

PITTSBURGH REGIONAL TRANSIT
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2023

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Port Authority of Allegheny County d/b/a Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) was held on Thursday, November 16, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. at PRT's Administration Offices, 345 Sixth Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 15222-2527, pursuant to due public notice given as required by law.

The following members were in attendance in person: Jeffrey Letwin, Chair, Jennifer Liptak, John Tague, Lori Mizgorski, Ann Ogoreuc, Michelle Zmijanac, Joseph Totten and Stephanie Turman. The following members were in attendance virtually: Senator Jim Brewster, Representative Nick Pisciotto and Ali Doyle. Board Solicitor Sandy Garfinkel attended in person.

The Chair called the November 16, 2023 Regular Meeting to order and asked the audience to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and for a moment of silence for those affected by gun violence.

A recommendation was made for approval of the minutes of the October 27, 2023 Regular Meeting. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously passed.

Mr. Letwin called on Pittsburgh Regional Transit CEO Katharine Kelleman for a report.

Ms. Kelleman asked for a moment of silence for the following retired employees who passed away since her last report: Operators Robert Shelter, Pamela Chavis, David Schenk, J.C. Stepp, and Raymond Alexander; automotive mechanic Albert Bowe Jr.; and body repairperson Gayle Smith.

This being our last meeting of the year, Ms. Kelleman wanted to publicly thank, on behalf of all our employees and riders, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald for his unwavering commitment to public transit throughout the years. "Mr. Fitzgerald has been an incredible transit champion, supporting our workers and increased funding." She said that she is looking forward to working with County Executive-elect Sara Innamorato, who she is sure will also be a staunch advocate for public transit.

Next, Ms. Kelleman announced that we've added a Spanish language option to our Customer Service phone system. The new system allows riders to receive information to help navigate the system in Spanish. Riders also have the option of speaking to a customer service agent who can provide translation services in Spanish and more than 200 other languages, adding that PRT is working to integrate other opportunities for non-English speakers to interact with our system in the future as well.

Ms. Kelleman reported that last month PRT modified schedules on several bus routes, including the 61s and 71s, and promised she would be reporting today on how it's going. After an uptick in questions and comments about the changes in the first few weeks, PRT has seen a significant reduction in calls as riders have become accustomed to the changes.

Ridership totals were not available at the time of the meeting, but Ms. Kelleman was happy to report that PRT has seen a 60 percent reduction in trips with standing room only, a five percent increase in on-time performance, and out of service has been under two percent since October 1.

Ms. Kelleman added that the reality is that there is a shortage of qualified personnel, which is a challenge that extends beyond PRT. The transit industry as a whole is grappling with a shortage of skilled professionals, from bus operators to Maintenance staff. PRT has 13 percent fewer operators than it did before the pandemic and has reduced service by about 14 percent.

“These service reductions have not been easy, but we have to maintain a balance between providing essential transit service and addressing the concerns associated with overworked staff. These incremental cuts have been reluctantly implemented to improve service reliability for our riders, mitigate the risk of fatigue-related incidents, and maintain the overall well-being of our dedicated employees.”

Ms. Kelleman concluded her remarks by saying that PRT understands the inconvenience these service adjustments may cause, and empathizes with the impact on riders’ daily lives. “We have made changes to streamline our hiring process, and we’ve been able to turn candidates to employees faster. We’ve also been actively recruiting and training new employees to address these staffing shortages, so we are eventually able to restore and expand service.”

That concluded the report of the Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. Letwin next congratulated Senator Brewster for his recent reappointment as the Vice Chairman of the state Budget and Finance Committee.

The Chair next called on Ms. Zmijanac for a report of the Performance Oversight Committee.

Ms. Zmijanac reported that the Performance Oversight Committee met last week and she had five resolutions for the Board’s consideration.

The Committee first reviewed six procurement items and determined the bids to be in accordance with PRT’s procurement policies and procedures and prices to be fair and reasonable. The Performance Oversight Committee recommended awarding the bids listed in the resolution for the total amount of approximately \$4.2 million.

