pham	
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 12:02 PM; majority vote of 41.26 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

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/Huntley) to approve the meeting minutes from the January 24, 2024 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			
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton			
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden	Becky Moriarty		
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham	David Shanabrook		
South Hadley			
Springfield	Amanda Pham		
Sunderland			
Ware	Nancy Talbot		
West Springfield			
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham			
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 39.74.

4. REPORT OF PVTA’S SUB-COMMITTEE’S

Administrator Sheehan gave the update of the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee and stated that the committee met on Thursday, March 14th and voted to approve the meeting minutes of January 22, 2024. The committee received a report on the year-to-date budget to actual and received an update on PVTA’s Draft FY25 Budget which has a 2% increase for expenses and does not incorporate a salary increase for contract employees, as this is currently being negotiated.

The committee also received an update on a Fare Analysis which looks at four primary approaches to revising fares in 2024, and will study the financial impact of each approach:

- No change
- Fare Increase
- Fare Free
- Ensemble

Peter Miller, Chairman of the Route Sub-Committee, reported that the committee met on Monday, March 18, 2024. The committee received an update on PVTA’s spring service enhancements as well as the Northern Tier Survey results. The committee voted to approve the meeting minutes of November 13, 2023 as well as recommend approval to the full Board to hold Public Hearings on the Northampton Micro-transit Pilot and a Title VI Analysis.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/Huntley) to accept the reports of PVTA’s Sub-Committees.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote to accept the report of the sub-committees.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam			
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown			
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley			
Hampden	Becky Moriarty		
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham	David Shanabrook		
South Hadley			
Springfield	Amanda Pham		
Sunderland			
Ware	Nancy Talbot		
West Springfield			
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham			

Motion passed by a vote of 39.52.

5. **APPROVAL OF PUBLIC HEARINGS & TITLE VI ANALYSIS FOR NORTHAMPTON MICROTRANSIT PILOT**

Paul Burns, Director of Transit Operations reported:

PVTA is seeking approval from the Board to implement a micro-transit pilot program in Northampton using existing assets that are often underutilized as currently dedicated. PVTA currently uses demand response vehicles to provide service to Seniors in the community and to provide regular access to the Northampton Survival Center. While the senior center service is well received, this was originally grant funded and that funding is no longer available. The Survival Center trips are significantly underutilized with extremely low ridership.

The proposed service would allow us to reassign vehicle assets in Northampton and provide an effective first mile, last mile transit solution in Northampton, potentially providing a model for other communities in our service area. The pilot program would provide:

- Door to door service for riders to access shopping, medical appointments, employment, and buses to points outside Northampton.
- Same day service with 2-hour ‘ notice (subject to availability).
- Door to door service throughout Northampton.
- Fares matching fixed route service, \$1.50 for adults \$0.75 for those with valid Elderly and disabled ID.

The Noho Shuttle is available to all Northampton residents, regardless of age or disability status.

If approved, the Noho Shuttle Pilot would begin service on May 1, 2024.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/ Mayor Sciarra) to approve holding public hearings and a Title VI Analysis on a 6-month Northampton Micro-transit Pilot.

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			
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley			
Hampden	Becky Moriarty		
Holyoke			
Leverett			

Longmeadow	Mark Gold
Ludlow	
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra
Palmer	Benjamin Hood
Pelham	David Shanabrook
South Hadley	
Springfield	Amanda Pham
Sunderland	
Ware	Nancy Talbot
West Springfield	
Westfield	Peter Miller
Wilbraham	
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell
ADA Representative	
Rider Representative	

Motion passed by a vote of 39.52.

6. DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT OPERATIONS REPORT

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

Systemwide February 2024 ridership was at 692K, up 24% from 560K in December 2022.

Paratransit year to date ridership is up 6.2% over FY23.

February systemwide recovery of 83% is tied for the second highest yet recorded for PVTA, matching the 83% recovery of May 2023 and just below the 86% recovery of December 2023.

Assaults on operators in January included 1 physical and 8 non physical assaults, the second lowest month noted since we began tracking and the first time we have recorded two consecutive months with total assaults below 10 per month.

With the increase in funding in this year's budget, we are continuing our commitment to add service where possible in both the short and long term. With the improving staffing situation, while we continue to take an incremental approach to adjusting service on our routes, we are also able to add service on several new 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.

<u>Route</u>	<u>Proposed Change</u>	<u>Comments</u>
<u>B7:</u>	Improve frequency from 20 minutes to 15 minutes between 9 am and 4 pm Monday through Friday. Effective March 24, 2024.	Restores much of the frequency lost due to labor related staffing reductions.
<u>X90:</u>	Service on the X90 from Chicopee Big Y to East Longmeadow will continue unchanged. The routing itself for the Holyoke to Chicopee section of the route will be unchanged but the routes will be renumbered as follows:	This change would greatly alleviate rider confusion especially where routes meet at Chicopee Big Y. No changes to trips or departure times proposed.

G19, Holyoke-Chicopee (currently called the X90A) Serves Montgomery St, Granby Rd and Memorial Dr to New Ludlow Rd, and Montcalm St, then travel to HTC via Memorial and James St to South Hadley Falls, then Bridge, Lyman Dwight, and High Streets.

R22, Holyoke -Chicopee (currently called the X90B) Serves Montgomery, Grattan and Chicopee Streets and travel to HTC via the Willimansett Bridge, Cabot, and High Streets.

