



## **Southeastern Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Meeting**

**Date:** Thursday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
**Location:** Virtual Meeting via SRTA Cisco WebEx (10:30AM)  
Call in Number: +1-408-418-9388; Access Code: 796 201 998; Password: 76232998  
**Purpose:** FY20 SRTA Advisory Board

### (1) Call to Order

**The Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 10:37AM EST.**

### (2) Roll Call

**Present:**

City of New Bedford (Tabitha Harkin)	City of Fall River (John Perry)
Town of Fairhaven (Paul Foley)	Town of Dartmouth (Deborah Melino-Wender)
	Riders Representative (Dan Robillard)

**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)
Kristen Sniezek, SRTA	Paul Mission, SRPEDD
John LeBert, SRTA	Lilia Cabral, SPREDD
Shayne Trimbell, SRTA	

### (3) Approval of Minutes

The City of New Bedford asked that the website URL of the SRTA's COVID Response landing page (<http://www.srtabus.com/covid19>) be added under the *COVID-19 Response* section of Old Business.

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**The motion was made (Riders Representative) and seconded (Dartmouth) to add the URL to SRTA's COVID-19 Response landing page and approve the minutes from the previous April (04/22/2020) SRTA Advisory Board Meeting. So Voted.**

(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.

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):

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 next semi-annual report is due June 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.

The SRTA is currently working with MassDOT and AECOM (Consultant) to develop a 5-year Comprehensive Service Plan. The SRTA anticipates that a Survey/Questionnaire will be released (via Survey Monkey) in the next couple of weeks in order to gather public input.

(6) Old Business

*COVID-19 Response:*

Mr. Erik Rousseau (Administrator) and Mr. Shayne Trimbell (Director of Transit Planning) shared that the Authority is currently working to build the next fixed route schedule. The next schedule will be comparable to the current COVID-19 schedule – with some expansion (i.e. frequency) on heavier utilized routes in

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order to help with (i.e. reduce) passenger loads. In order to accomplish this, schedule changes will include the Fall River Route 2, New Bedford Route 1, New Bedford Route 2, and New Bedford Route 11, while alignment changes will include the New Bedford Route 2 and New Bedford Route 11.

Note: In developing this schedule, the Chamber of Commerce was briefed on the SRTA's plan and asked that they share any concerns that arise from their members.

In addition to schedule changes – of which will be publicized on the SRTA website – the Authority has begun working toward implementing an express service between the City of New Bedford and the City of Fall River. This proposed service would utilize Highway 195 East/West to travel between the Cities – with stops only at each Terminal – and would allow for roughly 20 minute headways.

Additionally, Mr. Rousseau shared that, in accordance with the Governor's facial-covering guidance, the Authority has since acquired 20,000 disposable masks and has ordered 5,000 cloth masks that will be available to be distributed to passengers in need.

The City of New Bedford questioned how the Authority is or will be encouraging social distancing on revenue vehicles (stickers, fliers, etc.) to help ensure the safety of Operators and passengers. At this time, the Authority is working to establish the most appropriate way / method to promote social distancing – which will be a topic at the next RTA Council meeting.

The Riders Representative questioned if additional buses will be needed to meet 30 minute headways on the Fall River Route 2 (North Main Street), of which Mr. Rousseau confirmed the need for additional buses will be met.

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

#### *FY20 Budget Update:*

Mr. Rousseau presented the FY20 Budget Year End Projection, highlighting that the largest unknown for this projection is centered on the notion of hazard duty pay – of which is currently with the Legislation. Should the Legislature approve the hazard duty pay reform, the Authority would be responsible for approximately \$700,000 to \$750,000 in back pay (retro).

Upon end result of this ruling, the Authority will recast the FY20 Budget Year End Projection and present to the Board.

Note: At this time, there is separate language backing hazard duty pay for both State Employees and Private Employees. The Authority's Contract Operator – First Transit / South Coast Transit Management – is of the private sector.

