



Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) Advisory Board Meeting

Date: Thursday, March 21, 2024
Location: Virtual Meeting via SRTA Microsoft Teams (2:00 PM)
Call in Number: 1-929-523-2910; Access Code: 637 984 637#
Purpose: SRTA Advisory Board Meeting

(1) Call to Order

The Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 2:04 PM EST.

(2) Roll Call

Present:

City of New Bedford (Jennifer Clarke)	City of Fall River (Bridget Almon)
Town of Dartmouth (Chris Vitale)	Town of Mattapoisett (Michael Lorenzo)
Town of Westport (Richard Brewer)	ADA Representative (Dan Robillard)
Town of Fairhaven (Paul DiGiuseppe)	

Absent:

Town of Acushnet	Town of Freetown
Town of Somerset	Town of Swansea
Riders Representative	

Additional Attendees:

Erik Rousseau, SRTA	Arthur Frank, General Counsel (SRTA)
Kristen Sniezek, SRTA	John LeBert, SRTA
Shayne Trimbell, SRTA	Corey Hebert, SRTA
Maritza Aquino, SRTA	Michelle Tavares, SRTA
Lisa Estrella	

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(3) Approval of Minutes

Motion: The motion was made (ADA Representative) and seconded (Town of Dartmouth) to approve the minutes from the previous SRTA Advisory Board Meeting held on October 26, 2023.

Discussion: N/A

Vote:

For: Town of Dartmouth, Town of Mattapoisett, City of New Bedford, Town of Westport, ADA Representative

Status: Motion Passes

(4) Citizen's Participation

David Motta, the program director of Mercy Meals in New Bedford shared that some participants of Mercy Meals had planned to participate in this meeting to share about their experience with Sunday Service.

Corinn Williams, the Executive Director of the Community Economic Development Center (CEDC) and a resident of New Bedford, expressed the importance of continuing the Fare Free and Sunday Service pilots. Many of the people served by the CEDC and volunteers are transit dependent and utilize the Sunday Service and the Fare Free pilots to travel to the CEDC.

Lisa Davis, a resident of New Bedford and a rider, expressed how the Fare Free and Sunday Service pilots have positively impacted her life. The Sunday Service has allowed greater flexibility to complete weekend plans and the free fare has allowed for greater financial saving.

Camilo Viveiros, an employee of the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth in the Labor Education Center emphasized the importance of the fair share amendment and that it can impact public transportation. Mr. Viveiros also expressed gratitude for the Fare Free and Sunday Service pilots which have expanded access to public transportation for the community.

(5) Civil Rights Update

Title VI:

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

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO):

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

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Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE):

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

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 1st and is under FTA review. The next semi-annual report is due June 1st.

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 Hearings / Meetings:

In early May, the SRTA will hold public meetings in Fall River and New Bedford to solicit input on recent service changes and pilots.

(6) Old Business

None.

(7) New Business

FY25 Draft Budget

Mr. Rousseau presented highlights of the Transit Operations Budget Assumptions. Due to the Sunday Service pilot, it is assumed that this service will continue in fiscal year 2025 and therefore demand a larger number of employees for the operator, South Coast Transit Management.

Mr. Brewer asked if the nearly 16% increase for the total transit operations budget is largely related to the Fare Free and Sunday Service pilots. Mr. Rousseau explained that the Sunday Service pilot itself would represent 13% of the total increase. The remaining increase would be traditional and expected increases year over year.

Mr. Rousseau continued presenting the draft budget and explained that it assumes the fare free pilot will expire at the end of fiscal year 2024 and that the draft budget assumes fare collection would resume on July 1, 2024. The governor of Massachusetts has expressed the desire for level funding for the regional transit authorities in the Commonwealth.

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Ms. Almon asked if the local assessments in the draft budget are already reflected in the governor's cherry sheet. Mr. Rousseau explained that the draft budgetary number for local assessments is what is anticipated if the advisory board elects to extend Sunday Service as a permanent offer. The number reflected in the fiscal year 2025 draft budget would not impact local assessments until fiscal year 2027.

Mr. Brewer asked for further explanation of the increase in local assessments in the draft budget. Mr. Rousseau explained that local assessment can only increase 2.5% if there are no changes to service in the community. Since Sunday Service would be a new service, 50% of the net cost can be allocated to local assessments. This would be the major reason for the increase in local assessments in the draft budget.

Mr. Lorenzo asked if the increase of federal grants is a known fixed number or if it is what is hoped to be received. Mr. Rousseau explained that the federal grants are allocated to the SRTA by formula and that the SRTA is not compelled to spend all the federal grant funding in a fiscal year.

Mr. Robillard asked for clarification of the SRTA's ability to increase local assessments if there are no service changes. Mr. Rousseau confirmed that the SRTA does have the ability to increase local assessments by 2.5% if there are no service changes. Mr. Robillard further asked if there have been any other service changes. Mr. Rousseau explained that the last time there was a sizable service change that resulted in an increase of more than 2.5% for local assessments was when the intercity route was updated to half-hour service. That service change resulted in an increase in local assessments of 50% of the net cost of the service. Mr. Robillard asked about the current ridership for Sunday Service. Mr. Rousseau stated that current ridership for Sunday Service is about 75% of the ridership for current Saturday Service.

(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 on April 25, 2024, at 2:00 PM.

(9) Adjournment

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