

PITTSBURGH REGIONAL TRANSIT  
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 2024

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) was held on Friday, March 22, 2024, at PRT's Administration Offices, 345 Sixth Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 15222-2527, pursuant to due public notice given as required by law.

The following Board members were in attendance in person: Jeff Letwin, Chair, Ann Ogoreuc, Joseph Totten, John Tague, Michelle Zmijanac. The following members participated by via TEAMS: Senator James Brewster, Ali Doyle, Lori Mizgorski, Jen Liptak and Stephanie Turman. Board Solicitor Sandy Garfinkel attended in person.

The Chair called the Regular Meeting to order and asked the audience to stand for the pledge of allegiance and asked for a moment of silence for victims of gun violence.

A recommendation was made for approval of the minutes of the February 23, 2024 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 first asked for a moment of silence for the following employees who passed away since our last meeting: Operators Thomas Hankins, Vincent Talarico, James Maddox, and Thomas Dougherty; Automotive repairperson William Thomas; Sign painter John Murrell; and Route Foreman Frank Samolovitch.

Ms. Kelleman next recognized the late County Executive Jim Roddey, who passed away earlier this month. Among Mr. Roddey's many civic accomplishments was his time as chair of PRT's board and his involvement with the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum. She remarked that as a friend of public transit, Mr. Roddey will certainly be missed.

Ms. Kelleman reported that this week, PRT announced a series of projects that will affect the rail system for the next few years. A meeting was held in Beechview on March 21, 2024, which was very well attended, and PRT will be hosting an online meeting on April 2. The projects range from replacing nearly 10,000 feet of tracks on the Red Line and inside the Mt. Washington and Mount Lebanon Transit Tunnels to rehabbing the Panhandle Bridge. The projects combined represent a \$150 million investment in our light-rail system, and it all starts immediately following the Pirates home opener on April 5.

Ms. Kelleman announced that Wood Street Station will be closed for construction but the Penn Station will be open. Riders will need to travel to Gateway Station to ride the T to Northside and Allegheny Stations until the end of May. In mid-June, PRT will be shutting down most of the Red Line for the majority of the summer to replace the tracks and make much-needed repairs. PRT will be replacing it with two bus routes and a rail shuttle that will run from Dormont to Overbrook Junction, where riders can transfer to the Blue or Silver Lines.

Ms. Kelleman said that staff went back and forth on whether or not to close the Red Line or close different parts at different times and agreed that this approach will allow PRT to perform the work as quickly as possible and get out with as little disruption as possible.

Ms. Kelleman next gave an update on the Monongahela Incline. It will continue to be closed for repairs. “The last thing we want to do is reopen too early and have another failure, which would force us to be closed for even longer. More importantly, we want to ensure the safety of our employees and riders.”

Ms. Kelleman announced that PRT has engaged an outside firm for the independent review of the Mon Incline that was announced last week and she hopes to have a completed scope and work order soon. “We’ve also begun to engage with members of the community to form the review committee that will be an extra set of eyes to ensure transparency and accountability.”

Ms. Kelleman noted that the Board today is expected to approve the purchase of minivans that will, in the future, operate as the new Mon Incline shuttles.

That concluded the report of the Chief Executive Officer.

Next, the Chair called on Ms. Michelle Zmijanac, Chair of the Performance Oversight Committee, for a report.

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

The Committee first reviewed nine 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 the award of bids listed in the resolution for the total amount of \$3,233,061.73.

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 was seeking authorization to adopt and implement PRT’s 2023 Amended Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan.

At the Committee meeting, the Committee heard a presentation from PRT’s Chief Safety Officer, Burt Jennings. Mr. Jennings reported that in June 2020, PRT’s Board authorized PRT to adopt and implement its first Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan. Pursuant to FTA Safety Plan Rule, PRT must review its Safety Plan on an annual basis to determine if further changes and/or updates need to be made, and if so, changes must be approved by PennDOT’s State Safety Oversight Agency, with final approval by PRT’s Board.

It was noted that the State Safety Oversight Agency has approved the changes made to the 2023 plan, as well as ATU Local 85 Management approving the Plan.

The Performance Oversight Committee recommended that PRT’s Board Adopt and Implement the 2023 Amended Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan attached to the Resolution as Exhibit A.

Ms. Zmijanac noted that copies of the Plan are available at the registration desk and can also be found on PRT's website.

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.

That concluded the report of the Performance Oversight Committee.

The Chair then called on Mr. John Tague, Chair of the Planning and Stakeholder Relations Committee, for a report.

Mr. Tague reported that the Planning and Stakeholder Relations Committee held its public meeting last week and he had a few items to report.

The Committee received a presentation on the final Herron Station Area Plan. It was reported that Herron Station, located in Polish Hill, was identified as an attractive location with a potential for new development around the station and new ridership. The new station will include better lighting for increased safety, seating, a ticket vending machine, and ADA accessible ramps.

