

**MINUTES OF PVTA'S
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
January 25, 2023**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Advisory Board Meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Wednesday, January 25, 2023, at 12:00 P.M. remotely in accordance with the Governor's State of Emergency Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, Section 20, relieving from the requirement of section 20 of chapter 30A that it conduct its meetings in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, permitting a public body to allow remote participation by all members.

	<i><u>Present (43.83 votes)</u></i>	<i><u>Not Present (18.17 votes)</u></i>
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 12:10 PM; majority vote of 43.83 present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Gloria Caballero-Roca (Holyoke Designee): Asked about adding frequency in Holyoke, specifically in Ward 1 as well as coordination of service to assist with outreach to the homeless, people struggling with substance abuse, as well as better access to jobs and medical care.

Chairman Slaughter: PVTA has made note of this.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to approve the meeting minutes from the November 16, 2022, Advisory Board Meeting.

Motion: Moved and seconded (O’Leary/Gold) to approve the meeting minutes from the November 16, 2022, 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	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
Chicopee			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke	Gloria Caballero-Roca		
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton			
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham			
South Hadley			
Springfield	Tim Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware	John Carroll		
West Springfield	Allyson Manuel		
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		

Motion passed by a vote of 43.83

4. REPORT OF PVTA'S PARATRANSIT SUB-COMMITTEE

Mark Gold, Chairman of the Paratransit sub-committee, reported that the committee met on Monday, January 23rd. The Committee received an update on paratransit service. The committee voted to approve the minutes of September 21, 2022, voted to recommend to the Board approving PVTA's Title VI Equity Analysis Report for the Dial-A-Ride service enhancements, and recommend to the Board approving the Dial-A-Ride service enhancements. This service will expand Dial-A-Ride hours Monday through Friday until 7:00pm as well as the addition of Saturday Service 8:00am – 7:00pm.

Chairman Slaughter asked the Board for a motion to accept the report of PVTA's Paratransit Sub-Committee.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Gold/O'Leary) to accept the report of PVTA's Paratransit 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	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O'Leary		
Chicopee			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke	Gloria Caballero-Roca		
Leverett			
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Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham			
South Hadley			
Springfield	Tim Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware	John Carroll		
West Springfield	Allyson Manuel		
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		

Motion passed by a vote of 43.83

5. **APPROVAL OF TITLE VI EQUITY ANALYSIS REPORT FOR DIAL-A-RIDE SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS**

Paul Burns stated that the full Title VI Equity Analysis Report is included in your Board packet. This analysis was required because the proposed change increases Dial-A-Ride service span by 53.7%, the impact exceeds the 7.5% threshold to qualify as a Major Service Change.

The purpose of an equity analysis is to determine whether the new extended span of service would have an adverse impact on PVTA customers of color and/or low-income riders.

The analysis concludes that the expanded services will better meet the needs of the riders and meet the motivations PVTA has set for this service.

PVTA has expanded this service without detriment to low-income populations or populations of color. The motivations for expanding service include:

- Increasing travel opportunities by offering additional alternative times to peak service hours
- Increasing service hour span to evenings and into weekends as requested by the riders
- Increasing ridership in-line with PVTA's mission and business practices

This service expansion will add 53.7% service hours from initial service levels and appears to have contributed to expanded ridership by nearly 15% year over year, with gains continuing.

While this expansion has a disproportionate impact on low-income riders of 39.04% and a disparate burden on people of color of 23.08%, it must be noted that disproportionate impact and disparate burden analysis does not consider the positivity of the change, but rather is the absolute difference. Mitigation is only considered in cases when the difference has a negative impact on a rider population. The increase in service will positively impact both people of color and low-income riders.

Chairman Slaughter asked the Board for a motion to approve PVTA's Title VI Equity Analysis Report for Dial-A-Ride Service Enhancements.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Gold/O'Leary) to approve PVTA's Title VI Equity Analysis Report for Dial-A-Ride Service Enhancements.

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	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O'Leary		
Chicopee			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
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Ware	John Carroll
West Springfield	Allyson Manuel
Westfield	Peter Miller
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell
ADA Representative	
Rider Representative	

Motion passed by a vote of 43.83

6. APPROVAL OF DIAL-A-RIDE-SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS

Chairman Slaughter asked the Board for a motion to approve PVTA's Dial-A-Ride service enhancements that will expand Dial-A-Ride hours Monday through Friday until 7:00pm as well as the addition of Saturday Service 8:00am – 7:00pm.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Gold/Sorrell) to approve PVTA's Dial-A-Ride service enhancements that will expand Dial-A-Ride hours Monday through Friday until 7:00pm as well as the addition of Saturday service 8:00am – 7:00pm.

