
**MINUTES OF PVTA'S
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
May 22, 2024**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Advisory Board Meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Wednesday, May 22, 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 (38.99 votes)</u>	<u>Not Present (23.01 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	Stephen Fay	
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	Timothy Sheehan	
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 12:14 PM; majority vote of 38.99 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 (Huntley/Sheehan) to approve the meeting minutes from the March 20, 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			
Hampden	Becky Moriarty		
Holyoke	Stephen Fay		
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
Palmer			
Pelham			
South Hadley			
Springfield	Timothy Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield			
Westfield			
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 37.87.

4. REPORT OF PVTA'S SUB-COMMITTEE'S

Steve Huntley, Chairman of the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee (F&A) reported that the committee met on Friday, May 17th and voted to approve the meeting minutes of March 14, 2024. The committee received a report on the year-to-date budget to actual and an update on PVTA's fare analysis. The committee reviewed PVTA's FY25 Budget which has an increase in expenses from FY24 of 3.8% with an overall deficit of \$3M which will be balanced by Covid Relief Funds and federal operating grants. The budget is based on the Governor's proposal and will need to have amendments as PVTA is required to submit an approved FY25 Budget to the state by June 1st and does not have finalized numbers for how much funding will be allocated from the state as well as some contracts that are currently in negotiations. The F&A Committee voted to recommend to the Advisory Board approval of PVTA's FY25 Budget, as presented.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/Mayor Sciarra) to accept the report of PVTA's Finance & Audit 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			
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton			
Granby			
Hadley			
Hampden	Becky Moriarty		
Holyoke	Stephen Fay		
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra		
Palmer			
Pelham			
South Hadley			
Springfield	Timothy Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield			
Westfield			
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 37.87.

5. **APPROVAL OF PVTA'S FY25 BUDGET**

Sandra Sheehan, PVRTA Administrator, reported on PVRTA's FY25 Budget:

EXPENSES

Administration

Wages/Fringe	Wages:	Increasing by 3%
	Health Insurance:	Increasing 10%
	Unemployment insurance:	Increasing 11.3% based on FY25 wages @ .003 UI rate

Overall wages and fringe are increasing by 1.8%

Services/Utilities	Legal Services:	Increasing from 20K to 35K due to construction project contracts
	Temp Employment:	Increasing from 15K to 60K due to Union Station staffing, two temporary employees
	Mobile Fare Collection:	Increasing by 10% due to increase in use
	Bond Financing:	Increasing by 14.3% due to a fee increase
	Printing:	Increasing from 5K to 7.4K as the budget was too low for FY24
	Interest expense:	Increasing by 14.3% based on FY24 forecast

Overall Admin expenses are increasing by 4.8%.

Paratransit

Contractors	Williamsburg:	Increasing from 7.5K to 12K based on FY24 forecast
	MV:	Increasing by 5.1%
	Fleet Maintenance:	Increasing by 32.5% due to supply constraints, the cost of parts increasing 16%

Overall Paratransit expenses are increasing by 8.2%. Additional community service makes up 2.8% of the increase. These costs are offset under Other Operating Subsidies, reimbursed by MassDOT at 100%.

Fixed Route Operations

SATCo/VATCo	Subsidy:	Increasing by 2.3% (does not include CBA Wages)
	Management Fee:	Increasing by 4.5% includes incentive for preventive maintenance goals
	Telephone:	Increasing by 12.2% includes internet for the buses

Fare Media Tickets: Increasing by 20% Based on FY24 forecast
 Fuel: Decreasing by 4.9% Contract price decrease
 CAM Charges US: Increasing by 16.7% includes electric outdoor heaters at Union Station

Overall Budget is increasing by 1.9% - No wage increases are factored in due to on-going union contract negotiations.

UMass Transit

Subsidy: Increasing by 1.1%
 UMass contribution increasing by 67.2%
 Fuel: Decreasing by 34.6% due to favorable contract

Overall budget increasing by 1.1%.

Shuttles
 Ware: Increasing by 53.8%
 Palmer: Increasing by 125.8%
 Easthampton: Decreasing by 18.7%
 Amherst/Worcester: Decreasing by 34.5% based on FY24 forecast
 Fuel: Increasing due to additional service

Overall budget increasing by 29.8%.

Overall fixed route operations budget increasing by 2.2%.

Allocated Insurance: Increasing by 4.9%

Allocated IT Support/Towers: Increasing 26% (Paratransit portion was not previously pulled into totals.

As PVTA's Finance & Audit Chairman stated, the FY25 Budget has a deficit of \$3M which PVTA will use Covid Relief Funds and Federal Operating Grants to balance the budget. This budget is based on the Governor's budget which is the most conservative. The House and Senate are in conference.

The Governor's budget for the RTAs includes \$94M from the Transportation Fund and \$75M from the Fair Share Amendment, distributed as follows: \$56 for operating, \$15 for fare equity and \$4M for Community Transportation Grant Funds. This funding level funds the RTAs to FY24 levels. This budget also distributes the monies amongst the RTAs in the same way it was distributed this fiscal year.