On behalf of the Performance Oversight Committee, Ms. Zmijanac respectfully requested approval of the resolution. It was moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the resolution be approved as presented.

The second resolution Ms. Zmijanac presented was seeking authorization for PRT to extend and amend an agreement with Willis Towers Watson US, LLC, to provide employee benefits consulting services. The initial three-year term of the agreement expires on February 28, 2024, and PRT is seeking to exercise the first option year extension and to increase the total authorized not-to-exceed amount by \$275,000.

The Performance Oversight Committee recommended extending the agreement for one additional year to February 28, 2025, and increasing the total authorized amount of the agreement from \$825,000 to \$1.1 million dollars.

On behalf of the Performance Oversight Committee, Ms. Zmijanac respectfully requested approval of the resolution. It was moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the resolution be approved as presented.

The next resolution presented would authorize PRT to enter into a Structures Over Facilities Agreement with the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority.

Ms. Zmijanac reported that PRT is planning a project to improve the rail station on Broadway Avenue, known as the Belasco Station, and a portion of the project will encroach over a portion of public sewer lines and related facilities.

In order to complete the project, PRT and PWSA have negotiated an agreement that provides for the terms and conditions of PRT's encroachment and provides the Water Authority with a permanent easement to access its facilities for future maintenance purposes.

On behalf of the Performance Oversight Committee, Ms. Zmijanac respectfully requested approval of the resolution. It was moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the resolution be approved as presented.

The next resolution presented was seeking authorization for PRT to extend its agreement for real estate services.

Ms. Zmijanac reported that PRT requires a consultant to provide expertise and technical support for all aspects of its real estate interests.

The current agreement is set to expire on December 31, 2023, and as services are critical to PRT's continued oversight and stewardship of its real estate assets and transit operations, PRT wishes to continue these services with its current contractor while PRT completes a new public solicitation for services.

The Performance Oversight Committee recommended extending the agreement with Interstate Acquisition Services for an additional three months and increasing the previously authorized total not-to exceed amount by \$150,000.

On behalf of the Performance Oversight Committee, Ms. Zmijanac respectfully requested approval of the resolution. It was moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the resolution be approved as presented.

Ms. Zmijanac presented the final resolution requesting authorization to award construction contracts for the West Mifflin Garage equipment replacement and facilities improvements project.

After review of the responsive bids, it was determined that the General Construction Contract be awarded to Mosites Construction Company in the amount of \$8,987,222.00, the Mechanical construction contract be awarded to SSM Industries, Inc., in the amount of \$596,000.00, the Plumbing construction contract be awarded to Wheels Mechanical Contracting & Supplier, Inc., in the amount of \$688,000.00, and the Electrical construction contract be awarded to Allegheny City Electric, Inc., in the amount of \$1,856,500.00.

The Performance Oversight Committee recommended awarding these contracts as presented, subject to completing all pre-award requirements.

On behalf of the Performance Oversight Committee, Ms. Zmijanac respectfully requested approval of the resolution. It was moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the resolution be approved as presented.

Ms. Zmijanac concluded her report by adding that the Committee also received a detailed presentation concerning PRT's System Safety Program from PennDOT's State Safety Oversight Agency representatives.

That concluded the report of the Performance Oversight Committee.

The Chair called on Mr. Tague for a report of the Stakeholder Relations Committee.

Mr. Tague reported that the Planning and Stakeholder Relations Committee met last week and had a few items for the Board.

Staff presented an update on the October 1 Major Service Changes and a high-level look at the changes anticipated for February. While it was too early for official ridership data from the October 1 service changes, preliminary data reflected that the number of trips with standees on the 61s and 71s had decreased from 100 trips on average each weekday, almost all in the East End, to 37, almost all in Uptown. Noting that on-time performance on 61s and 71s was also up by five percent.

Because the Committee does not meet again until January, the February tentative service changes were also previewed, which include a minor service reduction of about 1.5 percent. This will allow for additional operators to assist with covering service when operators are out and will help stabilize service based on projections for the rest of 2024 and beyond as the organization turns the corner with operator hiring. Mr. Tague noted that the proposed changes also include routing changes for about 10 routes, running time adjustments for about 20 routes, and frequency changes on more than 20 routes, among others.

