

Berkshire Flyer 2.0 Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

October 29, 2018 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 1 Fenn St. Pittsfield, MA 01201

Staff Attendance

X	A. Koirala	X	L. Schmid	X	C. Kus
	B. Lamb		B. Steiner		

Member Attendance

X	T. Matuszko (Co-Chair)	X	Senator A. Hinds		
X	J. Butler (Co-Chair)	X	J. Green		
X	R. Malnati	X	K. Chittenden		
	A. Lomanto	X	Z. Fleury		
	E. Kerns	X	F. Heming		
X	D. Ruffer		K. Christenson		
X	C. Hoyt	X	N. Henebury (new member)		
	T. Delasco				
X	B. Keane				

Other Attendees: A.J. Enchill (Senator Hinds' Office), Peter Frieri (MassDOT), Eddie Sporn (Robin Road Consulting), Brian Butterworth (member of the public).

Heather Bellow (Berkshire Eagle) and Terry Cowgill (Berkshire Edge) were also in attendance.

Call to Order - 3:02pm

1) Introductions

- J. Butler noted that Noel Henebury will be joining the committee as a representative from the Hospitality sector.

2) Administration

a) Approval of Meeting Minutes from September 24, 2018

- Motion: C. Hoyt
- Second: B. Keane
- Motion Carries (three abstentions: J. Green, R. Malnati, N. Henebury)

3) Review of Existing Rail Service Models (A. Koirala)

- A. Koirala conducted a powerpoint presentation that examined local connector options for existing rail service models in the region, namely the Ethan Allen Express (New York City to Rutland, Vermont) and Empire Service (New York City to Toronto, Ontario). Both lines have local transit options managed by their regional transit districts, as well as connecting services: Rutland has a private service that goes to Killington year-round, and Fort Edward on the Empire Line has a trolley service connecting to Lake George during the summer season.
- T. Matuszko noted that if a similar service were offered for the Flyer, purchase of that ticket should be integrated with the Amtrak ticket purchasing, similar to the Killington shuttle service from Rutland. A. Hinds agreed, and added that although we don't have a Killington, northern and southern Berkshire County would be analogous draws.

- D. Ruffer noted that the fares for the Lake George trolley service are highly affordable, and wondered if there was a state subsidy involved. A. Koirala clarified that the State of New York does indeed subsidize those fares.
- K. Chittenden suggested that Vermont's Shire Connector is another model worth researching. J. Green added that the Shire Connector is a subcontracted service that connects Albany to Manchester Center via Rensselaer. A. Koirala will look into this model.

4) Last-Mile and Local Transportation Options (A. Koirala)

- A. Koirala pivoted the presentation to focus on existing and potential local transportation options, including Kripalu's currently-operating shuttle service to and from Albany International Airport, Wassaic Station, and Downtown Lenox. Other options that have potential or are presently operating in limited capacities include: car rental via Enterprise, car sharing through Zipcar and/or Turo, ride sharing through Uber and/or Lyft, proposed BRTA north-south bus service, a Berkshire Flyer service through Transport the People, local taxis, and local car services. The presentation considered the pros and cons of each option.
- A. Hinds wished to know the level of traffic going to Wassaic during the summer. A. Koirala indicated that peak ridership for the shuttle service to Wassaic is in the winter, and that on the whole, the shuttle service is not breaking even at this time.
- D. Ruffer noted that the City of Pittsfield will be happy to assist with rental car parking, but that an RFP would need to be issued for the use of designated spaces. This process would take approximately 3 months, and would involve a selection panel that would likely include people from this committee.
- D. Ruffer also noted that Zipcar offers a model that could be implemented much sooner and without an RFP, as the company could be the permit holder of some designated spaces. However, the question remains who will invest in the cars. A. Koirala will contact Zipcar about expanding service beyond its present footprint at Williams College.
- T. Matuszko noted that ridership demographic data will be very helpful in determining which options are most likely to be utilized by Flyer passengers, and as a result, should be very informative about the kinds of options this committee might recommend in its report.
- R. Malnati inquired whether Lyft and Uber provide handicap-accessible vehicles. J. Butler and A. Koirala indicated that this is likely not the case, but that Transport the People may offer that service.
- A. Hinds suggested that the discussion of ride-sharing services speaks to the need for a marketing campaign to be implemented prior to the pilot service, targeted at getting locals to join rides-sharing services to make some extra money.
- B. Butterworth noted that bikeshare could be an option to consider for traversing the area once Flyer riders have arrived at their destinations from the train. T. Matuszko agreed, adding that bikeshare businesses are sprouting up everywhere, and not just near bike paths.

5) Developing a Marketing Strategy (J. Butler)

- J. Butler provided an update on the marketing strategy. Two responses have been submitted to 1Berkshire's RFP. 1Berkshire has convened a working group comprised of 1Berkshire staff, Jodi Joseph from MassMoCA, Margit Hotchkiss from the Norman Rockwell Museum, and Eric Kerns from Bright Ideas and TOURISTS Welcome. This group has begun to review the proposals and will select one by November 12, with branding and branded content appearing in January. One tactic the marketing strategy will utilize is partnering with cultural and hospitality entities to leverage existing marketing campaigns to also deliver Berkshire Flyer messaging.

- J. Green noted that there is a real opportunity in New York By Rail magazine, an independently-published onboard magazine that is circulated everywhere Amtrak services in New York. This could be an excellent opportunity to piggyback on tourism to Hudson Valley. New York By Rail is published annually in the spring, so getting into the 2019 edition would provide a year of awareness-building prior to the pilot service in 2020.

6) Next Meeting date - Monday, November 26, 2018

7) Other items not reasonably anticipated by the Co-Chairs 48 hours in advance of the meeting

- a) T. Matuszko noted that J. Green has offered to coordinate a site visit to the Rensselaer Rail Station to see what that facility looks like and how it functions. This visit would show a larger terminal in action, and we could include a train ride from Albany to Schenectady. The Co-Chairs will coordinate with Amtrak to set up a visit and circulate it to the committee.

8) Opportunity for Public Comment

9) Adjournment

Motion - R. Malnati

Second - N. Henebury

Motion Carries (Unanimous)

Adjourn - 4:16

The next meeting will be held on Monday, November 26th at 3:00 PM – BRPC Offices, 1 Fenn Street, Pittsfield. - meeting was subsequently cancelled.