

## **GATRA Advisory Board Meeting June 13, 2018**

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 pm by Mayor Thomas Hoye, GATRA Advisory Board Vice-Chairman, in Raynham, MA.

Those in attendance were:

Francis J. Gay, Administrator, GATRA  
Mayor Paul Heroux, Attleboro Rep.\*  
Carole Julius, Carver Rep.  
Stacey Powell, Plainville Rep.  
Debra Surprenant, Mansfield Rep.  
Linda Hayes, Scituate Rep.  
James Gouveia, Lakeville Rep.  
Greg Guimond, Marshfield Rep.  
Bradley Marshall, Rehoboth Rep.  
Angela Azevedo, SRPEDD

Mayor Thomas Hoye, Taunton Rep.  
Richard Leitch, Norton Rep.  
Joanne Moore, Duxbury Rep.  
Courtney Riley, Medway Rep.  
Vicki Lowe, Foxboro Rep.  
JoAnn Cathcart, N. Attleboro Rep.  
Robert Brady, Lakeville Rep. (alternate)  
Joseph Ryan, Pembroke Rep.\*  
Brittney Faria, Seekonk Rep.\*  
Kim Catania, Admin Secretary, GATRA

**\*Denotes New Designee to the Board**

1. Introductions were made by those present.
2. **Approval of November 29, 2017 Minutes:** The Minutes of the November 29, 2017 GATRA Advisory Board meeting were distributed to the Advisory Board for approval.

**MOTION** by JoAnn Cathcart to approve the Minutes of the November 29, 2017 GATRA Advisory Board meeting as circulated.

**SECONDED** by Linda Hayes and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

### **3. Advisory Board Elections:**

Mr. Gay proposed to the Board the following election of officers to be voted on due to departure of Mayor Dumas and Leland Ross from the Board:

**Chairman:** Mayor Thomas Hoye  
**Vice Chairman:** Mayor Paul Heroux  
**Clerk:** Debra Surprenant / Kevin Dumas, Town Manager, Mansfield

**MOTION** by Greg Guimond to recommend and nominate the above election of officers.

**SECONDED** by Debra Surprenant and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

4. **Legislative Update:** Mr. Gay informed the Board that the RTA Caucus, which consists of State Representatives and Senators, meets regularly to help with the RTA program legislative issues. The RTAs met with the RTA Caucus in early January 2018 to discuss budget issues. Two of the larger RTAs needed to make service reductions and fare increases. GATRA had also discussed this with the Board in November. The message from the Caucus to the RTAs was to give them a chance to help and give them some time to work the budget for this state budget session. The RTAs had their legislative luncheon in March and the Caucus informed the RTAs they were going to support a budget line item of \$88 million this year (\$8 million increase) and it was in keeping with what the

legislature had proposed to do back in FY2014 through transportation financing, which was at a minimum, the RTAs grow annually by 2.5% over the \$80 million. This did not happen. This would bring the RTAs back to that number which would have been inflationary over the past 3-4 years. This year, the House budget came out in April 2018 at \$80 million but they set aside \$2 million which would be under the purview of MassDOT to distribute. Recently, the Senate budget did come out at \$88 million and they have put \$4 million in a pool which MassDOT would control. They also put in language for an inflationary increase for the RTAs going forward which will be helpful and put in language to have a task force set up with 6 administrators and some appointments from the Governor. This task force is to look at the RTA funding and how we provide services. Hopefully, they will develop a plan going forward on a number of different items. Currently, the budget is in conference and the Senate number is at \$88 million and the House number is at \$82 million.

The federal budget was just passed and GATRA received final FY2018 apportionments which were basically level funded. It will be a wait and see about FY2019.

**5. Capital Projects Update:** Mr. Gay gave an update on Capital Projects as follows:

**Vehicles:** GATRA received and put into service 2 new 35' Gillig transit buses on the Taunton/Attleboro routes. It also recently received 7 vehicles (mini-buses and vans) which will be inspected and replacing older equipment throughout some of the COAs and in the Taunton and Plymouth Dial-A-Ride Operations. We will be talking with the COAs once the vehicles are ready to put into service.

**Wareham and Plymouth Management Services:** GATRA advertised in late fall a Request for Proposal for Management Services for the Operations of Wareham and Plymouth Services. GATRA awarded the contract to Transdev and started operations in early February 2018. Transdev has a garage facility, which now the Town of Plymouth is not allowing GATRA to continue operating from. Transdev has to be out of the garage in September. Due to this, we are searching for a new temporary location. If anyone knows of any industrial space available in the Plymouth, Carver, Wareham corridor, please let me know. GATRA is also still studying sites to purchase land for a permanent garage facility in the eastern region but funding is not available for this as yet.

