

MINUTES OF PVTA'S  
PARATRANSIT COMMITTEE MEETING  
January 21, 2020

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Paratransit Committee of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority held a meeting on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 at 10:00 AM at the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority Administration Office located at 2808 Main Street in Springfield, MA.

**PRESENT:**

Members: Brian O'Leary, Belchertown; Carolyn Brennan, East Longmeadow; Steve Huntley, Chicopee; Mark Gold, Longmeadow;

**NOT PRESENT:**

Becky Moriarty, Hampden; Paula Dubord, Wilbraham;

A quorum being present, Chairman of the Paratransit Committee, Steve Huntley called the meeting to order at 10:04 A.M.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comments were made.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chairman Huntley asked for a motion from the Paratransit Committee to approve the meeting minutes of November 12, 2019.

**Motion:** Moved and seconded (Gold/O'Leary) to approve the meeting minutes of November 12, 2019.

Chairman Huntley asked if there was any discussion, hearing none, asked for all those in favor to say aye.

Motion passed by a unanimous vote.

**4. NEXT UPDATE**

Paul Burns, Director of Transit Operations, stated that our paratransit contractor, National Express Transit (NEXT), has recently had a change in management at their decision. The new management team has been working to address identified deficiencies and to make sure ongoing plans for improvement are in place.

NEXT continues to demonstrate consistent and steady improvement

- While on time performance was challenging in early December the current trend for the last 4 weeks shows improvement.
- Wait list issues have declined dramatically as have other trip issues and concerns.
- NEXT struggles with an ongoing driver shortage but has made steady progress in addressing this challenge over the last three months

## **5. PARATRANSIT RIDER'S COUNCIL UPDATE**

Paul Burns reported on the Paratransit Rider's Council (PRC):

- PRC continues to meet and work to develop by-laws
- Next scheduled meeting is Tuesday, January 21st
- The committee will elect officers soon and will begin to function independently by April 2020

## **6. DIAL-A-RIDE UPDATE**

Paul Burns reported the following:

We continue to find that we are denying a significant number of Dial-A-Ride trips each month. We are looking into the possibility of enacting several strategies to help reduce the number of denials and expand our ability to provide more trips. We are requesting feedback on the following strategies:

- Trip grouping by day
  - This change would include defining set days for particular types of trips. For example, shopping trips might only be scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays with Medical trips being scheduled only on Monday and Wednesday.
- Limiting trip purpose overall:
  - Dial-A-Ride could be restricted to only service for medical trips and grocery/pharmacy trips
- Limiting distance traveled for Dial-A-Ride trips to only one community or neighboring communities except for medical appointment trips.
- Creating circulators/deviated fixed routes expressly for serving senior riders. These would serve defined areas centered around medical or shopping centers in specific areas where population density would support this.

## **7. SCHOOL TRIPS – IMPACTS ON ADA**

Paul Burns reported the following:

Westfield special education has been using the paratransit service to provide transportation to students in its transition program. PVRTA has pushed back because we believe that we are not obligated to provide paratransit services to support school programming. We are continuing to provide the transportation to the program while we investigate our options and solicit legal opinions, however we believe that we are nearing a decision and wanted to keep the committee updated on the challenges this situation presents.

- The impact of providing trips to one program, while it creates expenses for PVRTA, would not by itself be overly burdensome. The challenge would be providing such a service across the

board if other districts requested it. We have already had inquiries from one other school districts, if all other districts in our service area attempted this type of service, the system would quickly be overwhelmed.

- Because these trips can be defined as agency trips, PVTA can charge the full cost of providing the service to the school department.
- There appears to be reasonable legal justification to deny trips to school systems that receive federal funding for Head Start and/or Special Education service. Federal regulations appear to prevent such programs from accessing public transportation for school service of which the transition program in question is one.

We are still reviewing our options in terms of how to respond but are considering the following:

- Denial of the transportation request on the grounds that it is outside the scope of what is required under ADA and FTA guidelines.
- Charging the district the full cost of the trips on the grounds that these are agency trips.
- Eliminating trips outside the ¾ mile limit for all agency trips

## **8. OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Huntley reported that there is no other business to discuss.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting of the Paratransit Committee adjourned (O'Leary/Gold) at 11:04 A.M.

**A TRUE RECORD**

**ATTEST:**

  
**BRANDY PELLETIER**

Documents filed with Paratransit Committee meeting packet:

- November 12, 2019 Paratransit Committee Minutes

**MINUTES APPROVED: 5-19-21**