Great Barrington Public Transportation Advisory Committee
7/6/2019
Meeting Minutes (FINAL)

The meeting was called to order by Chair Tate Coleman at 3:45pm; a quorum was present. The meeting sign in sheet is attached. Copy of the Route Optimization Report was made available to attendees. R. Wood volunteered to take the minutes of the meeting.

I. Approval of 6/27/19 minutes: Following introductions, action on the minutes was deferred.

II. BRTA Night Service Update: This, regarding the last bus connection from BCC to the Great Barrington bus, was reviewed. R. Wood provided an update on the email sent from Bill Cooke and R. Wood to R. Malnati and S. Ervin on 6/28/19, as agreed upon at the last meeting and his response email of 7/3/19. The matter concerns a DOT sponsored year long pilot that appears to have been changed by BRTA after the pilot was run for a 6 month period. R. Malnati’s email included citing very limited ridership and shift implications and costs. Discussion ensued wherein several persons present discussed the importance of the service, including the last bus, corresponding to the end of the last BCC courses for the night, being able to connect with last bus service to Great Barrington. Actions: 1) BRPC will send a letter to BRTA on this matter; T. Coleman will request a letter from Beth Wallace of BCC; and 3) R. Wood will send an email response, which will not represent the Committee, asking for the Advisory Board to meet in July and review this and other pilot route matters, as was requested in the original email. Others present were asked to take whatever action they wished to take.

III. Route Optimization: T. Coleman said they are still waiting on cost estimates from BRTA and cited the letter from Great Barrington Town Manager M. Prehenski to R. Malnati. Matter was deferred.

IV. BRPC: Anuja Koirala, Principal Transportation Planner, gave an update on all the transportation related activities and committees BRPC works with. She also went over a number of the transportation plans/programs BRPC works on and explained how they interrelate; involve bus and RTA issues; and participation opportunities available for interested parties, such as members of this Committee. The Regional Transportation Program was noted as being held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. Much of this information was new to Committee members and others in attendance.

V. Green Streets Initiative: While deferred to the next meeting, T. Coleman gave a brief overview noting its origins in the Boston area. Goal is to walk/ride on the last Friday of the month. Discussion of establishing a western MA division of this group and P. McDonough, Age Friendly Berkshires Coordinator, noted a possible tie in with this effort.

VI. Mobility Issues for Persons with Disabilities: T. Coleman discussed the situation of a person, not a senior, who has disabilities and the expense of SBETC at $7 round trip fare. Inaccessibility and non-ADA compliant GB bus stops reviewed, Stanley Park being cited. It was recommended such issues be reviewed with Great Barrington’s Commission on Disability, the Town Planner and Manager.

VII. BRTA Advisory Board Update: no update.

VIII. RTA Advocates Coalition Update / Final RTA Budget: RTA Advocates Coalition is a separate group with members of this Committee, staff from various BRPC programs, such as P. McDonough, and other groups in the Berkshires. Discussion ensued of possible tie in with Western MA Transportation Conference / Summit in Pittsfield and Amherst. BEROOG was reviewed. Next meeting will be 3rd Thursday in September. A. Koirala is co-chair.

Final MA RTA budget has not been set. House and Senate each have a set budget number ($87 M versus $88M, but differences in discretionary funding. House has none; Senate has $4M. FY19 was base of $82M with $2M through Memos of Understanding and $4M discretionary.
The Chairman added a discussion of possible Best Practices for the Committee, based on the Transportation Advisory Committee Best Practices; Town of Amherst, MA. Feb. 2016. R. Wood raised the question of the mission statement of the Committee and whether it is duplicating existing committees.

A. Koirala provided an overview of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), part of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); the southern district representative is Selectman Jim Lovejoy of Mt. Washington. She noted that the Committee could become a member.

R. Wood asked about the Committee's relationship with BRTA. It was explained the Committee formed to focus on route updates and optimization; want to keep route optimization cost neutral. Services out of date and South County members of BRTA Advisory Board invite to, or are on, the Committee, so are kept informed.

The Mission Statement for the Committee is as follows:

This Committee is charged with regularly evaluating the needs and desires of South County residents regarding public transportation services through surveys and public input meetings, and provides recommendations on how to maximize service frequency in areas with the most ridership potential in addition to providing widespread coverage. The Committee reports to the Town Manager at least once a year.

Senator Hinds, Representative Smitty and R. Malnati had been invited to the meeting, but not in attendance.

IX. Bus Stop Locations in Great Barrington: deferred to next meeting.

X. Next Meeting's Secretary: T. Coleman asked for a volunteer as this position rotates amongst the membership. No one volunteered, though several members were absent. R. Wood volunteer if no one volunteers and she is able to attend the next meeting.

XI. Citizen's Speak: None

XII. Adjournment: R. Wood made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by A. Condon, and unanimously passed. The meeting adjourned at 4:43pm.

Next meeting: Date not set.

Meeting Materials:
Meeting Agenda 7-8-19
Meeting Sign-In Sheet
Route Optimization Report
Email chain from Bill Cook to Sheila Eirvin and Robert Malnati, dated 6/28/19 at 3:44pm and response from R. Malnati to Bill Cook and Rene Wood, on 7/3/19 at 4:08pm
Transportation Advisory Committee Best Practices; Town of Amherst, MA. Feb. 2016

Respectively submitted by Rene C. Wood Town of Sheffield Delegate to Committee
Electronically Signed by Tate C. Coleman, Chairman