**Taunton Terminal Project:** GATRA finished renovations to the GATRA Bus Terminal in Taunton including new offices for its brokerage department on the first floor of the terminal as well as a new conference room. Also there were some improvements made at the Maintenance Garage Facility in Taunton to upgrade older systems.

**Taunton:** GATRA is working with the City of Taunton to do some additional sidewalk and ADA accessible improvements in and around the bus terminal in Taunton which began today.

**Attleboro:** GATRA is still working with the City of Attleboro on the TOD development and conceptual design for a garage at the Attleboro Train Station.

**N.Attleboro:** This project is back on track. A developer has demolished the old Balfour buildings and will be building commercial and residential buildings. GATRA is establishing a hub close by and will be bidding that project sometime late summer 2018 and to be constructed next spring.

**Mansfield:** GATRA is working with the Town of Mansfield on renovations to the Mansfield Avenue Bridge, which is both supporting MBTA operations as well as the major roadway and pedestrian access to the station building. This project is starting this week.

**RideMatch Program:** GATRA has made some enhancements to its RideMatch Program which includes a searchable trip section to the software. Angela Azevedo from SRPEDD briefly explained these enhancements to the Board. She explained that before the search was limited to Town to Town and now you can search by actual addresses which is more helpful to the consumer as well as beneficial to GATRA to be able to track on the backend for “unmet needs”. Mr. Gay also explained that with the additional grant funds from MassDOT, GATRA is able to market the program throughout the Commonwealth, all the RTAs are using it, and Google Transit has been included so a public transit search can be done as well as showing available private vendors. It is a good tool for finding transportation from one area to another. Due to MassDOT’s involvement, GATRA has been able to make it available statewide. The web address is [www.massridematch.org](http://www.massridematch.org).

**FTA Low-No Grant Application:** GATRA will be filing a competitive grant with the FTA to buy electric vehicles and equipment. The intent, if awarded the grant, is to use it on a new service from Mansfield to Foxboro and Gillette Stadium/Patriot Place. GATRA has been working with the towns and The Kraft Group on this. They are looking for better service connections between Gillette Stadium/Patriot Place and the Mansfield Train Station. Also, GATRA would have this new technology ready to use as part of the pilot service when train service is brought to Gillette Stadium.

**Service Updates:** Mr. Gay provided the Board with a ridership handout with comparative to last year. On most of its fixed route a system, GATRA is down a little more than 3% in ridership which is a trend statewide and nationally. It is due to a combination of factors, i.e. the good economy and private Uber/Lyft services now available. It is a trend which GATRA does not like but needs to find a way to turn around in the future. On the demand response side, GATRA, overall, is showing positive increase in ridership.

## 6. Approval of FY2019 Budget:

Mr. Gay provided to the Board a handout which was circulated at the Legislative Luncheon in March as part of an informational package. It shows RTA service funding per population. GATRA is significantly lower compared to the other RTAs, and more importantly on the RTA state funding per capita, GATRA is at \$6.99. It does show GATRA overall is much lower funded per capita by the state than all other RTAs and this is a concern. Again, when the Board met in November and passed the FY2018 Budget, GATRA carried a receivable of about \$100,000 which it believes is owed by statute and MassDOT disagrees. GATRA’s numbers are going to get progressively worse. At the end of FY2018, it will be at least \$200,000 or more because of the \$80 million budget and going deeper and deeper.

GATRA does brokerage work with the state (referred to Page 4 of FY2019 Budget, D. Human Service Transportation). Of GATRA’s \$56 million operating budget, the human service contract work which it does with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) is \$39 million of that amount. GATRA has not received a contract yet for FY2019 from EOHHS and does not know where they are going with funding for FY2019. Due to all these factors, the Administrator is recommending to pass a level funded budget for FY2019. Mr. Gay recommended to the Board to adopt the budget for FY2019 and have another board meeting in August after the legislature passes and the Governor signs a budget.

**MOTION** by JoAnn Cathcart to accept the FY2019 Budget as presented as a level funded budget with the opportunity to revisit once GATRA gets the final budget numbers.

**SECONDED** by Linda Hayes and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

## 7. Public Hearings – Proposed Fare Increases:

Mr. Gay circulated to the Board the public hearings

flyer which has been posted regarding fare increases. There is a fare increase proposed for both the fixed route and demand response services and passes related to same. Also, it is proposing an ADA paratransit fare which is currently the same as the regular demand response fare but under statute it can double the base fare for anyone who has Category 1 ADA status. Once the hearings are done in late June we will send to the Board all the transcripts and information received through the hearings and comment period. Sometime in July or when the budget gets passed a follow up meeting of the Board will be scheduled to make recommendations and have final vote on the fare increases and levels we are going to charge.

