

REIMAGINING public transit



Dear BRTA STAKEHOLDERS,

As is customary, I want to provide an overview of the significant accomplishments of your public transit authority during FY 2017. During the year, we made a number of changes to our current route map, always striving to be responsive to our riders, building efficiencies into our operations, and working within the financial constraints of our budget.

Our ridership was down 6.13%. Some of the reduced ridership could be explained by reduced enrollment at Berkshire Community College. But we wanted to understand more about both the people who ride the bus as well as those who don't.

During the fourth quarter, we began work on a survey that would address both audiences. From riders, we wanted to learn where, why and how frequently residents used our service. From those residents who don't ride, we wanted to know more about why they don't ride. Sure, we had some assumptions but we wanted to know what it would take to get them on board. We, at one point this year, would distribute the survey.

Ultimately, what we hope to learn is how can BRTA be a **better service provider** to meet the needs of the people in the communities we serve given our funding reality. Over the years, people have expressed the need for additional service including later evening and Sunday service. This new survey will answer whether this is still the case. Of course, the reality remains that these additional services would come at a cost that the federal, state, local communities, and even the riding public cannot afford to pay. **It's a real dilemma.**

Perhaps the time is right to develop a locally generated use fee that would remain in the area to support transit projects. A review of any transit related publication contains examples of communities across the nation voting to implement a dedicated funding stream for transit or transportation infrastructure. Transportation would include transit along with road and bridge projects.

Berkshire County's transportation issue is not unique, as many rural areas throughout the country face similar challenges of not enough services, not enough funding, and sparse population density. The good news is that more and more people view transportation as a backbone issue in the Berkshires. With more people working in a collaborative spirit on transportation, I believe a viable solution can and will be developed. **We welcome the opportunity to work together.**

Robert Malnati
ROBERT MALNATI

meet THE TRAINER

Julie Davine spends a portion of her day teaching people how to ride the bus. A certified trainer, she makes it possible for people in a variety of circumstances to get where they need to go and gain (or regain) their sense of **independence**.

Consider Rita. In the early hours of a July morning, Rita experienced a stroke. She was alone in her home and wasn't rescued for nearly 30 hours. The happy news was Rita recovered but the residual effects ended her ability to drive. Rita had no idea how she would even be able to leave her house.

Enter Julie. She and Rita started riding the bus together, learning about the bus schedules, asking for transfers, getting to know the various routes. This training lasted until Rita was confident she could navigate by herself. Today, she's on the go and is the first to sing Julie's praises.

Julie trains young and old alike, across the full spectrum of capabilities. She has helped transition paratransit riders to bus riders. She has assisted young people on the autism spectrum as they work toward independent travel. She also helps visitors who arrive from New York by train to get to their final destination by bus.

There's no charge for Julie's services. As Julie likes to say, **"I'm here to help. Please just ask."**

"Improving our public transportation system is central to addressing numerous challenges that I hear about often: reliable access to employment and services, the ability to move to a better job, thereby improving quality of life, connecting to other transportation options, and beyond. This is the start of an ongoing effort to improve rural transportation options throughout my district."

State Senator Adam Hinds

berkshire county A SNAPSHOT

4,805 Single parent households

1,841 Single parent households/income below poverty line

Population
129,288

Median Age
45.8

Poverty Rate
13%



The highest decline in population of all 13 Mass. Counties



The Oldest population in Mass.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau estimates

getting more people TO & FROM WORK



Work is among the most frequent destinations for BRTA riders. We know with certainty that the numbers of riders would increase if we were able to extend our hours. For years, this RTA has made the case for additional state funding for this purpose but to no avail. How could we think differently about how people get to and from work?

What We Knew

We knew which communities have the highest concentrations of households without a car: North Adams, Pittsfield and Great Barrington. We knew who the largest employers are and where they are located. In North Adams, Adams and Williamstown, it is Williams College, Walmart and Crane & Co. We know Pittsfield has the largest number of employers and is where the greatest number of individuals are employed. The top employers in Lenox, Lee & Stockbridge are Canyon Ranch, Onyx Paper and Lee Premium Outlets.

We knew there are other providers of transportation in Berkshire County. We knew we needed to hire a firm with transportation planning expertise. We submitted a grant application to fund a study to determine how we could get more people to and from work, using a ride-share program. We solicited a proposal from McMahan, with more than 40 years of experience studying and then providing solutions for transportation issues.

At the end of FY2017 we were notified that MassDot would fund a Phase I study to determine how feasible it would be to create a shared-ride transportation services program centered around getting people to and from work.

The study results are scheduled for release in FY2018.

it takes a village TO REIMAGINE PUBLIC TRANSIT

The challenges of public transit aren't new.

What is new is a widespread interest and involvement by organizations and individuals throughout Berkshire County. Consider State Senator Adam Hinds and MCLA's Dean Jake Eberwein who cohosted a design thinking workshop. Participants included planning, social service, colleges, Working Cities, the local chapter of NAACP along with the BRTA.

