



## **Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) Advisory Board Meeting**

**Date:** Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Location:** Virtual Meeting via SRTA Cisco WebEx (10:30AM)

Call in Number: 1-408-418-9388; Access Code: 132 615 7784; Password: 899 35 687

**Purpose:** FY21 SRTA Advisory Board

### (1) Call to Order

**The Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 10:34AM EST.**

At the onset of the meeting, the Advisory Board Chair called for a brief moment of silence for Former City of New Bedford Mayor, Frederik M. Kalisz, to honor his work and contributions to the City.

### (2) Roll Call

**Present:**

City of New Bedford (Jennifer Clarke)	City of Fall River (Mayor Paul Coogan)
Town of Dartmouth (Cody Haddad)	City of Fall River (John Perry)
Town of Mattapoisett (Michael Lourenco)	Riders Representative (Dan Robillard)
Town of Fairhaven (Paul Foley)	

**Absent:**

Town of Acushnet	Town of Swansea
Town of Freetown	Town of Westport
Town of Somerset	ADA Representative

**Additional Attendees:**

Erik Rousseau, SRTA	Arthur Frank, General Counsel (SRTA)
Kristen Sniezek, SRTA	Maritza Aquino, SRTA
John LeBert, SRTA	Lilia Cabral-Bernard, SRPEDD
Shayne Trimbell, SRTA	Emily Ann Doors, SRPEDD
Nancy Rezendes, SRTA	

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(3) Approval of Minutes

**Motion:** The motion was made (Riders Representative) and seconded (Town of Dartmouth) to approve the minutes from the previous December (12/16/2020) SRTA Advisory Board Meeting.

**Discussion:** The Town of Fairhaven made note of technical difficulties that prevented attendance at the previous SRTA Advisory Board Meeting (December)

**Vote:**

**For:** Town of Dartmouth, City of Fall River, City of New Bedford, Riders Representative

**Abstain:** Town of Fairhaven, Town of Mattapoisett

**Status:** Motion Passes.

(4) Citizen's Participation

No Citizen's Participation.

(5) Civil Rights Update

*Title VI:*

The SRTA's Title VI Plan has been submitted and is under FTA review and awaiting concurrence.

*Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO):*

The EEO Plan for South Coast Transit Management (SCTM) has been submitted and is under FTA review and awaiting concurrence.

*Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE):*

The SRTA's DBE goals for FFY19-FFY21 has been submitted and is under FTA review and awaiting concurrence.

The SRTA's DBE Program Plan received concurrence in September 2017.

The most recent semi-annual report was submitted and has since received FTA approval. The next semi-annual report is due June 1, 2021.

*Environmental Justice:*

Environmental justice is a requirement that the SRTA must engage the public whenever there is a major project or route change.

The SRTA is constantly working to increase public participation, and if any public input is needed, it will be conveyed to the Board as part of this report.

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The Authority intends to schedule a public hearing regarding the service adjustments for the New Bedford Route 5 (NB5), New Bedford Route 6 (NB6), and Fall River Route 6 (FR6). This meeting is slated to take place in early 2021, however, more information will be forthcoming.

#### (6) Old Business

##### *Fare Discussion:*

As mentioned at previous Advisory Board Meetings, the SRTA is continuing to work toward reinstating the enforcement of fare collection, however, the original target for commencement on March 1, 2021 has been pushed to April 1, 2021. Additional information regarding the specifics of the step-up fare set is forthcoming as the Authority has recently engaged a third-party consultant with the purpose of strengthening content creation as well as the means and methods of information distribution.

Additionally, the Authority is in the process of generating a proposal for the subsequent fare set that will be effective upon completion of the 6-month step-up fare period (October 1, 2021). Currently, the intent is for the base cash fare to return to the pre-pandemic level of \$1.50, however, pricing for the various pass products will be modified to further encourage the use of Multi-Use passes and Stored Value (Magnetic Tickets or CharlieCards) in an effort to speed up the boarding process.

As questioned by the City of New Bedford, Mr. Rousseau shared that the vendor delay is related to the back-end programming, of which is largely associated with the adjustment(s) to the minimum thresholds. With this change, the minimum threshold to load value onto a Charlie Card will be reduced to \$2.00 at the farebox and reduced to \$.25 at the SOT and TVM locations. Similar to the aforementioned fare set modifications, the goal for this change is to incentive use of a SOT or TVM as opposed to a farebox for loading passes or value.

