

**GATRA Advisory Board Meeting**

**May 10, 2017**

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm by Mayor Kevin Dumas, GATRA Chairman, in Norton, MA.

Those in attendance were:

Francis J. Gay, Administrator, GATRA Mayor Thomas Hoye, Taunton Rep.

Mayor Kevin Dumas, Attleboro Rep. Richard Leitch, Norton Rep.

Carolyn Roycroft, Bellingham Rep.**\*** Carole Julius, Carver Rep.

Anna Seery, Pembroke Rep. Greg Guimond, Marshfield Rep.

Joanne Moore, Duxbury Rep. Tammy Murray, Kingston Rep.

Leland Ross, Plainville Rep. James Gouveia, Lakeville Rep.

Debra Surprenant, Mansfield Rep.**\*** Scott Bragdon, Norfolk Rep.

Vicki Lowe, Foxboro Rep. Bradley Marshall, Rehoboth Rep.

Linda Hayes, Scituate Rep. Robert Brady, Lakeville Alt. Rep.

Lisa Matolo, Bellingham Council on Aging Shayne Trimbell, SRPEDD

Peter J. Wiggins, Norton Resident Stacy Forte, Admin. Asst., GATRA **\*Denotes New Designee to the Board**

1. **Approval of November 29, 2016 Minutes:**

The Minutes of the November 29, 2016 GATRA Advisory Board meeting were distributed to the Advisory Board for approval.

**MOTION** by Greg Guimond to approve the Minutes of the November 29, 2016 GATRA Advisory Board meeting as circulated.

**SECONDED** by Leland Ross and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

**ABSTENTION** by Debra Surprenant and Carolyn Roycroft.

**2. Approval of FY2016 Financial Report:**

At the November Meeting the Board tabled the acceptance of the FY2016 Financial Report until all had a chance to review the report.

**MOTION** by Greg Guimond to approve the FY2016 Financial Report as circulated at the November 29, 2016 meeting.

**SECONDED** by Leland Ross and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

**ABSTENTION** by Debra Surprenant and Carolyn Roycroft.

**3. Legislative Update:**

Mr. Gay gave an update to the Board. He informed the Board on the federal side Congress has passed a bill for funding through FY2017. GATRA has not received any final numbers for transit and there is no clear picture as to total dollar amounts. There is conversation about eliminating some of the grant programs which have been available in the past. Hopefully by June 2017, GATRA will have the final numbers. On the state side, the House Budget passed and only included 81 million dollars. Our legislative program should be at 86 million dollars for all the regional transit authorities. There will more likely be some kind of reduction in our overall state funding. GATRA is still waiting for information from the proposed Senate Budget.

In regard to GATRA’s Regional Transit Plan which the Board approved almost 2 years ago, it lays out some short term and long term programs for new services. GATRA did recently extend service on the Route 16 in Attleboro to the Market Basket in S. Attleboro and the Scituate service has been extended into North Scituate. Everything else in the plan is on hold pending funding.

**4. Capital Projects Update:**

Mr. Gay updated the Board on Capital Projects and Service.

As to upgrade and replacement of older equipment, GATRA recently received 7 new vans; new mini buses are coming in within the next 30 days and 4 transit buses will be delivered sometime in late June.

At the Taunton Terminal, the renovation project is continuing. There have been some delays and issues GATRA has had to deal with especially with the new HVAC system.

GATRA is continuing to work with the City of Attleboro on Riverfront Drive. It should be completed by the end of June. GATRA’s final piece of the Attleboro Project includes final pavement and sidewalk work. The rest of the project falls under the City’s state grant.

The North Attleboro Hub project is on hold at this time. There may be a new developer purchasing the site and this project will be able to move ahead if the sale goes through.

In Mansfield, GATRA will be doing work with the Town on the Mansfield Avenue Bridge which leads to the train station. GATRA is working on upgrades for pedestrian safety and lighting.

The Eastern Area Maintenance Facility project, GATRA has submitted a needs information report to MassDOT. They have asked for additional information for the need for the garage. GATRA will have this additional information to them by the end of this month. GATRA is starting to move ahead and now looking for a site.