First, the group had some goals in mind: How do you extend bus service from 6am until midnight? Near parking? Without ever having to change a bus? The group came up with a BRTA Circulator route in the shape of a figure 8, plotting current Fixed Route buses and the distances traveled between all BRTA-served cities and towns. This is an exciting new way to think about a service map, opening the door for incentivizing other private carriers while increasing frequency and duration of service. Of course, to the Mass DOT and the legislature, more funding would be required but we believe we have a strong case to make.

BIKE RACKS & JOBS



Ever notice how all BRTA buses feature bike racks? Ever wonder why bike racks are so important to some of our riders? You'd probably be surprised to learn that bike racks have less to do with staying fit and more to do with getting and keeping a job.

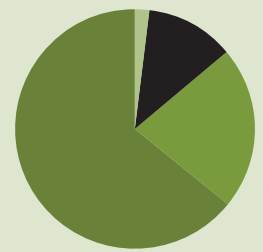
Here's how it works. People who don't have cars often rely on public transportation to get to work. Often times the distance between the bus stop and a person's place of employment is farther than it's feasible to walk and get to work on time. So they rely on a combo of bus & bike to get to work.

Then there's the matter of getting to jobs with hours that extend beyond BRTA service hours. These employees are riding their bikes home from work, often times in inclement weather. We know because we hear from them when we do surveys of riders. They ask us to remember how important public transit is to working people.

Next time you see a BRTA bus with a bike rack, please remember how important it is to a fellow resident's livelihood.

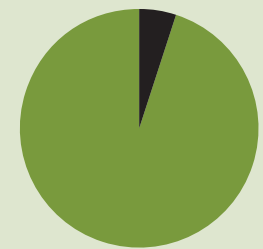
the FINANCIALS

TOTAL OPERATING + NON-OPERATING REVENUES of \$15,443,426 by Source



- Transportation revenues 64%
- State and local operating grants 22%
- Federal operating grants 12%
- Other 2%

TOTAL OPERATING + NON-OPERATING EXPENSES of \$15,443,426 by Source



- Transportation services 95%
- Administration 5%

BROKERAGE TRIP HISTORY

DESTINATION	FY16	FY17
DCF Pilot		417
DMA (Department of Medical Assistance)	132,646	157,687
DDS (Department of Developmental Services)		
Dayhab	89,656	90,575
Route	13,776	13,243
DPH (Department of Public Health)	4,620	3,957
MRC (Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission)	772	1,068
DMH (Department of Mental Health)	3,763	2,814
TOTAL	245,233	269,761

BRTA TRIP HISTORY

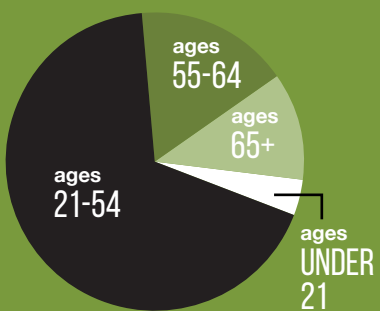
	FY16	FY17
FIXED ROUTE RIDERSHIP	576,243	539,699
PARATRANSIT	76,929	73,401
TOTAL RIDERSHIP	653,172	613,100

BRTA by the NUMBERS

Below you will find the results of our ridership survey conducted in 2017. Survey participants included 231 customers on all routes.

ON TIME SERVICE
92%
OF THE TIME
★ ★ ★ ★

RIDERSHIP BY AGE



DESTINATIONS

Work **35.9%**

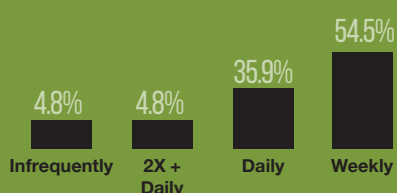
Shopping **23.4%**

Medical **16%**

Family **12.6%**

Other **12.1%**

FREQUENCY OF USE



customers with BICYCLES

7,427

customers with WHEELCHAIRS

2,032

TAKE A RIDE

BRTA Bus service days and hours

Monday-Friday 5:45 am – 7:20 pm

Saturday 7:15 am – 7:00 pm

Sunday 7:15 am – 7:00 pm

Holidays: No service on the following days:
New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas



1 Columbus Avenue
Pittsfield, MA 01201
800.292.2782 • 413.499.2782
WWW.BERKSHIRERTA.COM

BUS ROUTE LEGEND

- 1** Pittsfield-N. Adams
- 2** Pittsfield-Lee
- 3** N. Adams-Williamstown
- 3S** N. Adams-Williamstown (Seasonal, September - May)
- 4** Dalton/Hinsdale
- 5** Lanesborough
- 11** Berkshire Community College (Pittsfield)
- 12** Southeast Loop (Pittsfield)
- 13** Linden/Hancock (Pittsfield)
- 14** Southeast Shopping Loop (Pittsfield)
- 15** West Pittsfield (Pittsfield)
- 16** Crane Ave
- 21** Gr. Barrington (Gr. Barrington, Housatonic, Stockbridge)
- 21X** Gr. Barrington (Gr. Barrington, Lenox, Pittsfield)
- 34** North Adams

MAP SYMBOLS

- Landmark
- Route Stop (color coded)
- Ashuwillticook Rail Trail
- Limited Service
- State Highway
- ▭ U.S. Highways

