



Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) Advisory Board Meeting

Date: Thursday, March 31, 2022

Location: Virtual Meeting via SRTA Cisco WebEx (2:00 PM)

Call in Number: 1-408-418-9388; Access Code: 2633 863 6091; Password 37232687

Purpose: SRTA Advisory Board Meeting

(1) Call to Order

The Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 2:07 PM EST.

(2) Roll Call

Present:

City of New Bedford (Jennifer Clarke)

City of Fall River (John Perry)

Town of Fairhaven (Paul Foley)

Town of Westport (Richard Brewer)

Riders Representative (Dan Robillard)

Absent:

Town of Acushnet

Town of Swansea

Town of Freetown

Town of Dartmouth

Town of Somerset

ADA Representative

Town of Mattapoisett

Additional Attendees:

Erik Rousseau, SRTA

Arthur Frank, General Counsel (SRTA)

Kristen Sniezek, SRTA

Lilia Cabral-Bernard, SRPEDD

John LeBert, SRTA

Amber Allen, SRTA

Shayne Trimbell, SRTA

Bob Espindola, Town of Fairhaven

(3) Approval of Minutes

Motion: The motion was made (Riders Representative) and seconded (City of Fall River) to approve the minutes from the previous SRTA Advisory Board Meeting held on February 24th, 2022.

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Discussion: N/A

Vote:

For: Town of Fairhaven, City of Fall River, City of New Bedford, Town of Westport, Riders Representative

Status: Motion Passes

(4) Citizen's Participation

No Citizen's Participation.

(5) Civil Rights Update

Title VI:

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

The SRTA's subsequent Title VI Plan is complete and can be submitted after this meeting.

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 current DBE Goal Plan has been submitted and is under FTA review and awaiting concurrence.

The most recent semi-annual report was submitted on December 1 and is under FTA review. The next semi-annual report is due June 1.

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

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.

Public Meeting:

Tuesday, April 12th at 6 PM – 7 PM at the Howland-Green Library To discuss options for service in the south end of New Bedford

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(6) Old Business

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

Mr. Rousseau stated that the Transit Security Administration (TSA) current mask mandate has been extended to April 18, 2022. Mr. Rousseau went on to express the federal government may end current restrictions in May.

(7) New Business

FY22 Budget Update:

Mr. Rousseau provided highlights of the progress to date on the FY22 budget. First, fare revenue is approximately \$100,000 more than the approved budget. Additionally, fuel has jumped significantly, roughly \$400,000 more than budget. Lastly, this projection also shows the increase in state contract assistance provided by the state legislature in late summer, which was unknown at the time of adopting the FY22 budget in May of 2021. We will need to approve the changes to the FY22 budget when we get closer to year-end.

FY23 Draft Budget:

Mr. Rousseau first explained the disparities between the New Bedford and Fall River operators i.e. positions. Prior to the implementation of the Paid family medical leave, we averaged 2 or 3 people out on long-term leave, now, we are around 10 people at any one time. This reflects what is really needed to cover the work and bring OT back down to the budgeted levels. The school tripper work in Fall River makes it more difficult to utilize part-time operators and the CBA is capped at a total of 10 part-timers which is better used in New Bedford. Additionally, the new positions and labor mean that supervisory staff requires an extra person to adequately cover the scheduled PTO of staff and reduce OT in this area.

Next, Mr. Rousseau described the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Negotiations for the next CBA have begun. The CBA expires June 30th this year. The 3% wage rate increase is a placeholder for this exercise. The operator was able to secure a favorable rate on the medical insurance renewal. Last, Mr. Rousseau highlighted the pension projections as they are lower than last year's for both union and non-union. This is an annual actuarial calculation based on a snapshot in time of performance. It is best to consider this drop a one-time occurrence since the market has largely been down since the end of November. The impact of today is generally a year behind, and we fund on a 20-year arch that is recalculated every year.

Finally, the overall budget assumptions by the operator are still conservative as it has been historically, but, Mr. Rousseau expressed that it is tighter than in past years.

Mr. Rousseau then began to speak about the Fiscal Year 2023 operating revenue. The 20% decrease in total revenues realized from what was projected in FY22 was not attributable exclusively to the effects of COVID. This is the expiration of the discretionary funding that covered the intercity express and Fairhaven night service. The projection for our fare revenue is not be expected to resume pre-pandemic levels in the coming year as ridership is not quite up to normal levels.

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Mr. Rousseau transitioned into the expense portion of the draft budget. The subtotals of transit operations arrived at a 3% increase over the previous year. Typically, we have experienced an annual increase of around 6% in the past. However a good renewal for healthcare, pension actuarial and the end of the pilot service, we are looking at an approximately 3% increase. To give context from a pre-pandemic budget, our original FY20 Draft budget had a 7% increase.

SRTA's administration costs reflected a 7% increase. Mr. Rousseau stated we have a staff position that has been open for most of the current fiscal year that we hope to fill soon; a second staff position was filled in FY22 but was open for some of the first half of the year. The anticipated Fed/State/Local share is shown as we know them today and includes the recovery funding highlighted in orange. The orange line is APRA funding we have in hand, ready to use for FY23. The state contract amount anticipated to be almost \$300k less in the coming FY is due to the Governor's budget that reflects a cut of SCA for RTAs. This might not be settled until the end of July.

In the final part of the presentation, the Net Cost of Service in Excess of Funding was reviewed. This is showing a deficit which is the lack of funding for the Fairhaven evening pilot service. We are working on options in hopes of keeping the service.

New Bedford Transit Enhancement:

Mr. Rousseau explained the City of New Bedford's new opportunity to develop a Business Improvement District or BID and how it will help the area around the New Bedford Terminal. He explained that the Authority has been invited to participate and it could be an excellent opportunity.

Motion: To authorize Erik Rousseau, Executive Director of SRTA, to endorse, execute and enter into the City of New Bedford Business Improvement District ("BID") petition, provided any and all assessments levied be covered on its behalf by the City of New Bedford. The motion was made by the Riders Representative and seconded by the Town of Westport.

Discussion: N/A

Vote:

For: Town of Fairhaven, City of Fall River, City of New Bedford, Town of Westport, Riders Representative.

Status: Motion Passes

(8) Logistics for the Next Advisory Board Meeting

As indicated on the agenda, the next Advisory Board Meeting for the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, April 28th at 2:00 PM.

(9) Adjournment

The Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to adjourn at 2:33PM EST.

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