As questioned by the Riders Representative, the Authority will explore the possibility of implementing a credit card / debit card payment solution for the purchase of Demand Response booklets at the Terminals.

##### *COVID-19 Response (<http://www.srtabus.com/covid19>):*

The Authority continues to explore numerous health and safety measures to ensure – and also maximize – the well-being and safety of both the workforce and the passengers. This includes, but is not limited to, enhancements to driver protection, improvements to HVAC systems, switching to vinyl passenger grab straps, and more.

As mentioned by Mr. Rousseau, the Authority recently awarded a procurement for driver protective and safety barriers – to be installed on all fixed route buses – and will be installing temporary barrier solutions during the initial phase of the reinstatement of fare enforcement. Additionally, all buses have been retrofitted with MERV-13 filter elements within the HVAC system.

As always, the Authority has continued the various cleaning and sanitizing efforts – of which can be found in greater detail on the COVID-19 landing page on the Authority website.

In response to the City of New Bedford's inquiry concerning industry best practices regarding the HVAC / filtration systems in Public Transit, Mr. Rousseau stated that (currently) there are no best practices,

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however, the SRTA has been, in many ways, foremost in conducting independent testing – such as the previously mentioned MERV-13 filters as well as the piloting of an ultraviolet light cleaning / filtration system (SanUVaire).

## (7) New Business

### *FY21 6-Month Budget Update:*

Mr. Rousseau provided the following summary with regard to the FY21 6-Month Budget Update:

**Revenue:** *Earned revenue continues to run behind original budget, due primarily to the lack of fare collection. SRTA originally planned in this budget year to commence fare collection on October 1, however an upward trend in state COVID cases along with the development of a fare change pilot warranted a conscious decision to delay collection until Q4. Advertising and Monthly Parking Revenue are both meeting their revenue targets, despite the current economic conditions during COVID.*

**Expenses:** *After six months of activity, transit operational expenses are running within 1% as compared to this time last year, and currently under FY'21 budget projections. Although this is favorable, especially in consideration of the delay in revenue collection, we do anticipate that expenses will start to catch up in the next two quarters. Prior to December 31, fuel pricing remained stable and we continue to perform favorably vs. budget.*

**State/Federal Funding:** *CARES Act funding has proven to be critical to providing essential service to our communities. SRTA is using 50% more federal funding than last year to help offset the dip in fare revenue as well as additional sanitation measures to help keep our staff and ridership safe during the pandemic. After a five-month delay, the State budget was passed in December. As a result, SRTA now has an executed State Contract Assistance agreement for the current fiscal year and has received funding through Q3.*

*Management will continue to refine its projections for FY2021 year-end and are in the process of drafting next year's budget.*

As a brief reminder, the budget process typically begins with a 6-month update of the current fiscal year / FY2021 budget, followed by a presentation of the draft FY2022 budget (April 1), which is then followed by the approval of the final FY2022 budget (June 1).

The City of New Bedford questioned the source of the additional Federal funds, in which Mr. Rousseau pointed to the CARES Act funds that were allocated to the SRTA around late March / early April of 2020.

The Town of Mattapoisett posed two questions – the first being if the Authority presently has any CARES Act funds remaining, and the second being if the Authority is held to a December deadline or sunset. In response, Mr. Rousseau shared that the Authority does currently have funds remaining – of the initial \$21 million – and that the perception was that Transit is not held to the same deadline.

Note: The latter statement regarding any deadlines associated with the CARES Act funds will be validated.

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The Riders Representative questioned if there were any restrictions with regard to the CARES Act funds, which Mr. Rousseau explained that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has portrayed it as largely unrestricted, but not unlimited. Additionally, FTA guidance allows for the CARES Act funds to be utilized for both Operating and Capital expenses.

As questioned by the City of New Bedford, the 6-month budget update report will also be presented to the SRTA Audit and Finance Subcommittee, at the same time as the draft FY2022 budget.

(8) Logistics for the Next Advisory Board Meeting

Consistent with the budget process mentioned above, the next milestone for the Advisory Board would be the approval of the draft FY2022 budget, of which is needed by April 1. Therefore, the next Advisory Board Meeting for the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority will need to occur in March.

As a result of this, an email questionnaire will be circulated in order to determine the optimal date between March 30 and March 31.

(9) Adjournment

**The Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to adjournment at 10:56AM EST.**