

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BAT ADVISORY BOARD

May 25, 2023

In Attendance:

Mayor Robert F. Sullivan, Chair	Michael Lambert, Administrator
Frank Hegarty, Town of Avon	Linda Sacchetti, CFO
Dottie Fulginiti, Town of Easton	Glenn Geiler, Grants Manager
Robert Thayer, Consumer Rider Representative	Charles C. Stevenson, General Counsel
Mary Waldron, OCPC	Kathy Riddell, BAT
Charlie Kilmer, OCPC	David Kingsbury, Baystate Council for Blind
Shawn Bailey, OCPC	

Mayor Sullivan called the meeting to order. Mr. Lambert performed a roll call and a quorum was declared. Mayor Sullivan stated that based on Governor Healey's extension of temporary provisions allowing public bodies to continue to hold meetings remotely without a quorum of the public body physically present at a meeting location, on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Enhanced open meeting regulations were utilized for the meeting. The meeting was recorded and live streamed on BAT's YouTube video platform to provide a public forum/access. All legal requirements were met.

Mayor Sullivan asked if there were any public comments. David Kingsbury asked to make comments. He stated that his organization, the Baystate Council for the Blind, consists of members from across the state and they have made it part of their mission to align the 15 RTAs in the Commonwealth with compatible ADA application processes. The goal is to make travel easier across the Commonwealth via paratransit services. He stated that he lives in Stoughton and is a client of DIAL-A-BAT and expressed his appreciation for the service. Mr. Kingsbury would like to see the application process simplified and renewal process streamlined. He stated that when he last applied DAB/BAT required renewal of ADA passes every two years with a \$5 fee required, but had heard that the ID had since been eliminated. He said that FTA guidelines do not call for a fee whereas other RTAs and the MBTA's The Ride have different requirements for renewal. He is therefore asking for MARTA (Massachusetts Association of Regional Transit Authorities), including BAT, to streamline their ADA application and renewal process and to simplify the process of riding between RTA regions. He did not feel it should be necessary to set up accounts with two or more entities to transfer from one region to other RTA regions. He noted that he would be addressing the issue at the next MARTA meeting in June. He thanked the group for hearing his concerns and thanked BAT/DAB for their professionalism and that of the drivers and dispatchers.

Next on the agenda was a review of the minutes of the 4/13/23 meeting. Mr. Hegarty made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Motion was seconded by Ms. Fulginiti. A roll was called and all were in favor.

Number 4 on the agenda was a service update. Mr. Lambert informed the Board that BAT is seeing an upswing in ridership. March and April showed record ridership since the beginning of the pandemic. BAT is at about 78% of pre-COVID levels and hopes to get to 85% over the next six months to a year. Revenue miles and hours are consistent. BAT purposefully kept the standards and goals in the Performance Dashboard from 2019. Demand Response ridership is tracking closely with fixed route. DAB is working to improve its on-time performance as it has been impacted by fewer drivers but expects to have a full complement within the next month. Accidents per mile driven has been very good, as well as service disruptions due to maintenance issues. Maintenance has benefitted from the added time between runs. There has been an increase in complaints for the fixed route and most are related to one issue (buses had been moving before riders were seated) as discussed at the Board meeting last month. The drivers have been instructed in the correct procedures and complaints have diminished. Mr. Lambert thanked the mayor's office for their partnership in working through the issue.

Mr. Lambert provided a ridership update. Ridership is rebounding and part of the reason is because Bridgewater State University has been able to solidify its service. Even without BSU, ridership is strong. The Rockland Flex service has been doubling every other month. Seems to be plateauing now but BAT will do a formal launch of the service in the next few weeks.

Ms. Sacchetti provided the Board with an overview of BAT's DBE Goal. BAT must prepare a DBE Goal and methodology every three years. The Disadvantage Business Enterprise requirements were developed to provide a level playing field for competing for contracting opportunities. BAT's goal for Federal Fiscal Years 2024 – 2026 is 2.1% of BAT funds expended in U.S. DOT assisted contracts. The plan is available for review at the BAT office if anyone would like to review. Advertisement will be published in the Enterprise newspaper on May 31<sup>st</sup> and a minority newspaper, El Mundo. Ms. Sacchetti asked if anyone had any questions. There were none.

Mr. Lambert provided an overview of the complex landscape of state and federal funding. The federal funds have been solidified after a difficult but successful negotiation of the Boston Urbanized Area split agreement. BAT is utilizing a conservative approach to programming its federal relief funds. State funding is uncertain but seems positive. The Governor's budget provided a 9% increase over last year to account for inflation and shortfalls from the previous administration. Additionally, the RTAs will be able to compete for discretionary grants. BAT would likely apply for expanded night time and weekend service to benefit customers. The Senate and House budget has level funded the RTAs with the addition of funding from the Fair Share Fund. It is not clear on how much money that would provide at this time. Mr. Lambert asked if there were any questions. There were none.