**Service Update:**

A ridership handout was distributed to the Board to review. GATRA currently, as well as a lot of transit, are experiencing significant reductions in ridership. The economy is good and GATRA has lost riders who have gone back to using a car. Fixed route ridership is down because of the economy, people finding alternatives to public transit such as Uber, and the cost of gas being down. Ridership is also down with the Councils on Aging and with the Attleboro/Taunton demand response service due to losing older seniors and younger seniors still using their cars.

Mayor Hoye asked about Uber and The Ride.

Mr. Gay stated there is a pilot program which the state is trying out with the MBTA Ride Program. There has been a lot of misinformation out there and GATRA needs to get a better indication as to how the MBTA is going. Uber vehicles do seem to be in GATRA’s area more and more. GATRA is working with the City of Attleboro and Wheaton College to make service available in this area for nights and weekends when GATRA buses are not running. There has been some discussion with the YMCA in Attleboro and Wheaton College and it may be possible to use Uber to fill in this gap.

Mr. Ross asked if GATRA did get involved in something like Uber, who would certify the drivers as to safety?

Mr. Gay stated those questions and issues are important to be addressed before moving forward. The Federal Transit Administration has come out to say that Uber is a good option but there are certain criteria under which they can be used if any federal money is to be used. He believes The Ride is doing the Uber demo with all state money right now for that reason.

Mr. Leitch stated as far as Wheaton College using Uber and on a safety level, he would not want to use it. There is too much unknown information when it comes to Uber.

Mr. Trimbell stated that Uber is a private for profit company and currently only charging approximately 59% of the actual cost of delivery and it is a strategy to expand their market share. As the market share expands and people become more accustomed to using it, he believes we will see their rate of cost per trip increasing steadily until it achieves that 100% cost. At some point, their investors are going to want to see a return on their investment and that is the only place it will come from. The risk of a public agency seeing the low cost of today is not representative of the cost in the future. It is a very complicated issue and with Uber being a relatively new company, there is not a lot of history to look back on.

Mr. Bragdon stated that Uber has also had very serious management problems in corporate which it needs to address.

Mr. Trimbell stated the state just imposed enhanced background checks for its drivers, and as a result of these checks, 12% of their driver pool was removed from eligibility. The rate of change is happening so fast it is hard for the public agencies to keep up.

**Fares:** Mr. Gay stated thatabout a year ago we discussed fares. At that time, RIPTA was looking at a new fare system and going to automated payment cards. Soon thereafter, GATRA found out from the MBTA that they are going to abandon the Charlie card over the next couple of years and do the same, but more enhanced than what RIPTA was going to do. Being as we service both markets, GATRA and SRPEDD have had discussions with both RIPTA and the MBTA. The MBTA has done procurement for the back-end and how the program is going to work. GATRA met yesterday with the MBTA and what they estimated would happen in 18 months is now going to take 3 years. RIPTA’s proposals are due soon. The timeframe for this new generation of fare upgrades and how GATRA would fit into it is going to be a lot longer than expected, and combined with our ridership decreasing, GATRA does not feel this is the time to do any fare increase.

GATRA and SRPEDD have discussed possible ideas. On the demand response side, GATRA is probably going to have to eliminate any free service for seniors, which is mainly through the Councils on Aging, and start charging a fare. Because GATRA does have a very large number of communities and they are not all on the same page as to fares, it is becoming quite complicated for GATRA to keep track. It makes much more sense to have the $1.25 fare across the board for everyone who uses Dial-A-Ride.

Other than this across the board $1.25 fare for demand response, there is no major proposal which GATRA would like to present to the Board on fare increases.