Mr. Tague concluded this portion of his report by stating that these proposed changes are still in progress and will not be formally presented to the Board until January.

Next Mr. Tague reported on the Allegheny County Transit Council and Committee for Accessible Transportation.

He reported that ACTC met on November 15, 2023. Staff provided the Council with an update on the October service adjustments and an overview of the planned February service adjustments. The group also received a presentation on Transit-Oriented Communities and an update on the Herron Station area plan. Their next scheduled meeting is January 25, 2024.

The Committee for Accessible Transportation met on November 2, 2023. CAT member Alisa Grishman provided remarks on the PRT stroller policy, detour signage, Complete Streets Advisory Committee, and the CMU committee on delivery robots.

Staff provided the Committee with an overview of the Bus Line Redesign project and the coming community engagement and an update on the recent October service adjustments and on the Herron Station area plan.

Karen Hoesch of ACCESS provided updates on the First Transit transition and the continuing shortage of drivers continuing to affect transportation providers across the country. CAT's next scheduled meeting is February 1, 2024.

That concluded the report of the Planning and Stakeholder Relations Committee.

The Chair called on Ms. Ann Ogoreuc for a report of the Finance Committee.

Ms. Ogoreuc reported that the Finance Committee met on Thursday, November 9th, 2023 and she had one item to report.

Ms. Ogoreuc reported that the October financial results were presented at last week's meeting.

It was reported that Total Operating Income for the month of October was under budget by \$700,000 due to lower Passenger and Access Revenue. Total Expenses for the month of October were below budget by \$900,000 due to lower Wages and Benefits Materials and Purchased Services.

Total Operating Income is \$2.8 million higher than last fiscal year through October due to higher Passenger Revenues and Investment Income. Total Expenses through October are \$6.6 million higher than last fiscal year due to higher Wages & Benefits, Materials, ACCESS, and Other Expense. Total Subsidy is \$42.9 million higher than last fiscal year due to \$30 million in additional federal stimulus invoicing, higher Preventative Maintenance invoicing and increased State Operating Assistance.

Finally, it was reported that PRT has invoiced a combined \$31.1 million against the ARPA and CRRSAA federal stimulus programs for the fiscal year and ended the month of October with approximately \$297.2 million in cash reserves.

That concluded the report of the Finance Committee.

The Chair next called on Ms. Liptak for the report of the Technology Committee.

Ms. Liptak reported that the Technology Committee met on November 9, and she had three resolutions for the Board's consideration.

At the meeting, the Committee first heard a presentation of a resolution to extend an agreement with Hitachi Rail STS, Inc., for the Procurement/Replacement of the Automatic Trip Stop System. The ATS is a critical safety mechanism on the rail services and the project is continuing. The current contract expires on December 11, 2023, and the request is to extend it with no change to the previously authorized not-to-exceed dollar amount for one year in order to complete the project.

On behalf of the Technology Committee, Ms. Liptak respectfully requested approval of the resolution. It was moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the resolution be approved as presented.

The next resolution presented was to authorize PRT to extend and amend an agreement with Ideal Integrations to provide Data Center Hosting and Managed Security Services.

It was reported that the contractor's services have been satisfactory and, as the initial three-year term of the contract concludes, PRT is seeking authorization to exercise the optional first extension year and to increase the total not-to-exceed amount from \$3,940,968.24 to \$5,254,624.32.

On behalf of the Technology Committee, Ms. Liptak respectfully requested approval of the resolution. It was moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the resolution be approved as presented.

The final resolution presented was to authorize PRT to enter into an agreement with Clever Devices Ltd., for Software Maintenance and Support Services. Clever Devices was first utilized on PRT's vehicles in 2000, and there has been significant growth in services and utilization in the years since.

This resolution would authorize PRT to enter into an agreement with Clever Devices for these services for up to five years through December 31, 2028, for a total authorized not-to-exceed amount of \$4,021,320.

