

May 8, 2019

GB Public Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes

Members present: John Kilner, Garfield Reed, Anne Condon, Pat Konecky, Tate Coleman, Also, Bill Cooke, GB Selectboard member not present but in attendance via telephone.

Others in Attendance: Bruce Bernstein, George McGurn, Rene Wood

1. We filled several positions for the committee

Vice Chair, Ann Condon (temporary)

Secretary, Ann Condon next meeting, task will rotate

Public Relations Officer, Tate (temporary)

2. Tate summarized the Route Optimization Initiative Report

Last significant change in BRTA service about ten years for minimal change and 20 years before that. Rene mentioned that a pilot service to Sheffield met some needs, especially GB/Pittsfield express, but was stopped, multiple problems.

Tate conducted public input sessions, and surveys were distributed both hard copy and on-line with over 400 responses received. Following analysis of responses, a summary of responses organized. Some new routes formulated as a result of input. Approximately 70 attendees to the hearings. Comments mostly positive with extensive support for express route and extending times into evenings. There was also interest in demand-response, especially in Egremont and Sheffield.

53% respondents had never taken BRTA bus. Greatest percentage who do use it under 1X per month. Electric buses (mostly hybrid used now) interest. Rene - this came up at recent BRTA meeting as well.

Tate is preparing for grant writing for support for Egremont and Sheffield demand-response service. Demand response costs about ½ cost of fixed route. Egremont fixed route had been estimated at \$48,000. Sheffield similar. Changing to demand response and getting a grant would cut community cost to approximately \$15,000 per town.

Rene discussed the issues related to transporting people to necessary medical treatments especially at BMC and the many medical offices near the BMC campus in Pittsfield. She used Sheffield as an example; since the senior center van is not generally used for transporting seniors to Pittsfield for such appointments, volunteer drivers are used. This occurs in most south county towns. Transportation issues have been discussed in her Patient and Family Advisory Council meetings at Fairview. She noted that she was speaking on her own and that the proper conversations with Fairview and BHS have not occurred; she was interested in the Committee's response. Given that the Committee was open to additional suggestions, Rene suggested considering an express bus to start with a loop to BMC and then return after the route - so two loops around to BMS. Any route would start as a pilot with input needed from several sources

before this could go forward. Bruce pointed out that we also need to work with Drs, inform them about transportation problems, and keep certain hours for people with transportation issues. Rene added that if Fairview and BMC were open to this, there may be some level of funding from their funds devoted to community services. Tate and John pointed out that these goals could be accomplished using Great Barrington loop and GB - Pittsfield 101X express. They explained that the circulator can be picked up at Fairview to Big Y or main st to go to Pittsfield. In Pittsfield there's a connection at the intermodal - the 16 bus (plus others). Staff at senior centers can help individuals coordinate rides. Given the Committee's response, Rene will have an initial conversation with Fairview Hospital to see if there is interest. Tate will look at a possible amendment to the Route Optimization to maximize assistance for those needing transportation for medical appointments.

Ann proposes we can have 10 days to respond on-line for approval of Route Optimization Study. Rene proposes we authorize chair to submit draft report. Both approved.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:00. The next meeting will be scheduled on-line.

Electronically Signed by Tate Coleman, Committee Chair