Number 6 on the agenda was a report from the Audit and Finance Committee and Compensation Committee. Mr. Hegarty reported that the joint Committee met earlier today and they are recommending adoption of a salary increase for the Administrator and CFO of 3% as of 7/1/23 and 2% as of 1/1/24. Mr. Hegarty said the group was very supportive of the staff and wanted to compensate the leadership appropriately. A motion was made by Mr. Hegarty to provide the Administrator and CFO with a 3% increase on 7/1/23 and 2% increase on 1/1/24. Ms. Fulginiti seconded the motion. The mayor performed a roll call and all were in favor.

Under the Financial Update, Ms. Sacchetti directed the groups attention to the Amended FY23 Budget. She noted that BAT is underbudget and therefore the amended budget has been reduced by \$997,000. She pointed out the changes to several line items including fixed route and paratransit revenues, fuel, insurance and interest expense. She pointed out state contract assistance that is level funded with some additional funds in other state funding. She also noted the decrease in federal assistance and stated that BAT would utilize the federal assistance funds to balance its budget. A motion was made by Mr. Hegarty to accept the Amended FY23 Budget as presented. Ms. Fulginiti seconded the motion. A roll was called and all were in favor.

Next was an overview of the FY24 Draft Budget. Mr. Lambert explained that there were three elements effecting the FY24 budget including the settlement of the fixed route labor contract, inflation and increased service. Fuel, insurance and labor cost are increased due to the plan for increased service. The state contract assistance line item is level funded and additional funds were added to other state funding. A motion was made by Mr. Hegarty to accept the Amended FY24 Draft Budget as presented. Ms. Fulginiti seconded the motion. A roll was called and all were in favor.

Next was a presentation to the Board by Shawn Bailey of the Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC) of BAT's Title VI and Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP). Mr. Bailey gave the group an overview of the plan which must be updated every 3 years. He described the requirements and elements of the plan. He stated that OCPC published the plan on its website and in El Mundo and The Enterprise. They also conducted table events at the BAT Centre and collected comment cards from the public at these events. Mr. Bailey asked if anyone had any questions. There were no questions but Ms. Fulginiti complemented Mr. Bailey on his presentation. A motion was made by Mr. Hegarty to approve the Title VI and Limited English Proficiency Plan presented by OCPC and the motion was seconded by Ms. Fulginiti. The mayor called a roll and all were in favor.

Mr. Lambert provided the administrator's report. He began by thanking Mary Waldron and her staff for an excellent report and for all of her and her staff's assistance to both BAT and the City for their technical assistance.

The Rockland Flex service has been doubling ridership every other month since it began in December. This service could be a model to address the changes in workplace needs. Assistance to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift workers could be used via an Uber/Lyft/taxi subsidy for after-hour service needed to address that workforce. In regards to bus electrification, BAT has submitted two

applications for funding to support BAT's efforts toward zero emissions. BAT has five electric buses on order that will be delivered in about a years' time. Implementation of those buses will be closely monitored to decide what path BAT will take next. The long-term plan is expected to include solar panels and battery storage. The Board will be kept informed as updates become available.

Under Old Business, Mr. Stevenson offered some remarks regarding Mr. Kingsbury's comments. He stated that the RTAs in the Commonwealth all offer free fixed route bus service to individuals who have Mass Commission for the Blind IDs. He suggested that it might be an easy solution for the RTAs to accept the MCB IDs as eligibility for non-ADA dial-a-ride services. Mr. Lambert thanked Mr. Stevenson for his suggestion.

Under New Business, Ms. Waldron provided a comment about bike to work day that took place on May 17<sup>th</sup> hosted by the Old Colony Planning Council and BAT at BAT's Intermodal Centre. She acknowledged Mr. Bailey for his work on the program. She also wanted to point out that Ms. Fulginiti would be leaving OCPC next week and wanted to thank her for all of her accomplishments over the last few years, thank her for her advocacy for the region and congratulate her on her new position.

Next meeting will take place in October 2023.

Mr. Hegarty made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Fulginiti seconded the motion. A roll was called and all were in favor. Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Kathy Riddell, BAT

Documents Included in May 25, 2023 Advisory Board Package:

1. Meeting agenda
2. Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – April 13, 2023
3. Performance Dashboard
4. Fixed Route Ridership
5. BSU Ridership
6. DAB Ridership
7. Rockland Flex Ridership

8. DBE Goal
9. FY2023 Amended Budget
10. Resolution #266
11. FY2024 Draft Budget
12. Resolution #267