On behalf of the Technology Committee, Ms. Liptak respectfully requested approval of the resolution. It was moved, seconded and unanimously agreed that the resolution be approved as presented.

That concluded the report of the Technology Committee.

The Chair announced that the Board will defer from presenting the resolution listed on the agenda under new business and therefore there was no further business to report.

There were five speakers who gave public comment at the November 2023 meeting*. The first speaker, Ms. Laura Perkins, a human rights organizer with Cas San Jose Community Organization, stated that her organization's vision is a region that celebrates Latino culture, welcomes immigrants, and embraces inclusion, dignity and respect. She was there to offer her free services to help make this transit system more inclusive to the immigrant community.

Ms. Perkins thanked the Board for adding Spanish language to the automated IVR system, adding that it is a move in the right direction but we have a long way to go.

Ms. Perkins also volunteered her services to assist riders during the renovations of the Belasco Station on the Red Line, which a study shows that 38 percent of the Red Line riders speak Spanish.

The next speaker, Mr. Dan Blonsky, is an organizer for PPT, who addressed the Board regarding the service changes on the 61 and 71 routes. He has been having conversations with riders who have had concerns in the reduction of seats going between Oakland and downtown and the reduction of frequency. Mr. Blonsky stated that this heightens tension between riders and operators and creates an environment around public transit that is not comfortable. He also stated that PRT's on-time performance has dropped and at no point during this year has PRT met their goal of 73 percent of buses arriving on time.

Mr. Blonsky mentioned that a new report published by the Urban Institute shows the transportation systems in seven mid-size cities are now carrying more passengers than they were before the pandemic, so this is an indication that if PRT improves service, reduces fares and respects the people that are riding transit, we can bring back more riders to our system.

The next speaker Ms. Morgan Zukowski, similar to the last two meetings in which she addressed the Board, stated her concerns regarding the 61 and 71 service changes. Ms. Zukowski stated that she does not believe that the Board is listening to her concerns. She noted that now PRT is talking about a bus line redesign, and that this prospect is terrifying. She emphasized the importance of the public transit system to convey people to medical appointments, students to class, and workers to jobs.

She will continue coming back to these meetings because she believes in the accountability of the Board and that her community deserves a world class transit system and she won't stand for anything less with this new bus line redesign.

The next speaker, Ms. Gina Anderson, is a certified land use planner. Her remarks included that recent cuts to Pittsburgh's transit system are part of continual declines in service. PRT is not alone, but according to her data, out of all the systems hit during the pandemic and now thriving are those that increased their service.

She also said that at last week's Committee meetings, PRT gave four data highlights for the October service changes that included trips with standees, on-time performance, ridership and rider concerns, but there were glaring omissions. There are no measures yet shared of how the cuts are impacting riders. Robust data should be provided on transfers in Oakland, transfer waiting times in Oakland, waiting times at stops for changed routes and lost ridership.

Ms. Anderson strongly urged the Board to direct PRT management to reverse the service cuts of October, and to call for a moratorium on more cuts until thorough data has been provided and assessed.

The final speaker, Ms. Amy Zaiss, addressed the Board by saying that she spends more time than she would like to admit on PRT transparency and reliability. She noted that as the statistics for October are not available yet, she is very concerned that PRT is being able to begin a particular story and narrative without the public or media.

Ms. Zaiss also heard earlier that supposedly complaints are down. She wanted to point that if riders don't feel like they are being heard, they would tend to be discouraged from continuing to complain. She stated that the public deserves to see the actual information and the Board has an obligation to listen to the public and make that information available.

She believes this is one of the points listed in the PA auditors report, suggesting that PRT do more to offer transparency to riders and the public about what PRT is doing at the agency to address these laws and issues.

During public remarks, a question was raised about how long speakers have to make their remarks. The Chair clarified that individual speakers are allotted three minutes and it is five minutes for an agency where more than one member of the agency has signed up to make public comments.

The Chair announced the next Regular meeting of the Board will be Friday, January 26, 2024.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned.

*Full testimonies can be found on PRT's website at www.ridePRT.org.