

**GATRA Advisory Board Meeting**

**June 23, 2016**

The meeting was called to order at 2:35 pm by Mayor Kevin Dumas, GATRA Chairman, in Norton, MA.

Those in attendance were:

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

Mayor Kevin Dumas, Attleboro Rep. Bradley Marshall, Rehoboth Rep.

Alan Slavin, Wareham Rep. Richard Leitch, Norton Rep.

Gil J. Pontes, III, Berkley Rep. Laura DeMattia, Bellingham Rep.

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

JoanneMoore, Duxbury Rep. Tammy Murray, Kingston Rep.

Leland Ross, Plainville Rep. Janet Angelico, Wrentham Rep.

Robert Dellorco, Franklin Rep.\* JoAnn Cathcart, N. Attleboro Rep.

Linda Hayes, Scituate Rep. Scott Bragdon, Norfolk Rep.

Shayne Trimbell, SRPEDD Stacy Forte, GATRA, Admin. Assistant

Peter J. Wiggins, Norton Resident

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

1. The Minutes of the January 7, 2016 GATRA Advisory Board meeting were distributed to the Advisory Board for approval.

**MOTION** by Greg Guimond to approve the Minutes of the January 7, 2016 GATRA Advisory Board meeting as circulated.

**SECONDED** by Mayor Hoye and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

**ABSTENTION** by Robert Dellorco of Franklin.

**2. Regional Transit Plan (RTP) Update:**

Mr. Gay updated the Board as to the Regional Transit Plan. GATRA had 4 legislative breakfasts in late February 2016 to discuss the Regional Transit Plan which this board voted and approved last summer. The Plan gives a roadmap as to where GATRA would add service in the future. Currently there are no new funding opportunities.

**3. Legislative Update:**

Mr. Gay informed the Board that GATRA is waiting to hear the state funding level. He spoke with GATRA’s legislative person and feels there will be a 1/12 budget for July. This could have short term impact on the budget. MassDOT has not yet told the Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) how they plan to give out the RTAs’ state share. In prior years they have been giving 90 percent of the dollars in July. Not sure if they will be able to do that this year. Operating money at the state level is 82 million dollars in the House budget version and 84 million dollars in the Senate budget version and there is no indication as yet.

On the federal side legislation has been signed and the RTAs received their first appropriation and a small increase in money. The federal government did put a new grant system into place this summer and GATRA just submitted its first grant into the system in June 2016. GATRA is actually running behind in its federal money as well as in its operating money. Depending on what happens at the state level GATRA’s operating money could have some short term cash flow.

**4. GATRA Update:**

Mr. Gay updated the Board on GATRA’s capital projects and services. GATRA will be receiving 3 new 30’ transit buses at the end of June 2016 and they will be put into service in the Plymouth area. GATRA also received 8 small demand response type vehicles and 4 mid-size vehicles which are in the process of being inspected and accepted. There are some issues with the rubber seals around windows and once all issues are resolved with the manufacturer and the vehicles are accepted they will be going out to some of the Councils on Aging throughout the summer to replace and upgrade some older equipment. Improvements to the Taunton maintenance garage are finished. GATRA replaced a lift which was 22-23 years old. The cost for this was approximately $115,000 which included some upgrades to its fuel tanks and leak detection system which were required to be done. GATRA is also working on the offices at the Taunton Terminal which will house its brokerage staff as well as create some new offices for Administration staff. This is still ongoing.

GATRA submitted a 2016 TIGER Grant Application for the Plymouth Transportation Center Project. It looks like GATRA is in the running this year and scored well. GATRA will make a push now with its congressional delegation and see if it can get funding for the project.

In Attleboro, GATRA has been working with the City on Riverfront Road. The Attleboro Transit Oriented Development (TOD) study, which was discussed at the last meeting, has been awarded to Nitsch Engineering to undertake the review of the whole Attleboro station and the ADA related issues at the station. GATRA will then begin looking at concepts for constructing a parking garage at that facility in conjunction with the TOD development.

In North Attleboro the transit hub is at 100 percent design but the project has been put on hold due to discussions with the owner of the property has fallen through. Hopefully, the construction will start as soon as those issues are resolved. Work could begin either late fall or next spring.