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	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O'Leary		
Chicopee			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
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Leverett			

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Ware	John Carroll
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Wilbraham	Paula Dubord
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell
ADA Representative	
Rider Representative	

Motion passed by a vote of 43.83

7. CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

Lisa Seymour, Chief Financial Officer, reported the following:

Farebox revenue is down by 10.4%. PVTA offered passengers pre-paid fare with the Try Transit program from November 25th to December 31st. The school passes were not invoiced during this time period but were invoiced in December which total \$849,863. This will be reflected on the next Budget to Actual presented to the Board.

The insurance recoveries are higher than expected accounting for \$240,865.

Some of the other operating subsidies have been billed. Most of this revenue line item is not calculated until the end of the year.

PVTA has not invoiced the federal operating grant which includes the ADA and Preventative Maintenance and the money for CARES has not being billed yet.

Paratransit vendor expenses are down slightly due to the number of trips performed.

Fuel for Paratransit is 21% over the budget prediction. This is due to the gasoline fuel cost variable. It is hoped this will come down in the next few months. On the last budget to actual presented to the Board, this line item was over by 28%.

SATCO/VATCO and UMass are under budget due to workforce shortage service reductions.

Allocated IT support is behind due to billing. This expense will even out in the next few months.

8. DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT OPERATIONS REPORT

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

Systemwide Fixed Route ridership in December 2022 was at 595K, up 33% from December 2021.

- SATCo was at 364K (up from 269K in 12/21)
- UMass was at 172K (up from 131K in 12/21)
- VATCo was at 59K (up from 47K in 12/21)

December ridership was much higher in 2022 than in 2021, largely due to the temporary suspension of fares. SATCo in particular, saw its highest ridership since February 2020, before COVID began.

Paratransit ridership continues to increase steadily when compared to the previous year. While November ridership decreased from October and November in accordance with standard seasonal trends, November's 14,126 rides was still an increase of more than 2,300 passengers or 19.5% over FY 21; paratransit ridership has recovered to 66% of pre-pandemic ridership.

December systemwide recovery of 82% is the highest rate since covid began. Since January 2022, system ridership has remained above 60% of pre-covid levels, with a significant uptick in November and December, due at least in part, to the suspension of fares.

UMass recovery was at 77%, a slight drop from November and the lowest rate for the operators this month.

SATCo recovery was at 85%, a sharp increase from November and the highest rate for the operators this month. This tied with UMass's 85% recovery in March 2022 and was an all-time high for SATCo.

VATCo recovery was at 80%, a slight increase from November.

Effective January 25th, PVRTA will resume operating Route 39, a Five College route connecting Smith and Hampshire Colleges. Prior to the pandemic, this route was operated by UMass Transit and ceased operations in the Spring of 2020. This route will be operated by MV Transportation during the Spring 2023 semester.

PVRTA's Safety Committee continues to meet monthly to address safety concerns and ensure input from front line staff is communicated directly with the Administrator and the Advisory Board as needed.

Currently, the committee is acting to further mitigate assaults in the workplace. While we have always focused on ways to reduce assaults on board our vehicles, recent changes included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides a very specific definition of assault, and we are working to update the Code of Conduct to address the new definition and define appropriate penalties.

Definition assault on transit workers: "a circumstance in which an individual knowingly, without lawful authority or permission, and with intent to endanger the safety of any individual, or with a reckless disregard for the safety of human life, interferes with, disables, or incapacitates a transit worker while the transit worker is performing the duties of the transit worker."

This legislation also requires that PVRTA implement policies that directly address ways to minimize operator assaults. The Safety Committee is directly engaged in ensuring that input from front line workers will inform adjustments to PVRTA's code of conduct, and assure appropriate punitive action is taken to act as a deterrent against future infractions.

Doug Slaughter: Are there certain routes that are more problematic regarding incidents.

Paul Burns: The increase in assault rates is across the system, no specific route is seeing an increase.

J.M. Sorrell: Are we able to post what the rules for riding are and the ramifications if not followed. If there is some type of campaign like a catchy sound bite that encapsulates the policy.

Sandra Sheehan: Currently there are interior car cards in the buses and we'll work with Brandy to create a campaign.

9. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator, Sandra Sheehan, reported the following:

At the end of December, MassDOT released the RTAs Ridership and Performance Report. The report includes three major findings:

1. COVID- continues to impact RTA operations with average systemwide ridership 35% below 2019 pre-pandemic levels.
2. RTA revenues are also still being "disrupted" by the pandemic mostly due to decreased ridership and the decision by several transit systems to pursue fare-free pilot projects.
3. Some RTAs are still relying on federal COVID- relief aid to offset lost revenue, but that funding is set to end over the next few years.

At the MARTA meeting held on January 10th, the upcoming state budget was discussed. All administrators were cautioned to remember that although there is a new administration, the legislature is basically still the same.

There are some transit systems that are asking for a different distribution formula and others asking for additional monies for their systems as part of what they perceive as inequities in service amongst the fifteen RTAs or a need to offset revenues not being collected.

Although there seems to be a combined belief, this administration is more receptive to an increase to the RTAs funding. There is hesitancy to request monies for service that may not be able to be delivered due to the workforce shortages being experienced by all. It was agreed the best-case scenario is that no system receives less than what it currently receives and if that additional monies are allocated that all system should receive additional funds.

Preliminary figures indicate the Try-Transit Program funded by the Massachusetts Legislation had a positive impact on ridership for the month of December. Month to month ridership analysis for the calendar year show December ridership has a gain of 16%. Since the system usually loses ridership in December, mostly due to the end of semester at area colleges, this ridership gain can in part be attributed to the pre-paid fare specially in the greater Springfield area.

Paratransit ridership does not appear to be impacted nearly as much by the Try Transit program. In the last couple of years, paratransit ridership has trended slightly higher during December than in November. There is a slightly greater increase in paratransit ridership (6.3% in 2022 vs 2.3% in 2021). Some of this may be attributable to the Try Transit program but some is also likely due the expansion of Dial-A-Ride program service hours. In our region, cost of service is not such a deterrent to using the public transit system.

We need to be more effective in our service delivery including improved frequency, span of service, and weekend service in order to provide a service that people want to use and use it frequently.

The University of Massachusetts – Amherst Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning (LARP) Department as well as the Civil and Environment Engineering Department have completed the PV TRIPS Project. The Valley On Board Report was funded by an FTA grant under the Helping Obtain

Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Program. This report is a 20-year vision for an accessible, equitable and efficient network for PVTA. The findings and recommendations from this report will guide PVTA's transit service improvements for the next few years.

PVTA and PVPC have met with Springfield Councilor Justin Hurst as a follow up to a fare free proposal submitted by one of the City Council's Committees. We presented cost information for two options; full subsidy and 50% subsidy. Another meeting is to take place next week.

As part of the Healy-Driscoll Transition, I was asked to participate in the "How to Get Around Transition Committee". This Committee was tasked with refining and prioritizing the action items generated during the campaign with an emphasis to make progress on the transportation issues during the first 100 days. The T safety concerns as well as the West East rail service are in that list of issues.

PVTA's Title VI Specialist released the report of the investigation completed in response to a Title VI Complaint filed whereby an individual alleges racial bias and profiling. The report concluded there was no evidence of racial bias or profiling by the PVTA driver.

The Open Meeting Law for remote participation is set to expire on March 31, 2023.

Tim Sheehan: With the state implementing free rides, do you have an overall sense of what the impact is.

Sandra Sheehan: The data is still being reviewed. We have automatic passenger counters which show a preliminary 16% increase in fixed route ridership over November's numbers.

Tim Sheehan: Do you have an estimate of the price that 16% increase came with.

Sandra Sheehan: We are still looking into this.

Tim Sheehan: Can we keep a focus on this and report this information at the next meeting.

Sandra Sheehan: Absolutely.

J.M. Sorrell: For future planning, the new West to East rail system would be complementary to bus service and could potentially change things a lot. Has PVTA thought about this for planning purposes.

Sandra Sheehan: Yes. We'd be the first and last mile and will need to take passengers where they need to go whether that be for an event, to school, shopping, etc. We are working with the planning commission and gave a presentation for the type of resources and changes that would be needed, so this is something on our radar.

10. NEW BUSINESS

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

11. OLD BUSINESS

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

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion to adjourn.

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

Chairman Slaughter asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
Chicopee			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden			
Holyoke	Gloria Caballero-Roca		
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Sunderland			
Ware	John Carroll		
West Springfield	Allyson Manuel		
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 43.83

The meeting of the Advisory Board adjourned at 12:58 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

ATTEST: _____
BRANDY PELLETIER

Documents filed with Board Meeting packet:

- Roll Call Votes
- Advisory Board Minutes of 11-16-22
- PVTA's Title VI Analysis Report for Dial-A-Ride Service Enhancements

MINUTES APPROVED: March 22, 2023