

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BAT ADVISORY BOARD

April 15, 2021

In Attendance:

Mayor Robert Sullivan, City of Brockton	Shawn Bailey, Old Colony Planning Council
Frank Hegarty, Town of Avon	Michael Lambert, Administrator
Michael Dutton, Town of Bridgewater	Linda Sacchetti, Chief Financial Officer
Stanley Zoll, Town of Stoughton	Kelly Forrester, Manager of Transit Operations
Dottie Fulginetti, Town of Easton	Charles C. Stevenson, General Council
Mary Waldron, Old Colony Planning Council	Kathy Riddell, BAT
Charles Kilmer, Old Colony Planning Council	

Chairman Sullivan welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting. He stated that based on Governor Baker's declaration of a state of emergency on March 12, 2020 enhanced open meeting regulations were being utilized for the meeting. The meeting was being recorded and live streamed on BAT's YouTube video platform to provide a public forum/access. All requirements have been met.

Chairman Sullivan welcomed everyone, a roll call was performed and a quorum was declared.

Chairman Sullivan asked if there were any public comments. There were none. Chairman Sullivan asked if there were any changes or questions regarding the minutes of the January 28, 2021 meeting. Mr. Lambert noted that Mr. Stevenson should be added to the attendees as he was at the meeting of January 28<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Sullivan asked for a motion to approve the Advisory Board Minutes of September 24, 2020 reflecting the addition of Mr. Stevenson. A motion was made by Mr. Dutton and seconded by Ms. Fulginetti to accept the minutes as presented with the noted change. A roll call was performed and all were in favor.

Next on the agenda was a service update. Mr. Lambert informed the Board that employee safety was a high priority. He stated that presently there were two employees out because of close contact with a COVID positive person or had tested positive with mild symptoms. All employees that wished to receive a vaccine will be fully vaccinated by Friday afternoon. This brings the vaccination rate of the workforce to about 75%. He sincerely thanked Mayor Sullivan, the Brockton Board of Health and the Neighborhood Health Center for the smooth and efficient disbursement of shots. He said the workforce felt valued by the efforts and commitment of the Mayor and his team. The Mayor stated that he was glad to collaborate.

Under operational changes, Mr. Lambert says he see positive changes in operations with warmer weather. After a decrease of around 50% during the past year for fixed route ridership, there was an increase in March. BAT anticipates that April will also improve. The decrease was generally the same as the ridership statistics of the MBTA and bus systems across the nation. Paratransit service was also consistent with the decrease due in large part to the closure of day programs and

customers comfort levels. As workshop and agency trips open back up BAT expects an uptick in ridership over time.

BAT's Comprehensive Regional Transportation Plan (CRTP) is now ready for release for public comment. Mr. Lambert provided the group with a slide presentation of the outcome of the project. The process of developing the plan took approximately one year and was developed by ADCOM. All fifteen (15) RTAs developed CRTPs with ADCOM under the supervision of MassDOT, thus providing the same format and industry wide best practices. The plan identified six (6) core goals for BAT:

- Preserve existing service,
- Support Brockton's economic vitality and environmental health,
- Employ innovative approaches to best serve member communities,
- Create a strong connection to greater Boston,
- Ensure all service changes are equitable and consider BAT's diverse customer and employee base, and
- Use technology wisely to improve service.

There are thirty-five (35) specific recommendations which will provide a roadmap for the next five years based on ridership, funding availability and demand. Chairman Sullivan asked if there were any questions on the presentation. Ms. Fulginetti applauded BAT's placing equity front and center and including employees in the process. Chairman Sullivan echoed Ms. Fulginetti's sentiments.

Under Financial Update, Ms. Sacchetti gave a presentation of the FY21 Budget with data through February. Revenues are underbudget as growth has been slower than anticipated. She stated that it appears in March there is a rebound of about \$61,000 over February's numbers. Expenses are down over \$2,000,000. This is due to a number of factors including:

- Operating on a 30-minute pulse vs. 20 minutes,
- Reduction of overtime,
- 2.5 operators for DAB not replaced,
- Mini-maller service replaced with expanded Stoughton service,
- Routes 10 & 11 were combined,
- Rockland new service delayed, and
- Fuel contracts procured at reduced cost through FY22.

She also informed the Board that a new line item was added to the budget, Emergency Preparedness, to address COVID expenses. BAT fully expects to be on budget by the end of the fiscal year by adjusting federal operating assistance depending on state contract assistance. An amended budget will be presented to the Board at the May meeting.

Next Mr. Lambert provided the Board with an overview of the FY22 Draft Budget. The document is similar to FY21 where BAT tried to fill in the unknowns to offer its best estimation. The good news is that the fuel contracts have a very positive effect on the budget. Also, BAT received all its requested Discretionary Grants. The state budget was just released from the House providing the RTAs with a slight cut. However, thanks to the CARES Act, CRRSAA and the Recovery Act, federal operating funds will help BAT balance the budget should the state's assistance fall short. The

additional federal operating funds will allow BAT to make changes from a strategic point of view and not a financial one. The two columns contain the Governor's budget vs. House budget numbers but the bottom line remains the same.