The House budget proposal sets aside \$184M for funding the RTAs. \$94M is to be transferred from the Commonwealth Transportation Fund and \$90M from the Fair Share Amendment and to be distributed as follows: no less than \$15M for an innovation grant program administered by MassDOT and no less than \$4M for community transportation grants to support expanded mobility options for older adults, people with disabilities and low-income individuals. This seems to indicate \$71M is to be distributed to the RTAs. However, this is not clearly stated in the language. An amendment has been filed with the House to distribute the \$165M (94+71) to ensure the funds are no

less than fiscal year 2024 including the more equitable distribution of contract assistance to regional transit authorities as was done in FY24 and to make that each recipient's baseline funding calculation for fiscal year 2025; the balance of the funds should be distributed based on the formula: 60% ridership; 30% population; and 10% service area.

The Senate's transportation budget proposed seems to be focused on the fifteen RTAs. The Senate proposal includes spending \$214 million in total on the RTAs. This figure is broken as follows: \$94M from the Transportation Fund and \$120M from the Fair Share Amendment, which is further broken down by allocating \$66M for operating, \$40 for year-round fare free service, \$10M for interconnectivity grants and \$4M for Community Transportation Grant Funds.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board has any questions.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/Huntley) to approve PVTA's FY25 Budget as presented.

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			
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton			
Granby			
Hadley			
Hampden	Becky Moriarty		
Holyoke	Stephen Fay		
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Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 37.87.

6. DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT OPERATIONS REPORT

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

Route Updates: As staffing has continued to improve at VATCo, PVTA has been able to reinstate service to those routes that were impacted due to the labor related staffing adjustments in 2021. Service on the B48 returned to half-hour frequency between the hours of 10:30am and 5:30pm on weekdays.

In addition, Sunday service is being added to the R41 and R42 effective June 2, 2024. We are also improving the frequency on the R44 on weekends from every two hours to hourly.

Paratransit ridership continues to increase steadily when compared to the previous year. April paratransit ridership showed a significant increase over FY23 levels, increasing 2,282 passengers or 15.2%. Year to date, paratransit ridership has increased 6.4% over FY23.

Systemwide Recovery, ridership is up 24% from last April, with recovery at 80%.

Northampton Micro-Transit Pilot: The Noho Shuttle began service on May 1, 2024, replacing the Noho Senior Center and Survival Center Shuttles. Ridership continues to outpace last year's ridership for the two services combined. Currently for the month of May, 265 riders have used the service compared to 216 for the comparable time period last year, an increase of 22.7%.

New Grant Awards and Proposals: PVTA was awarded funding for additional service through the Regional Transportation Innovation Grant (RTI) program.

This new service will begin in early FY25 for the following:

1. A route connecting Amherst and Greenfield and providing service to Leverett and Sunderland in cooperation with FRTA.
2. A program to provide door to door service for Amherst area individuals experiencing homelessness and connecting them to employment in Amherst, Hatfield, Whately, and Deerfield.

7. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator, Sandra Sheehan, reported the following:

Ridership continues to increase. All routes except for three routes in the system have ridership increases for the month of April and three routes exceeded the pre-covid ridership.

PVTA's Capital Improvement Program, which is part of the MPOs Transportation Improvement Program, is currently on public review at PVPC's website. This Program lists the improvements needed at each of the facilities owned by PVTA as well as vehicle replacement and IT funding.

On construction activities, the roof repairs to the flat roof portion of the PVTA Administration building has been substantially completed.

The replacement of the overhead doors at Cottage Street was awarded.

The bid documents for the expansion of the UMTS garage are being reworked to eliminate the phasing of the project thus reducing construction costs.

Phase I construction activities of the electrification of Cottage Street is progressing.

PVTA is celebrating its 50th anniversary. We will be celebrating all year long by announcing exciting news, events, and promotions. To kick off the celebration, and to thank our passengers for their continued loyalty, PVTA will be offering pre-paid fares from June 1, 2024, through August 31, 2024. The official announcement will be released this afternoon.

Tim Sheehan asked: Do you believe the state underestimated the fare free amount and what are the impacts since service is essentially free. The other issue is, if PVTA goes fare free, you need to be prepared to continue to do it.

Administrator Sheehan: The figures used by the Senate are based on pre-Covid ridership. However, ridership has continued to increase thus it is hard to say if the funds will be sufficient. Yes, you are correct, if the RTAs go fare free, it will be very difficult to go back to charging fares. Funds will have to be allocated on a continuous basis. There will be a lot of service impacts if RTAs were to go fare free, there could be some overcrowding on some of the trunk lines, people riding around with no trip purpose, etc. The staff and I would prefer to look at low-income fares, improving frequency and adding service versus providing fare-free service. There are a lot of unknowns, it all depends on how the language is written.

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 to adjourn.

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

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
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Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra

Timothy Sheehan

Paula Dubord
J.M. Sorrell

Motion passed by a vote of 37.87.

The meeting of the Advisory Board adjourned at 1:09 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

ATTEST: _____
BRANDY PELLETIER

Documents filed with Board Meeting packet:

- Roll Call Votes
- Advisory Board Minutes of 3-20-24
- FY25 Budget

Minutes Approved: June 26, 2024