#### *Penultimate FY21 Budget:*

Included with the meeting materials, Mr. Rousseau presented the FY21 (Penultimate) Draft Budget, of which was recently presented to the SRTA Advisory Board Audit and Finance Sub-Committee.

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Highlights of this Draft Budget include the assumption of full service beginning on July 1, the addition of 3 full-time Operators, an increased pension liability due to a recent change in the assumed rate of return (6.75% to 6.50%), and a 3% increase in wages – of which the latter is contractual obligated.

Similar to the FY20 Budget Year End Projection, the most notable unknowns are the reintroduction of service and the reintroduction of enforcing fare collection. As mentioned in previous Board meetings, the Authority is currently planning to moderately and strategically phase in service throughout the Summer – with the goal of returning to a variation of full service. As also mentioned in previous Board meetings, the Authority is currently forecasting that enforcement of fare collection will resume by October 1, however, this will be dependent on several factors and, as mentioned by Mr. Rousseau, is possible that the suspension of this enforcement is extended beyond that date.

The Town of Dartmouth questioned the impact of Cash (Fare) Revenue as compared to the overall budget. In a normal or optimal scenario, Cash (Fare) Revenue would account for roughly 14 to 15% of the overall budget.

The City of New Bedford questioned the availability of the CARES Act Funding, of which the Authority has since written the applicable Grant and successfully completed two (2) operating drawdowns for FY20. In addition, the Authority has opened discussions regarding suitable capital acquisitions under CARES, such as Operator barriers and enhanced air filtration systems.

Furthermore, Mr. Rousseau shared that it is possible – and anticipated – that amount of State Contract Assistance (SCA) will decrease as the State looks to pass their budget. It is estimated that this number will drop to roughly \$80 million – of which would be split amongst the Massachusetts RTA's. This shortfall, as questioned by the Town of Dartmouth and the City of New Bedford, would presumably be covered with CARES Act Funding.

The City of New Bedford questioned the impact of a potential decrease in State Contract Assistance, in which Mr. Rousseau shared that such a decrease would permit a lesser focus on the addition of any new service.

**The motion was made (Dartmouth) and seconded (Riders Representative) to approve the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority Fiscal Year 2021 Budget of \$22,250,785. So Voted.**

*FY20 Discretionary Grant:*

As discussed at previous Board meetings, the Authority was recently awarded a Discretionary Grant that was originally intended to fund an abbreviated (August – December) pilot of Fixed Route Sunday Service. Given the current circumstances, the Authority has elected to delay adding any new service at this time and, as an alternative, has asked MassDOT to pivot these funds to the aforementioned Express Service (New Bedford – Fall River).

The Town of Fairhaven questioned if this intercity (New Bedford – Fall River) express service would be synchronized with RIPTA's Fall River – Providence Service, of which Mr. Shayne Trimbell shared that the intent and goal of this service is to eventually align with the RIPTA service.

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The City of New Bedford questioned the frequency of this proposed service, of which Mr. Trimbell shared would begin with an hourly headway, operating Monday through Saturday.

The Riders Representative and the Town of Fairhaven questioned the duration of this proposed service, of which is slated to operate throughout the FY21 fiscal year (July 1 to June 30).

Discussions between the Authority and MassDOT regarding this alternative are ongoing – with the latest revolving around potential performance metrics and benchmarks. As questioned by the City of New Bedford, should these discussions evolve into a Contract, the Authority would be conducting the necessary Public Outreach.

#### (7) Logistics for the Next Advisory Board Meeting

The next SRTA Advisory Board meeting will be tentatively scheduled for either June 17<sup>th</sup> or June 26<sup>th</sup>, depending on Board availability. These potential dates will be circulated to the Advisory Board Members (via email) to finalize.

In line with recent meetings – and given the current circumstances – this meeting is scheduled to take place as a remote / WebEx meeting.

#### (8) Adjournment

**The motion was made (Dartmouth) and seconded (Riders Representative) to adjourn the meeting at 11:21AM EST.**