



Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) Advisory Board Meeting

Date: Thursday, April 29th, 2021
Location: Virtual Meeting via SRTA Cisco WebEx (10:30AM)
Call in Number: 1-408-418-9388; Access Code: 132 272 9706; Password: 437 76 386
Purpose: FY21 SRTA Advisory Board

(1) Call to Order

The Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 10:31AM EST.

(2) Roll Call

Present:

City of New Bedford (Jennifer Clarke)	City of Fall River (Mayor Paul Coogan)
Town of Fairhaven (Paul Foley)	City of Fall River (John Perry)
Town of Dartmouth (Cody Haddad)	Town of Mattapoisett (Michael Lourenco)
Riders Representative (Dan Robillard)	

Absent:

Town of Acushnet	Town of Swansea
Town of Freetown	Town of Westport
Town of Somerset	ADA Representative

Additional Attendees:

Erik Rousseau, SRTA	Arthur Frank, General Counsel (SRTA)
Kristen Sniezek, SRTA	Lilia Cabral-Bernard, SRPEDD
John LeBert, SRTA	
Shayne Trimbell, SRTA	
Maritza Aquino, SRTA	

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(3) Approval of Minutes

Motion: The motion was made (City of Fall River) and seconded (Town of Mattapoisett) to approve the minutes from the previous March (03/31/2021) SRTA Advisory Board Meeting.

Discussion: N/A

Vote:

For: City of Fall River, City of New Bedford, Town of Mattapoisett

Abstain: Riders Representative

Status: Motion Passes

Note: The Town of Dartmouth and the Town of Fairhaven joined the meeting at approximately 10:34AM EST.

(4) Citizen's Participation

No Citizen's Participation.

(5) Civil Rights Update

Title VI:

The 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):

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

The SRTA's DBE Program Plan received concurrence in September 2017.

The next semi-annual report is due June 1, 2021.

Environmental Justice:

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

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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.

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 currently targeted for late June, however, more information will be forthcoming.

As inquired by the Riders Representative, the Authority's recommendation will be to reinstate the Fall River Route 6 (FR6). As a follow-up, and related to the FR6, the Riders Representative shared the desire for 30-minute service to Walmart.

(6) Old Business

Fare Discussion:

As mentioned at previous meetings, the Authority did proceed with the reinstatement of fare enforcement by way of a 6-month step up fare set. The present 6-month step up fare set period began (as targeted) on April 1 and will be in place until September 30. During this time, the Authority will be analyzing the data as well as assessing the previous (pre-pandemic) fare set – the latter of which would be effective October 1.

Shared at previous meetings, one of the Authority's objectives with fare set modifications would be to reduce cash collection(s) when boarding in an effort to expedite the boarding process and minimize the dwell time. Amongst others, one possible solution is to modify the current CharlieCard transfer policy by extending the time limit to 120 minutes and allowing for transfers in any direction (inbound or outbound). The current transfer policy – which would remain for Cash transfers – provides a time limit of 90 minutes and limits transfers to only inbound to outbound.

As questioned by the City of New Bedford, the Authority had not intended to institute any modifications (i.e. transfer policy changes) as pilot services, however, the possibility of doing so will be explored.

In response to the Riders Representative inquiry regarding the initial Access Pass fee (\$5), Mr. Rousseau reiterated the Authority's somewhat recent change to load the initial Access Pass fee (\$5) as Stored Value – effectively making the card free of charge. After further questioning, the Authority will investigate if said fee is being viewed as a barrier.

Both the Riders Representative and the Town of Fairhaven expressed support of the potential transfer policy modifications, as mentioned above, being fully adopted.

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

Amid the several different sets of guidance that have recently been released – and with more to come – the Authority intends on maintaining current policies, including the mask policy.

Additionally, the Authority continues to work on various COVID-response items such as the permanent barrier solutions as well as the possibility of 20% fresh air retrofit driver defroster kits.

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As questioned by the Riders Representative, the Authority has maintained all cleaning and sanitization protocols.

Note: These protocols will be in place for the foreseeable future.

The Town of Fairhaven questioned the slight ridership decrease in the previous quarter (January through March), of which Mr. Rousseau stated that January and February are typically light ridership periods, which is most often due to seasonality. Further, Mr. Rousseau shared that the Authority is anticipating a slight decrease in April ridership due to the reinstatement of fare enforcement.

The City of New Bedford shared the thought of providing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic ridership comparisons to the Board.

FY22 Draft Budget:

To begin, the City of New Bedford provided a brief refresher of past Budget activities and upcoming Budget activities. As mentioned, after presentation to the SRTA Audit and Finance Subcommittee, the Authority will be presenting the final SRTA FY2022 Budget to the Advisory Board at the May meeting, with the objective of approving by June 1.

Additional information regarding the SRTA FY2022 Budget will be forthcoming, however in the interim, Mr. Rousseau shared that the House Budget initially accounted for a Regional Transit Authority line item of \$90.5 million in operating funds and \$3.5 million in discretionary funds – effectively level funding the RTA's. Since then, an amendment to the House Budget has been accepted, of which would shift the \$3.5 million in discretionary funds to base operating funds to ultimately be distributed by formula. Should the amendment pass, the Authority would see an increase of approximately \$280,000 in State Contract Assistance (SCA).

As questioned by the City of Fall River, the potential increase in State Contract Assistance (SCA) would cover the previously noted deficit of the SRTA FY2022 Draft Budget. Correspondingly, the Authority continues to investigate different, resourceful ways to utilize CARES Act funds. Further, Mr. Rousseau shared that the fare collection data in April will be vital to the fare projections for the SRTA FY2022 Budget.

The City of Fall River questioned if CARES Act funds were being used to fund other COVID-related initiatives such as the 20% fresh air retrofit driver defroster kits, of which Mr. Rousseau confirmed.

As questioned at the previous (March) meeting, the City of New Bedford requested a status update on potential funds for the Authority through the American Recovery Plan (ARP). Currently, the Authority is slated to receive approximately \$250,000 to \$260,000 through the New Bedford UZA, however, a MassDOT split/distribution letter is pending. Consistent with the guidance, the Authority is being encouraged to utilize ARP funds for operating funds.

Furthermore, the MA RTA's – including SRTA – are continuing to work with MassDOT on renewal of the bi-annual Memorandum of Understandings (MOU). More information on these discussions should be available in the coming weeks.

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(7) New Business

No New Business.

(8) Logistics for the Next Advisory Board Meeting

As indicated on the agenda, the next Advisory Board Meeting for the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority will be held on Thursday, May 27th at 10:30AM. Consistent with past meetings, this meeting will be held remotely.

(9) Adjournment

The Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to adjournment at 10:57AM EST.

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