5. **Approval of FY2018 Budget:**

Mr. Gay presented the FY2018 Budget to the Board. He proposed level funding right now for everything across the board for FY2018 due to much of what has previously been discussed. The biggest reason is the state numbers and the federal budget won’t be out until late June 2017. GATRA advertised its Plymouth and Wareham Services, fixed route and demand response for proposals, and only received one response. The vendor interest does not seem to be there and the rates of the proposal were a lot higher than the current rates. GATRA plans to re-advertise and also will advertise for the Attleboro/Taunton area services in early summer. These services cover the largest cost numbers in the budget and we need to get these numbers back for a better indication for FY2018 operating costs. GATRA plans to come back to the Board in late summer with a revision for the FY2018 budget. The budget presented today, if approved, would be a budget to begin with July 1st and a revision to come later in the year.

Mr. Gouveia asked about the difference in the amount of $11,000 when comparing the Lakeville and Plainville numbers in which Lakeville’s ridership went up and Plainville’s ridership went down. He stated that over 50% of Lakeville riders are 50 years or older and the numbers are going to continue to increase over the next few years.

Mr. Gay stated that the numbers are based on what is in the Council on Aging budget for running the transportation.

Mr. Gay stated that the operating cost does get included in the town budget for the Council on Aging and is approved by the town.

**MOTION** by Linda Hayes to approve as presented the FY2018 Budget.

**SECONDED** by Joanne Moore and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

6. **SRPEDD Programs/Issues:**

Mr. Trimbell updated the Board on what SRPEDD is currently working on. SRPEDD currently is working on a Bus Stop Capital Improvement Plan. Over the last 2 years SRPEDD staff has gone to all bus stops in the region gathering measurements and observations to create a snapshot of what the infrastructure looks like throughout the region. From this data it will create a Capital Improvement Plan to inform the MPO (the regional body which funds transportation projects) where the need is greatest for improvement to the bus stops. SRPEDD should have the plan completed about this time next year.

Another issue SRPEDD wanted to update the Board on was last year’s Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administration’s ruling on reforming how the MPOs function and the geographies for which they serve. This rule would have changed dramatically how transportation planning was conducted in Southeastern Massachusetts. This rule was passed, but fortunately, the Senate and House overturned the decision and it essentially wipes out the ruling as if it had never passed. This allows SRPEDD to continue planning as it has in the past.

**7. Other Business:**

Mr. Gay stated that part of the Board’s makeup is to have an ADA delegate and a Community Rider delegate. In the past, the Board voted to go in alphabetical order of the communities for appointment of the ADA delegate. At this point in time, the Town of Franklin is to appoint a delegate. We have reached out to Franklin but have not received any appointment from them. If Franklin chooses not to appoint a delegate, GATRA would then go to the next community. For the Community Rider delegate it was voted to go in reverse alphabetical order and the Town of Wareham is to appoint a delegate. We recently received from the Town of Wareham an appointment of the one of the Selectmen as the delegate but this Selectman already serves as the Town’s Designee on the Board and he cannot serve both functions. We will be talking with the Town of Wareham again in order to get a delegate. With Fiscal Year 2017 coming to a close and beginning a new Fiscal Year, Mr. Gay wanted to make the Board aware of its attempt to have these delegates appointed. If no appointment is made by either Franklin or Wareham, the next town in line for the ADA Delegate would be Hanover and the next town in line for the Community Rider Delegate would be Taunton.

Mayor Dumas asked Mr. Gay to explain to the Board the role of each delegate.

Mr. Gay explained to the Board the ADA Delegate and the Community Rider Delegate have one vote each on the Board. The Community Rider Delegate is to be an advocate and uses our system somewhere in our communities and would provide input to the Board as to where our system can be improved. The ADA Delegate is an advocate for the disabled community and provide input to the Board as to if there are particular issues under ADA which the Board should address as far as policy or service. Originally, the delegates were to serve without a vote. MassDOT authorized that they have one vote each on the Advisory Board. The ADA Delegate has been ongoing for several years. The Community Rider Delegate was someone relatively new. Both delegates only serve a one year term.

Mayor Dumas asked when the next Advisory Board meeting may be.

Mr. Gay stated the next meeting would be scheduled for late July or August.

With no further business to discuss;

**MOTION** by Greg Guimond to adjourn the meeting.

**SECONDED** by Leland Ross and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:44 PM.