GATRA has completed surveys in Marshfield and Norton about additional service. It is in discussions with the Town of Marshfield for service to the Greenbush line and will be meeting with the Norton about options. GATRA has a survey in the Town of Pembroke regarding changes to the commuter shuttle service GATRA provides to the Hanson Train Station, and operating more local Pembroke fixed route bus service.

A handout was given to the Board showing ridership through the end of April 2016. Mr. Gay explained the ridership highlights of the fixed route and demand response services. The last time the Board was given an update it was actually running behind in ridership. This handout shows GATRA has gone into the positive on both types of services as far as ridership.

Regarding the lease buses, which are the intercity buses which GATRA has with some of our private carriers in the area, most of the decline is due to GATRA buses which have been taken off the road and not reporting ridership any more.

**5. FY2015 Financial Statements:**

At the last Board meeting (l/7/16), the Board voted to table the approval of the FY2015 Financial Statement so everyone could have a chance for review of same. GATRA did not receive any questions from the communities in this regard and would like to have the board approve the FY2015 Financial Statement at this time.

Mayor Dumas asked if anyone had any questions regarding the FY2015 Financial Statements and there were none.

**MOTION** by Alan Slavin to approve GATRA’s FY2015 Financial Statements.

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

**ABSTENTION** by Robert Dellorco of Franklin.

**6. FY2015 Annual Report:**

GATRA’s FY2015 Annual Report was provided for review by the Board. Mr. Gay informed the Board that the Annual Report highlights the planning and other work GATRA has accomplished over the last year. A summary of the ridership statistics for FY2015 as well as the finance page of the report is information from our FY2015 Financial Statement. This information gives an overview of where revenue and expenses are derived. The report also contains legislative highlights and planning recommendations.

**7. FY2017 Budget:**

Mr. Gay explained to the Board in light of the state budget status, there is much uncertainty on the final outcome. As it relates to FY2016, GATRA is in good shape and will come in under budget due to fuel savings and the milder winter. Mr. Gay recommended to the Board to accept a level funded budget for FY2017 except in one case - our fixed route operations. GATRA finally received notice it will receive funding for the Wareham to New Bedford bus service. The state did fund it, so GATRA has included it in the budget even though there is no contract in place yet. It will take a couple of months, but it is something GATRA plans to undertake in FY2017. Currently, this is the only addition to the overall FY2017 budget.

There are few big issues which are pending besides the state budget. GATRA has not finalized a brokerage contract with the state for our Human Service Transportation service which is 35 million dollars of our 52 million dollar operating budget. GATRA is reviewing with its attorney the HST contract amendment and the implications for what they are proposing. It will affect both GATRA’s operating costs for its staff as well as the operating costs of the HST portion of its budget. GATRA also has ongoing union negotiations with the operator of its Attleboro/Taunton services. All these issues could affect GATRA’s overall operating budget for FY2017. Lastly, GATRA is still waiting to hear from its insurance agent on insurance premiums for its general liability and automotive.

With these 3 issues and the state budget, it seems appropriate for now to come in with a level funded budget and present any revisions to the budget to the Board later in the fall once these issues are resolved.

Mayor Dumas asked about local assessments. Mr. Gay stated that local assessments could go up by 2 ½ percent, and in some cases, may go up more if GATRA adds more service, i.e. Marshfield. GATRA is still in discussions with Pembroke, Hanover and Marshfield for a new bus service in the area. The service for Pembroke, Hanover and Marshfield is in the operating budget now but some issues still remain to be resolved.