Ms. Moore asked if we would consider a 31 Day Pass for the demand response service. She felt it would be less of an increase to the elderly population. Ms. Azevedo explained that the demand response fee is a flat fee for each ride no matter how far the trip and these trips are considerably more expensive to provide. On the fixed route service, a 31 Day Pass is for unlimited rides for 31 days and doing this for demand response would mean they could ride unlimited for 31 days and this would be significantly more costly than riding unlimited on the fixed route. Ms. Azevedo suggested a 20 ride pass (or higher number) could be provided in cases where a program or family member may be purchasing the passes and prefers to purchase a large number.

Ms. Surprenant brought up the possibility if a pass for more than 10 rides was considered could purchasing this pass save a person more money by making it less expensive than if they bought 2, 3 or 4 10 Ride Passes at one time. Ms. Azevedo stated that the Board could choose to give such a discount for a larger number pass.

Ms. Cathcart asked if any projections were done if all these increases pass. Mr. Gay stated that GATRA has not done a projection as such. Ms. Azevedo stated that in 2013 the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) did a fare increase at that time. SRPEDD tried to do some projections but it turned out to be a foul's errand due to the fact that when prices go up some people will choose to travel less than they did before and it did not make for a solid projection when there are so many factors. SRPEDD could run some numbers but previously they have found it not to be reliable data.

Mr. Gay's overall concern is the loss of ridership and believes the fare increase will have a more dramatic affect than if our ridership numbers were going up. Over the last 1 ½ years, the numbers have been going down locally as well as nationally.

Ms. Cathcart shared with the Board a consumer's comments she received recently. This consumer wished to express to the Board she is vehemently opposed to raising fares for Dial-A-Ride. She lives in a housing authority in North Attleboro and she is not going to be able to go anywhere due to the increase in the fares. Ms. Cathcart feels there is more negative feedback than anything else regarding the fare increases.

Ms. Moore asked as to when GATRA anticipates the fares will go into effect if everything passes. Mr. Gay stated it would not be until September 2018. The Board will have to vote on this. Mr. Gay stated that it also depends on what the state does for final funding. He was very disappointed with the House Budget being \$80 million again.

Mr. Marshall mentioned that they rely on demand response greatly and it is becoming harder and harder for individuals with fixed incomes. He feels they understand the reasons for the increases but don't know what they will do.

Mr. Leitch agrees with the increases.

**Public Hearings – Proposed Service Changes**

Mr. Gay stated the service changes were discussed in November and the Board authorized GATRA to do public hearings which have been held off for now until the state funding is finalized. A list was put together back in November. If there is no more funding, those would be the first 4-5 routes to either eliminate or cut back and would probably go further than what was previously discussed in November, but waiting on legislature.

8. **SRPEDD Programs/Issues:** Ms. Azevedo reviewed with the Board the Public Hearings information. After the public hearings are done, SRPEDD will perform the fair equity analysis on the changes to make sure there is no impact on certain populations.

Ms. Cathcart asked how the fare changes are determined once the public hearings are done and will additional fare increases be proposed to offset the cuts in service if the state does not increase the budget. Mr. Gay explained to the Board that once the public hearings are completed and the comment period is over, he will be sending to the Board all information for review. SRPEDD will do their analysis and the impacts around our service area. Ultimately, it is the Board who decides what the fare increases and cuts in service will be and this would not be until late summer/early fall. GATRA will give the Board some recommendations but it is up to the Board. As far as any additional fare increases, Mr. Gay stated the fare increases do not produce near enough revenue to offset any service cuts which will be made due to the lack of funding.

Ms. Surprenant asked about looking at ridership and projection with fare increases. Ms. Azevedo explained again that these numbers would not give an accurate analysis due to the fact riders may ride less due to the fare increase. Mr. Gay informed the Board he will prepare some sort of projection as to what the fare increases will mean overall in regard to the budget revision.

Ms. Riley asked if there is any fare program for low income individuals. Mr. Gay stated that some towns, i.e. Duxbury and Wareham, purchase passes and have different programs to enable individuals to get free passes for their lower income residents. He also had the same conversation recently with the Town of Franklin and they would like to do such a program. Ms. Surprenant also suggested having one day a week or month as a sale day to seniors or low income groups.

9. **Other Business:** Mr. Gay informed the Board that Vicki Lowe from Foxboro is retiring and wanted to wish her all the best and acknowledge all her great work over the years with GATRA.

With no further business to discuss;

**MOTION** by Mayor Heroux was made to adjourn the meeting.

**SECONDED** by Greg Guimond and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:54 PM.