



Southeastern Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Meeting

Date: Friday, November 20th, 2020

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

Call in Number: 1-408-418-9388; Access Code: 132 843 4633; Password: 663 797 46

Purpose: FY21 SRTA Advisory Board

(1) Call to Order

The Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 10:30AM EST.

(2) Roll Call

Present:

City of New Bedford (Jennifer Clarke)

City of Fall River (Mayor Paul Coogan)

Town of Fairhaven (Paul Foley)

Riders Representative (Dan Robillard)

Town of Dartmouth (Cody Haddad)

Absent:

Town of Acushnet

Town of Swansea

Town of Freetown

Town of Westport

Town of Mattapoisett

ADA Representative

Town of Somerset

Additional Attendees:

Erik Rousseau, SRTA

Arthur Frank, General Counsel (SRTA)

John LeBert, SRTA

Lilia Cabral, SRPEDD

Shayne Trimbell, SRTA

Nancy Rezendes, SRTA

(3) Approval of Minutes

Motion: The motion was made (Riders Representative) and seconded (Town of Dartmouth) to approve the minutes from the previous October (10/28/2020) SRTA Advisory Board Meeting.

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Discussion: The Town of Fairhaven asked that the message of support / concurrence of the Mask Policy – brought to the Board by the Riders Representative – be reflected in the minutes.

Note: The above statement was included with the meeting minutes under the discussion for Agenda Item Number 7 (New Business – FY20 Ridership) to emulate the original meeting flow.

Vote:

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

Motion Passes.

(4) Citizen’s Participation

No Citizen’s Participation.

(5) Civil Rights Update

Title VI:

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

EEO:

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

DBE:

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

SRTA’s DBE Program Plan received concurrence in September 2017.

The most recent semi-annual report has been submitted and is under FTA review and awaiting approval.

The next semi-annual report is due December 1, 2020.

Environmental Justice:

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

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

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

Mr. Erik Rousseau (Administrator) shared with the board some of the recent – and continuous – efforts that the Authority has undertaken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As suggested at the previous meetings, the Authority has been working with its Contract Operator, SCTM, to collate additional information – including cleaning / sanitizing protocols – that will be posted to the SRTA website in short time.

All COVID-19 related news can be found on SRTA’s website: <http://www.srtabus.com/covid19>

In addition, Mr. Rousseau shared that the Authority has adopted a revised Mask Order / Policy that, similar to the previous Mask Order / Policy, is consistent with Governor Baker’s COVID-19 Executive Order No. 55. The revised Mask Order / Policy states that all passengers are required to wear a mask at all times while present at a SRTA bus stop, terminal, or while in a bus. All destination signs say Masks Required.

Monitoring and enforcement of such has been with the assistance of local law enforcement – particularly at terminals – with the most severe option being to issue temporary no trespass order to passengers that are deemed unruly.

The City of New Bedford questioned if the Authority has experienced any challenges with SRTA/SCTM personnel, in which Mr. Rousseau stated has been fairly well received and followed, with one adjustment being for the Maintenance Department.

The Riders Representative questioned the Board’s role regarding the Mask Order / Policy – particularly if the Board has the right to enact a guideline that would require all patrons to wear a mask in order to utilize the SRTA services. Additionally, the Riders Representative shared the concern of lack of ability to properly social distance on a bus and, as such, communicated the advocacy for a “No Mask, No Ride” Policy.

The Town of Fairhaven shared that a similar Policy has been posted at the Fairhaven Town Hall, echoing that access will not be granted if a patron does not have a mask.

The City of New Bedford asked for clarification of the Board’s ability to enact such a provision and, as requested by the Town of Fairhaven, the SRTA Legal Counsel shared concern over enacting such a Policy as doing so could potentially result in Title VI / social justice issues – with regard to denying service – as well as the added risk – with regard to enforcement – that would then assumed by the Driver. Mr. Rousseau echoed the concerns of the SRTA Legal Counsel and as stated previously, the SRTA’s Mask Order / Policy is posted on all buses and destination signs are programmed to display “Masks Required” throughout the scroll.

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Motion: The motion was made (Riders Representative) and seconded (Town of Fairhaven) to include “No Mask, No Ride” as part of the SRTA’s Mask Order / Policy.