Ms. Sacchetti showed the Board the Estimated Local Assessments for FY21. These are estimated costs for service provided in 2021 and include an increase of 2.5% over the prior year. Finalized assessments will be presented at the fall meeting. Mr. Dutton asked what the percentage of assessments was to BAT's overall revenue. Ms. Sacchetti stated that it falls between 15% and 17% of gross revenue.

Under Discretionary Grants, Mr. Lambert informed the Board of the success of the Stoughton enhanced service. It provides service between the BAT Centre and Cobbs Corner in Stoughton and goes to key locations in Brockton and Stoughton. The Commuter Rail Partnership discretionary grant is providing Brockton residents at the three Brockton commuter rail stations with greatly reduced fares. This provides customers with financial savings and takes pressure off the Ashmont bus service. The reduced fares contract is due to expire May 31, 2021 but he hopes MassDOT will keep it going until the Governor's State of Emergency is lifted.

Number 6 on the agenda was a report from the Audit and Finance Committee. Mr. Hegarty stated that the Committee met earlier in the morning and had two items to report. First was an extension of the Administrator's employment contract. There is one year remaining on the contract and the Finance Committee would like to extend the contract for four more years through March 30, 2026. Kudos were expressed for his performance particularly during this difficult year. Mr. Hegarty made a motion to extend Mr. Lambert's contract from May, 2022 to March 30, 2026. Motion was seconded by Mr. Dutton. A roll call was performed and all were in favor. Motion passed. The second matter to present to the Board was the replacement of the retired Board member, Frank Lynam. The Audit and Finance Committee are nominating Ms. Fulginetti to fill the vacancy. Motion was made by Mr. Hegarty and seconded by Mr. Dutton. A roll call was performed and all were in favor. Chairman Sullivan thanked Ms. Fulginetti for her service to the Committee.

Under Administrator's Report, Mr. Lambert gave the group an overview of the Commuter Rail Pilot program. He stated that a survey was conducted of participants that showed that the reduction in Commuter Rail fare did not change the rider's behavior. Individuals utilized the Commuter Rail because of the faster connection to Boston and bus riders valued the frequency and timing of bus service. BAT will continue to coordinate schedules with the MBTA keeping the customer at the forefront of decision making.

Next was an overview of the Automated Passenger Counter (APC) project. The goal of the project is to provide customer enhancement and information/data. During the first week of May, a portal will be accessible to riders to determine bus capacities and where riders are getting on and off the buses. He provided presentation slides pointing out some of the features of the program.

Mr. Lambert stated that the BAT Centre is scheduled to reopen on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. He wanted to thank the customers for their patience. Heaters have been installed outside on the platform to enhance rider's

comfort and the Centre has a new vendor, Lady C & J Café, that provides breakfast and lunch options for the riders, employees and the general public.

Regarding Bus Electrification, BAT is doing everything possible to put itself in a good position to obtain federal funding should opportunities present themselves in the future. National Grid provided BAT with a review of its bus replacement plan incorporating costs and incentives available should BAT move to electrification of some of its fleet. See Attachment #14. The main concern is on the operational side, taking into account New England winters and topography. The consensus is that Brockton would be a good candidate for electrification for most of its routes. Chairman Sullivan asked if anyone had any questions for Mr. Lambert on his report. There were none.

Number 8 on the agenda was an update from the Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC). Mr. Kilmer provided the group with an overview of the study it performed to provide transportation between Taunton and Brockton. Mr. Kilmer noted that both cities are considered “Gateway Cities”, and should provide mobility options to its residents. The study examined trip generators, employment data, socioeconomic data, and journey to work studies for the two cities. Three options to provide that service were presented and the preferred mode was the option of travel from the BAT Centre to the GATRA terminal in Taunton. It was recommended that instead of heavy fixed route bus utilization, that a pilot “micro transit” option be explored. This has been utilized by other RTAs and is an “on demand” service between certain buffers. Chairman Sullivan thanked Mr. Kilmer for his overview of the study. He asked if anyone had questions for OCPC. There were none.

Mr. Lambert thanked Mr. Kilmer for his 25 years of service at OCPC and presented him with a personalized brick that would be placed on the platform at the BAT Centre. He noted OCPC and BAT’s long running partnership and described how OCPC and the MPO had received three commendations from Federal Highway, based in large part, by OCPC and BAT’s partnership carried out by Mr. Kilmer over the last 25 years. Ms. Waldron and Chairman Sullivan both expressed their appreciation of Mr. Kilmer’s dedicated service. Mr. Kilmer expressed his pleasure and gratitude to the group.

Under Old/New Business, Mr. Lambert noted the passing of Astrid Glynn, MassDOT Administrator recently. She was a mentor to many individuals in the transit industry and will be missed.

Next meeting will take place on May 27, 2021.

Motion was made by Mr. Hegarty and seconded by Mr. Dutton to adjourn the meeting. A roll call was performed and all were in agreement. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kathy Riddell, BAT

Documents Included in April 15, 2021 Advisory Board Package:

1. Meeting Agenda
2. Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – January 28, 2021
3. Fixed Route Ridership
4. DAB Ridership Comparison
5. Performance Dashboard FY21
6. FY21 Budget Summary
7. FY21 Budget
8. FY22 Draft Budget
9. Estimated Assessments FY21
10. Personnel Policies and Benefits
11. Social Media Policy
12. Tuition Reimbursement Policy
13. APC Preview
14. National Grid Cost Analysis