<u>P21E:</u>	Frequency improved from 45 minutes to every 30 minutes.	Continues the frequency improvements on this route that began in December.
<u>G73E:</u>	Frequency improved from 45 minutes to every 30 minutes.	Continues the frequency improvements on this route that began in December.
<u>X92:</u>	Improve frequency from every 60 minutes to every 45 minutes on weekdays.	
<u>R10:</u>	Service will start earlier and end later, with the first departure from Union Station at 6am and the last departure from Westfield State University at 9:50pm.	Additional runs added on Saturdays
<u>B6:</u>	On Sundays, trips will alternate between the Pasco Rd variation and the regular variation	Provides service where it doesn't exist on Berkshire Ave north of Page Blvd
<u>G1:</u>	On Saturdays and Sundays, trips will alternate between Bicentennial Hwy and Canon Circle, like on weekdays. The southern end-of-line and layover location will be moved to Five Town Plaza to match weekdays	Provides consistent routing across all days.
<u>34</u>	Add an additional vehicle to this route weekdays between 12:00 PM and 7:00 PM which will add 8 additional afternoon runs. Leaving lot 11 at 12:33, 1:23, 2:13,3:03, 3:53, 4:43, 5:33 and 6:23	Restores much of the service lost to labor related staffing reductions
<u>30 and 31 Afternoon Trippers</u>	New supplemental weekday "trippers" will add capacity to existing scheduled services between 2PM and 6PM with a focus on increasing capacity during class change times	Restores service lost to labor related staffing reductions

New Grant Awards and Proposals:

Regional Transportation Innovation Grant (RTI): PVTA submitted two applications for RTI grants independently and submitted a third application jointly with BRTA and FRTA.

PVTA's two grants were submitted as follows:

1. In cooperation with FRTA we submitted a grant for the creation of route connecting Amherst and Greenfield and providing service to Leverett, and Sunderland.
2. A grant application to provide door to door service for Amherst area individuals experiencing homelessness and connecting them to employment in Amherst, Hatfield, Whately, and Deerfield

The joint application with FRTA and BRTA would establish two fixed routes providing connections between the RTA's:

- Pittsfield-Northampton via Pittsfield, Dalton, Windsor, Cummington, Goshen, Williamsburg, Northampton
- North Adams – Greenfield via North Adams, Adams, Savoy, Plainfield, Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Shelburne, and Greenfield

Alex Forrest, PVTA's Manager of Planning & Analysis, reported key highlights on PVTA's Northern Region Survey customers' travel and characteristics:

Most customers use other means of travel where PVTA is unavailable:

- 48% walk
- 34% get rides from friends or family
- 26% use Uber, Lyft, etc.
- Only 19% report having no other means of travel
-

PVTA customer incomes are higher than expected, where data exists

- Only 10.1% reported earning below the Federal Poverty Line (FPL)
- Slightly more (10.4%) reported earning >400% FPL
- Majority (55%) did not provide any income information

7. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator, Sandra Sheehan, reported the following:

On the federal side, the House and Senate on March 8th passed a \$460 billion spending bill to fund about half the federal government through the fall, moving to avert a partial shutdown. The measure packages together six spending bills, extending funding through September 30th for dozens of federal programs covering agriculture, energy and the environment, transportation, housing, the Justice Department, and veterans. In addition, President Biden proposes increased funding for transit and rail in FY 2025 budget request.

On the state level, the RTA Advancement Bill (Sen. 2277/House 3272), to help fund regional transit authorities at the \$150 million level received for fiscal 2024 as the base amount that would be adjusted for inflation and subject to a cap was extended to May 23rd by the Transportation Committee after a State House public hearing last month. As you may recall, last year the bill was recommended by the committee but did not advance further.

MARTA held its annual Legislative Luncheon on March 5th in Boston. Several members of the Western Mass delegation attended the meeting. PVTA provided a handout of transit budget information and its impact on service. In addition, all RTAs provided a summary of the activities

that have taken place since the increase in the RTA budget line item was approved. At PVTA, the increase in operating funding assistance of \$6,900,734 allowed us to make enhancements to the transit system including the following:

- PVTA implemented route enhancements, on the following routes: G1, B7, R10, B17, P21E, G73E, Ware and Palmer, that improved transit service by adjusting area coverage, frequency of service, hours of service and by adding weekend service.
- Information about PVTA's Bus Operator Trainee Program was provided By training new employees ourselves, we are addressing the national level shortage of CDL qualified individuals.

As part of the preparation of FY25 budget, a year-to-date budget analysis and projection has taken place. Notable items include employee salary expenses increased by 5.4% for FY24 over FY23. In part due to the longevity bonus that was awarded to reward front line employees for their longtime loyalty.

Workforce challenges have increased the amount of overtime worked by operators; agency wide overtime has increased by 38% from last fiscal year to this fiscal year for the period July through December. PFMLA has also had a great impact on the amount of overtime worked. In addition, salary adjustments were made to the paratransit workforce to reflect median statewide paratransit driver salary.

As we prepare the FY25 budget, we are very cognizant of the fact the governor has proposed a level funded budget for the RTAs. The additional costs of fuel, parts, health insurance coupled with the service enhancements implemented, the in-house training costs and the overtime associated with PFMLA, it is going to be a tight budget.

March 18th was the National Transit Employee Appreciation Day. PVTA celebrated this day by making sure the riding public was aware that March 18th is the day to thank drivers for their service and, by honoring the Calendar Year 2023 best performing employees from each of the garages as follows:

- The Most Miles Driven
- The Most Miles Driven without a Preventable Accident
- The Most Passengers Carried
- The Most Bus Stops Served
- The Most Days Driven without an Incident

8. NEW BUSINESS

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

9. OLD BUSINESS

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

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion without objection to adjourn.

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

Chairman Slaughter stated this meeting is adjourned.

The meeting of the Advisory Board adjourned at 12:52 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

ATTEST: _____
BRANDY PELLETIER

Documents filed with Board Meeting packet:

- Roll Call Votes
- Advisory Board Minutes of 1-24-24
- Northern Tier Survey Presentation

Minutes Approved: May 22, 2024