Discussion on the Motion:

The Town of Dartmouth endorsed the concerns of the SRTA Legal Counsel over implementing such Policy, emphasizing the risk assumed by the Driver.

The Town of Fairhaven questioned the availability of masks, of which Mr. Rousseau shared that the Authority currently have ample stock of masks at both terminals and on all buses. The Town of Fairhaven felt this would address the previously mentioned social justice issue.

The Riders Representative shared – for sake of comparison – that the City of Fall River Government Center does not allow access if a patron does not have a mask. Additionally, the Riders Representative pointed to the Rules of Conduct that are posted in all buses that permit the Driver to refuse service for a variety of reasons.

Amendment to the Motion: The original motion was amended (Town of Fairhaven) and seconded (Riders Representative) to revise the SRTA’s Mask Order / Policy to include the statement of “No Mask, No Ride,” in addition to the current statement of “Need a Mask, Just Ask” and reference the Governor’s COVID-19 Executive Order No. 55.

Discussion: N/A

Vote:

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

Against: Town of Dartmouth

Motion Passes.

Fare Discussion:

Mr. Rousseau presented the current SRTA Fixed Route Fare Policy (last updated in 2013) previously distributed with meeting materials and indicated a minor language modification to the policy being proposed. As required by the SRTA-MassDOT MOU Agreement, Mr. Rousseau advised the following language to be included:

“Fare modifications are subject to regular and recurring evaluations based on changes in rider demographics or needs of the service.”

In response to a question from the Town of Fairhaven as to whether the Authority offers a monthly or annual pass product, Mr. Rousseau confirmed the Authority does offer a rolling 31-day pass that can be uploaded to a CharlieCard for a full fare of \$40 and a reduced fare of \$28.

Additionally, the Town of Fairhaven questioned whether the Authority plans to offer any sort of discounted pass products in response to COVID-19. As discussed in previous meetings, the Authority is currently not

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enforcing fare collection and is actively working with the Fare Collection System Vendor – Scheidt & Bachmann – to implement a 6-month step-up program to ease back into the enforcement of fare collection.

Motion: The motion was made (Riders Representative) and seconded (Town of Fairhaven) to accept the added language to the SRTA Fixed Route Fare Policy. So voted.

Discussion: N/A

Vote:

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

Motion Passes.

(7) New Business

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan:

Mr. Rousseau presented the recently finalized SRTA's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP), as required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in the recent 49 CFR Part 673 of the Federal Register, copies of which were previously distributed with meeting materials. In the course of his presentation, Mr. Rousseau indicated the FTA required that the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) offer technical assistance to the Regional Transit Authorities (RTA), an opportunity for which the SRTA opted. As a result, technical assistance was provided by Cambridge Systematics – through MassDOT. While the PTASP's framework was largely derived from the FTA-provided template, the plan, itself, was ultimately reviewed by the FTA PTASP Technical Assistance Center (TAC) in September 2020.

As indicated in the PTASP, the Authority is required to conduct an annual review in February and later present the reviewed and/or revised Plan to the Board no later than the following July 20th.

There was a brief discussion by the Board as to the need for additional time for its review of the PTASP at which time it was clarified that a December vote would satisfy the requisite timeframe.

Motion: The motion was made (Riders Representative) and seconded (Town of Dartmouth) to table the acceptance of the SRTA's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan until the following December Advisory Board Meeting.

Discussion: The Town of Fairhaven questioned if the delay would impact the Authority, of which Mr. Rousseau shared the deadline for Board acceptance is December 31, 2020.

Vote:

For: Town of Dartmouth, Town of Fairhaven, City of New Bedford, Riders Representative

Null: City of Fall River

Motion Passes.

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The City of New Bedford asked that the City's questions and comments – received via email prior to the meeting – and the Authority's responses to such be distributed to the Board in advance of the December meeting.

Reiterated by the City of New Bedford, it was asked that any questions or concerns be shared in advance of the meeting to allow for adequate time to address.

(7) Logistics for the Next Advisory Board Meeting

The next Advisory Board Meeting for the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, December 16th at 2:00PM (EST), pending confirmation from the City of Fall River.

(8) Adjournment

The motion was made (Ridership Representative) and seconded (Dartmouth) to adjourn the meeting at 11:16AM EST.