Mr. Gay referred the Board to the last page of the budget under Revenue, demand response revenue is $360,000. GATRA will hit that target for FY2016 as well as the fixed route. Looking at GATRA’s demand response revenue in relation to the overall operating costs, GATRA is at just about 6 percent cost recovery which is getting very low. This means GATRA either has to look at raising fares, which the Board should talk about as well as seeing what can be done to get more people on its demand response systems. The fixed route has the same kind of issues. Fixed route revenue to cost is only about 9 percent. Again, in some of its bigger urban systems, i.e. Attleboro and Taunton, it may be 15 percent, but some of the commuter shuttle work which GATRA does, those ridership numbers are pretty low for what GATRA is running. Historically, GATRA has tried to keep fares low because of economics and for the majority of its riders this is their only choice of transportation. GATRA’s fixe route fare is $1 and demand response is $1.25. GATRA is proposing to do public hearings in the fall to talk about fares and wanted to bring this issue to the Board. Mr. Gay suggested to the Board that it needs to have some discussion going forward on an overall fare increase.

Mayor Dumas asked if GATRA generates more revenue what the money will go towards. Mr. Gay stated it would go back into investing into the system. GATRA puts a lot of federal capital money into operations now. The RTAs should be using the capital money for capital not operations. GATRA does put in almost 4.8 million dollars from its federal money into operating costs. It is a large piece of how GATRA funds its operations right now.

Joanne Moore of Duxbury asked how much GATRA would need to raise the fee. Mr. Gay felt the fare for the fixed route buses could go from $1 to $1.25. On the demand response service it should raise fares to possibly $1.50 or higher. Technically on the demand response side, GATRA could go to doubling the fare under ADA to twice the base fare of fixed route service.

Greg Guimond of Marshfield stated for his community he does not feel a $1 is very high at all and $1.25 may not be a big deal in his community but in other communities they may feel a little differently.

Bradley Marshall of Rehoboth mentioned the proposed increase in social security for next year is going to be 2 percent. Overall, the social security based income person is actually losing money in the long term if the bill goes through as proposed. This will be affecting people in the lower income bracket trying to get rides, which we mostly service, and it will be tough for them.

Jo Ann Cathcart of North Attleboro asked how long these fares have been in place? Mr. Gay stated they have been in place for 8 years. GATRA has not had any increase in some time. GATRA felt the populations which were using the services could not afford to go significantly higher.

Shayne Trimbell of SRPEDD explained to the Board that as part of raising fares GATRA must do a Fair Equity Study. The study looks at the economic impact on the ridership and what they can pay and/or afford. Mr. Trimbell believes the phased in approach is a good one and as well as being very upfront and honest with the public about what they are going to get for their dollars.

Mayor Dumas asked if it would be something that may be recommended to GATRA to have a Fair Equity Study done for its area. Mr. Gay asked if GATRA has public hearings, will it have to do the study. Mr. Trimbell explained that it is a whole process to follow and required by the Title VI requirements which govern how GATRA operates and delivers service to minority and low income populations. SRPEDD would do the study and release the results and then with the hearings receive comments from the public.

It is an ongoing communication process, and the ridership feels they are part of the process and understand why fares have to go up and what they are going to get for that, then you would get less push back in the end. It would not make sense to have 28 meetings, but probably 5-10 meetings in this instance and make sure the public has a lot of opportunity to participate in the process. You want to provide every possible opportunity for the public to participate.

Leland Ross of Plainville felt the Board should decide what type of service should be increased. The Dial-A-Ride is for seniors and people with disabilities who may be on a fixed income or have a lower income as opposed to the fixed route which is mostly people commuting to work and they may be able to afford an increase more. Mr. Ross felt the fixed route would be the better option to raise the fare.

Robert Dellorco of Franklin stated that GATRA will have pushback from some of the public because even if you go from $1 to $1.25 there will always be someone who thinks it shouldn’t be raised or not raised so much.

Mr. Guimond asked if a vote is needed on the budget?

Mr. Gay stated a vote is necessary to approve the budget.

Mr. Guimond asked if the budget is the same as last year.

Mr. Gay explained that currently that is what he is recommending for FY2017.

Mayor Dumas stated that the Board should continue the discussion on rates for the next meeting and be able to take the vote on the budget today as level funded except for the increase in the fixed route service. For the next meeting an agenda item should be prepared to have discussion on some suggestions on the plan and justifying the increase. This would be a part of delivering the message, loud and clear, and why we are doing it.

Mr. Dellorco stated he has done it and would be happy to help.

Linda Hayes of Scituate asked if each community will be charged with going to their ridership to see how they feel or is it too early to do that.

