

Berkshire Flyer 2.0 Subcommittee Meeting Minutes (Draft)

September 24, 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
X	B. Lamb		B. Steiner		

Member Attendance

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

Other Attendees: A.J. Enchill (Senator Hinds Office), Sarah Vallieres (BRTA), Peter Frieri (DOT), Lisa Fletcher-Udel (Rep. Farley-Bouvier’s Office)

Call to Order - 3:03pm

1) Introductions

- J. Butler noted that proxy representatives cannot be considered for quorum as this is a publicly appointed body.

2) Administration

a) Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 27, 2018

- Motion: C. Hoyt
- Second: B. Keane
- Motion Carries (Unanimous)

b) Others

- T. Matuszko updated that Agreement with MassDOT has come been executed.
- Senator Hinds Updates - continued communication with the railroad stakeholders to make sure the marketing is broadcast appropriately, as well as the general operations pieces. The finance piece would usually go through DOT/Amtrak - trying to get ahead of this so things are working in parallel and timing is appropriate for budget season. CSX also involved since they oversee that particular stretch of rail. DOT/Amtrak agreement was not as complex as expected.

3) Review of existing models

- Both are focused on visitor areas.

a) Ethan Allen Express

- 5hr 30min ride, 241 miles, daily service from Rutland to NYC.
- Killington shuttle can be purchased in coordination with the train ticket.
- Gramps Shuttle offers added benefits .
- Don't currently know the ridership data for these tertiary services.
- Local transit - numerous fixed route options both internal to Rutland and outside. 50 cents per ride within the city, \$2 to go outside. Free on Saturdays. Diamond express goes to Killington, into a "fare free zone." Potentially subsidized by hospitality ventures in that particular area. Local taxis and car services also available.
- Existing Model - finances through Vermont Transit Agency and New York DOT.
- Ridership - in 2017 there were 1,950 one way trips to Rutland on Fridays/Saturdays during the summer an early fall. Approx 1,500 to Lake George/Fort Edward via Glens Falls.

b) Amtrak Downeaster

- 5 round trips daily - Boston to Portland.
- Acts as commuter rail and connects the central points.
- Special trains for events and games with special delays based on event end times.
- Train goes to the major transportation hub (North Station - Boston) which allows for folks to take central transportation.
- Local transit - Greater Portland offers fixed route. \$1.50 local service, \$3.00 to surrounding communities. Local taxis and other car services exist.
- Existing Model - Funded through Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, Federal Railroad Administration programs. MaineDOT coordinates CMAQ funds that support 80% of operating costs.
- Ridership - ~1,500 one way trips to Freeport on Fridays/Saturdays in the summer/fall seasons (more of a commuter rail model).
- Freeport has incentive program for local taxi services through NNEPRA specifically.

Berkshire Flyer Estimates

- 20 weeks
- 3hr 50min ride
- Depart Friday at 2:20pm, arrive 6:10pm / Depart Sunday 2:45pm, arrive 6:45pm
- 2,600 one way trips
- Operating cost - \$421,561 (only includes Amtrak costs, not marketing or capital improvement)
- Revenue - \$184,000
- Net Operating Cost - \$237,561 (amount needed for pilot service)
- Operating Cost Per trip - \$162.13 one way
- Customers would be willing to pay \$70-75 one way

5) Discussion on existing last mile/ local transportation options in Berkshire County

a) Inventory of existing last mile/ local transportation options in Berkshire County

- Numerous taxi services with various hours are available throughout the region.
- Lacking information on ridership for the third party businesses
 - Would be useful to have transit data from folks like Kripalu shuttle
- Transport The People has around 102 vehicles, long existence in the county, interest in collaborating. Agreed to shuttle service for pilot program. Shuttle will be waiting as the train arrives. One going north, one going south. Estimated fare for shuttle would be \$35

one way or \$60 round trip per person. Rates comparable to other operations in other communities.

- Able to shift vehicles accordingly to meet demand, including up to 13 vans with 14 passenger capacity.
- BRTA Bus connections - offering 2 fixed bus options specifically, one going North, one South. Both also being offered on Fridays and Sundays. Would actually offer a new mode of transportation on Sundays for folks. Draft cost for 20 weeks would be around \$25,000. Per person costs: Charlie card - \$1.55 Local / \$4.00 system wide. Cash - \$1.75 local / \$4.50 system wide.
- Buses can't do charter service, so it would need to be accessible to anyone who shows up just like any bus. Cannot charge a higher rate for the same reason.

6) Discussion on ridership data

- Data from 2013 and 2017
- MCLA Report
 - 450 responses with 40% residing in the Berkshires.
 - 99% in favor of Flyer
 - Most anticipated using it for cultural attractions and visiting family/friends
 - Top three locations to visit: Pittsfield, North Adams, and Lenox
- 1Berkshire Report
 - 56,007 travelers invited to participate, 6,257 responded
 - Data is still considered solid 6 years later
 - 55-64 year olds are primary visiting population, starting to look younger qualitatively
 - Data doesn't acknowledge the sharing economy that has developed in recent years and doesn't engage the health and wellness population
- Need to get the information on use for the major hospitality partners in Southern Berkshire to better understand if the same people that would already be coming are just going to take these seats.
- Try and tune our model to a targeted population that isn't coming here now because of transportation restrictions, to turn it into a growth piece rather than serving populations that already have access to the region.
 - Who are we specifically trying to draw in and market to?
 - If the 2,600 people aren't "new" then is this a waste of time and money?
 - Perhaps our marketing could then be more narrow in scope if we are being strategic in marketing to those key demographics of folks
 - Younger couples from places like Brooklyn

7) Discussion on developing marketing strategy

- 13 different entities contacted with RFP, several turned down, a couple have shown interest
- RFP responses due on October 9th.
- Timeline: Decide by November 12th on who to use, have until Early January to have the brand.
- Sub-Subcommittee will be convened for the branding piece. Potentially engaging a partnership of the culturals/hospitality piece to make sure the brand is something everyone is willing to spread and share.

8) Next meeting date - Monday, October 29, 2018

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

- B. Keane - Trying to push to people who aren't coming here. Catskills and Adirondacks have really great websites that are helpful for the transportation recruitment piece. Folks that want to "explore"
- Z. Feury - What is the point of sale piece? Is there any flexibility? This could impact the marketing piece. Everything will need to go through the Amtrak system.
- E. Kerns - If you're buying a package ticket, how does the liability work? Who takes on that liability in the partnerships? Amtrak is usually the coordinating body in the other examples.

10) Opportunity for Public Comment

11) Adjournment

Motion - C. Hoyt

Second - Z. Feury

Motion Carries (Unanimous)

Adjourn - 4:07

The next meeting will be held on Monday, October 29th at 3:00 PM – BRPC Offices, 1 Fenn Street, Pittsfield.