Next the Committee received an update on the Calendar Year 2024 Operator Hiring and Training Plan. It was reported that the goal in 2024 is to hire as many as 300 operators to improve reliability and set up our agency for success. In an effort to get the operators trained, PRT is hiring more instructors, increasing the number of CDL examiners, and increasing training class sizes. The plan also continues to support maintenance training, operator qualifications and other associated training.

Next, the Committee received an update on the Monongahela Incline. As mentioned by CEO Kelleman, the agency will be hiring an independent consultant and forming a review committee following several short and moderate term closures over the past year. The consultant will review the incline's operation, its ongoing maintenance procedures, and other aspects, with the goal of improving the incline's operation and reliability. PRT is also working to update and improve the deployment and operation of shuttle buses for future planned and unplanned incline closures.

Finally, Mr. Tague gave an update on the Allegheny County Transit Council and the Committee for Accessible Transportation. ACTC met on March 20. Staff provided the council with an overview of the upcoming rail and Red Line projects. The next scheduled ACTC meeting is April 24.

The CAT Committee did not meet in March. The next scheduled meeting is May 2.

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

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

Ms. Ogoreuc reported that the Finance Committee met on Thursday, March 14, and had only one item to report.

Staff presented the February financial results at last week's meeting as follows.

It was reported that Total Operating Income for the month of February was under budget by \$600 thousand due to lower Passenger, ACCESS and Advertising revenue. Total Expenses for the month of February were below budget by \$2.8 million due to lower Wages and Benefits, Purchased Services, Materials and ACCESS expense.

Total Operating Income is \$6.4 million higher than last fiscal year through February due to higher Passenger Revenue, ACCESS Revenue and Interest Income. Total Expenses through February is \$12.7 million higher than last fiscal year due to higher expenses in every category except Utilities.

Total Subsidy is \$94.2 million higher than last fiscal year due to higher invoicing of federal stimulus and Preventative Maintenance.

As of February 2024, the total remaining federal stimulus balance is \$63 million of CRRSAA funds.

Finally, it was reported that PRT ended the month of February with approximately \$366.7 million in cash reserves.

That concluded the report of the Finance Committee.

There was no New Business before the Board.

Before moving on to public comment, Mr. Letwin reminded all our speakers of the three-minute speaking limit.

There were five speakers who addressed the Board at the meeting. The first speaker was Mr. Andrew Hussein. Mr. Hussein thanked the Board for the communications regarding the Red Line closure. He was happy to hear about the shuttles but asked that staff consider tweaks to the shuttle service because of the gaps in service and increased frequency.

The next speaker was Ms. Phyllis DiDiano. Ms. Didiano is a Beechview resident and attended the public meeting last night. She stated that many of the upcoming projects in the next five years do affect people's lives. She commended Ms. Amy Silbermann, chief development officer, for the brief overview of the plans, mentioning Ms. Silbermann's knowledge and professionalism. Even though it was a very thorough presentation, not enough time was allotted to address all of the questions. Ms. DiDiano requested more time be spent on Beechview to ensure that the residents and visitors and those employed, can have a reliable method of transportation available.

Although the webpages on PRT's website are great, moving forward she requested that a one-stop way to communicate issues that may come up such as a project manager, a specific office or an online form dedicated to the Red Line be established.

She also requested that for the interim, everyone that needs a transfer to connect to another vehicle should be provided one with no charge when disembarking a bus or rail shuttle.

Her final issue was her concerns with the ADA accessible Belasco Station. She has grave concerns about the safety of navigating the now two-lane Broadway Avenue. It is difficult enough at present to know when it is safe to cross with cars traveling in high speeds around the bend. There needs to be more discussion about the safety of the plans as they now stand.

The next speaker, Mr. Hunter Akridge, had issues regarding the bus schedules. His main concern was not enough time being allotted for operators to make comfort stops. He said it is unsafe should an operator have an emergency and is unable to stop. He wants his drivers to be able to concentrate on driving with nothing else on his/her mind.

The next speaker, Mr. Tayveon Smith, had a specific issue regarding service on the Y49 route. Mr. Smith catches the 5:30 a.m. bus. He is proposing that the schedule be changed to 5:00 or 5:15 a.m. to allow him and his fellow passengers to make their connection. If the Y49 is just a few minutes late he misses his connection and is late for work.

The final speaker, Ms. Bernadette Mosley, was also at the Beechview meeting on March 21st. She too wanted to commend Ms. Amy Silbermann for her thorough presentation. Although not the safest place, she thanked PRT for the changes to the Belasco Stop. She is very happy with the design of the accessible ramp and distance between the platform and the railcar when navigating a wheelchair. She also thanked PRT for providing the shuttles during the construction but agreed with the woman who spoke earlier about not charging for transfers when making any connections. She also has concerns with the drivers not wanting to put both seats up in the bus in order for wheelchairs and scooters to make three-point turns.

That ended the public comment period of the meeting.

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

With no further business the meeting was adjourned.