Mayor Dumas explained that it would be part of the whole process and be determined later.

Scott Bragdon of Norfolk asked about the budget and wanted to confirm that no one was getting any pay increases for FY2017.

Mr. Gay stated that was correct for now and included only GATRA staff, not operator staff. The union negotiations are with our Operator and GATRA has no say on the union negotiations.

Mr. Bragdon asked how often pay increases are given to GATRA staff?

Mr. Gay stated that they are given usually yearly. Mr. Gay will come back to the Board in late summer/early fall to talk about that. For now everyone’s position is level funded.

Mayor Hoye asked if the benefits are level funded as well? He stated in Taunton healthcare went up significantly.

Mr. Gay informed him GATRA’s benefits are level funded as well and but will be adjusting that when revisions to the budget are made.

**MOTION** by Greg Guimond to approve the FY2017 Budget as circulated.

**SECONDED** by Mayor Hoye and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

**8. Federal Grant Resolution and Bank Resolutions:**

Mr. Gay informed the Board this resolution is a standard resolution which the Board has approved in the past to authorize staff to file grants with the Federal Transit Administration. The Board is required to vote. There are no changes from the previous resolution.

**MOTION** by Leland Ross to approve the Federal Grant Resolution as circulated.

**SECONDED** by Gil Pontes and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

**Resolutions (2) for Bristol County Savings Bank:**

Mr. Gay explained to the Board that the Bristol County Savings Bank (BCSB) asked the Board to approve 2 Resolutions for GATRA, for its municipal accounts, to have on file acknowledging that GATRA has accounts with BCSB and for me, Dan Burgess, CFO and Kathleen Kisamore, who handles wire transfers, to work with BCSB regarding these accounts.

**MOTION** by Alan Slavin to approve the Bank Resolutions as circulated.

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

**9. SRPEDD Business:**

Mr. Trimbell updated the Board on the different projects which they are working on with GATRA currently. The TOD Study for the City of Attleboro is continuing which includes the area around the downtown station and its various stages of redevelopment. GATRA asked SRPEDD to look at the area and give a thumbnail sketch as to what it may look like when it redevelops. The Scope and Budget are finalized. SRPEDD has been busy this spring with traffic counts in 10 locations around the station and turning movement counts to see which direction vehicles are turning. SRPEDD will use these to develop a future traffic condition based on the buildout anaylysis. SRPEDD is working on three “Buildout Scenarios” to identify how the land around the station may develop over time. It has met with the City Planner to refine this based on his knowledge of the city. SRPEDD take the information and make a computer based model of what the traffic may look like so the City can plan for the need for intersections and signals. The buildout analysis and the future modeling should be done by the end of July 2016. SRPEDD can then go out to the public in August 2016 and present its findings and begin working on a draft plan. This should be completed by the end of August 2016 and a final plan done by the end of September 2016.

SRPEDD has released for comment its annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) which highlights the work it will be doing in the upcoming fiscal year. It is available on SRPEDD’s website, www.srpedd.org. Some of the benefits which highlight GATRA are an inventory of bus stops throughout the region and collecting information on all the amenities which are there, the sidewalks, conditions of sidewalks, whether or not there are ADA ramps, signalized crossings, crosswalks. SRPEDD is nearing the completion of the data collection and in the near fall will start developing its “Capital Improvement Plan”. SRPEDD will prioritize the stops based on their need in the region and work with its municipal partners to incorporate those stop improvements when they come in for roadway improvement projects.

Another Study SRPEDD plans to do is a Battery Electric Bus Study. SRPEDD is going to be looking at the feasibility of using battery powered buses in the region. The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) has a route and it has been successful there. SRTA and GATRA showed interest in this and SRPEDD’s first step is to study where it will work and what routes have potential for battery bus and what the environmental impacts will be over diesel bus or hybrid.

Lastly, SRPEDD is continuing its data collection program for the National Transit Database program where it has a person board a bus at random to count the number of passengers and where they board and exit bus. It is very important to setting funding levels for GATRA.

No further business to discuss.

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

**SECONDED** by Gil Pontes and **passed** by the Advisory Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM.