

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING - BLOOMINGTON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION CORPORATION (BPTC) FEBRUARY 16, 2021, 5:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

Chair Obermeyer convened the regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Bloomington Public Transportation Corporation. The meeting was held electronically using a Zoom meeting accessed at:

<http://us02web.zoom.us/j/85858151639?pwd=bjO4ZEtSMX1pNjZNek1yaW1Nc29YUT09>

Meeting ID: 858 5815 1639
Password: 935849

The Zoom meeting was also accessible at the following phone numbers:

(312) 626-6799

Meeting ID: 858 5815 1638
Password: 935849

ROLL CALL

Board Members and staff present: Chair Nancy Obermeyer, Vice Chair Kent McDaniel, Marilyn Hartman, Secretary James McLary and Board Member Doug Horn. Also present were Lewis May, General Manager, Christa Browning, Controller, Brenda Underwood, Director of Human Resources and Marketing, Zac Huneck, Planning and Special Projects Manager and Eli McCormick, Customer Service Manager/BT Access Manager.

Members of the Public: Holden Abshier, Dave Askins

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS ON NON-ACTION ITEMS

There were no petitions and communications on non-action items.

MESSAGES FROM BOARD MEMBERS

There was no comment from Board Members.

MESSAGES FROM THE MANAGER

Mr. May provided the Board a COVID-19 update and its continuing impacts on BPTC. Mr. May noted that about two weeks ago the CDC and TSA issued Federal mask directives that requires the proper wearing of masks on all public transportation services. There are exceptions such as:

- A person can remove their mask for a brief period to eat, drink, or take medication.
- Children younger than age 2 don't have to wear a mask.
- People with certain medical conditions don't have to wear a mask.

Mr. May explained that drivers have been instructed to courteously tell passengers that aren't wearing masks that they must comply or get off the bus. If passengers refuse to do either, a supervisor is contacted to meet the bus as soon as possible. If the passenger refuses the supervisor's request, we contact the police to have the passenger removed. The police department has agreed to assist us in such cases with the understanding that their normal emergencies will get first priority.

Mr. May noted we will continue to supply free masks on buses to anyone who doesn't have one. He said we have given out more than 40,000 reusable and disposable masks on buses. Mask compliance by riders continues to be good, however, there are still a few riders who aren't complying.

Mr. May noted that the average weekday ridership per month since the pandemic began is shown in the table below. Mr. May noted that in January 2021 we carried about 18 percent of what we carried in January 2020 for an average weekday as shown in the data that was included in the Board packet.

MONTH	2020/2021 Average Weekday Ridership	2019/2020 Average Weekday Ridership
January 2020	12,487	12,183
February	16,922	14,740
March (thru spring break)	10,736	9,618
March (post spring break)	1,503	14,746
April	1,266	14,081
May	1,399	5,651
June	1,913	5,051
July	1,990	4,779
August	2,630	8,213
September	3,627	17,028
October	3,562	16,672
November	3,039	14,494
December	2,147	11,656
January	2,298	12,487

With respect to COVID-19 related actions, staff recommends the following actions between now and the March 16, 2021 board meeting:

- Continue operating both fixed route and BT Access service fare-free for the near term and re-evaluate on a monthly basis as local conditions change relative to the pandemic.

Also, continue operating with rear-door boarding and alighting for ambulatory passengers so as to provide as much space as possible between the driver and customers. Non-ambulatory persons would be allowed to use the front doors for boarding and alighting.

- Continue the closure of the Downtown Transit Center indoor passenger waiting area and restrooms to the public. We would continue to provide outdoor portable restrooms for the public at the Downtown Transit Center. Re-evaluate on a monthly basis as local conditions change relative to the pandemic.
- Continue with the closure of the Grimes Lane facility to the public. Re-evaluate on a monthly basis as local conditions change relative to the pandemic.
- Continue remote working for designated administrative and management employees. Re-evaluate on a monthly basis as local conditions change relative to the pandemic.

Board Member Horn asked is there appropriate visual signage on each unit and at each bus stop alerting the ridership that this is now a Federal mandate. Mr. May explained that there is signage on all the buses, signage has also been placed at our downtown transfer facility, and we have posted notices on our website and our social media. However, we do not have signage at all the bus stops given that there are over 500 bus stops. Board Member Horn asked if it was on DoubleMap. Mr. May explained that the bus tracker app also works off of our voice annunciator platform so we are using that to periodically make public service messages over the public address system of the buses advising of the requirement to wear masks.

Mr. May noted included Under New Business is an action item for the Board to consider for approval of a motion to continue the current operating actions being followed in response to the continuing pandemic. Board Member Horn asked what will a guiding focus to staff to change that recommendation in the near future. Mr. May noted one of the guiding principles will be the infection rate or the number of new cases and how that is trending here in Monroe County. Board Member Horn asked is there indication with other transportation corporations across the state or country in terms of discussion about how they are handling this issue and what their parameters are. Mr. May noted he is in touch with most of our peers across the State of Indiana and we are one of the few systems that operating fare free and still doing rear door only boarding and alighting. Most of the other systems went back to collecting fares just a few months after the pandemic began. Board Member Horn noted that he questions for the benefit of the public whether we can foresee yet when we might consider perhaps backing off some of these restrictions though not necessarily all of them. Mr. May responded that he would like to give it at least another 30 days to see how the numbers trend with new infections and new cases of COVID here in Monroe County. We can report back to the Board at our March 16 meeting and perhaps we will have some better information. Vice Chairman McDaniel noted that he thinks it is a good idea to hold our ground for now mainly because of the new variants that are showing up that are more contagious. He said the hope is that it continues to improve but we are not out of this problem yet. Board Member Horn said he shares that concern. However, if our peers are viewing this matter in a different way, we may need to understand what makes our situation different. He is just trying to again to think about the public and the limitations that we placed

on the service for their benefit and make certain that we do the most that we can with the best information we can to begin bring service back.

Secretary McLary said that really the only two things that we are doing different from others is fare-free service and rear-door boarding. Mr. May responded we do have continued closure of our downtown transit center and our Grimes Lane facilities to the public. Board Member Horn noted he is not suggesting that they are doing it right it but it would be an interesting comparison. Mr. May noted he would provide more information to the Board before the next Board Meeting.

Secretary McLary asked what is going on with the Indiana state association. Mr. May responded discussions are going quite well as some association members have started some informal advocacy efforts with members of the General Assembly on state transit funding matters. It is a biennial budget at the General Assembly state funding for transit is an important issue. Transit systems are moving towards the creation of a new state association and those systems include Bloomington, Lafayette, South Bend, Fort Wayne, and Indianapolis. We had a virtual meeting a few weeks ago and talked about organizational structure and dues. The idea is to start building some reserves with the association that can eventually be used to hire an advocacy specialist and perhaps an association manager or firm. Mr. May noted the general manager in Lafayette had a virtual meeting with Dr. Tim Brown who is the Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee and was making the case for PMTF funding to be non-reverting. The challenge that we faced in recent years is that the Governor had done a reversion on PMTF funding of about 3 percent. INDOT basically takes 3 percent off the top and keeps that money and doesn't return it to the PMTF fund. He said it is deducted from the allocations that are made to the transit systems. We are moving to try to get PMTF to be a non-reverting fund. The Governor's Budget is proposing to bring us back to 2020 levels plus some as early as next year. We have heard there is some discussion within the General Assembly about cutting it back primarily because most transit systems were CARES Act funding recipients.

Mr. May discussed the proposed service changes. Last January/February we made a number of adjustments to the study recommendations based on the public input we received from several public hearings and meetings that we had in the fall of 2019. We were about to seek Board approval to move ahead with implementation of the service changes in the fall of 2020 and then the pandemic hit in March and we agreed to postpone those service changes pending the outcome of the pandemic. Tonight we want to reopen the discussion with the Board regarding the service changes. There are some important questions that we need answers to before we can move forward with service changes.

The following are the three primary questions:

- When will IU resume normal face-to-face classes with students?
- When is the new hospital expected to open to the general public?
- How many additional drivers will BT need in order to implement full service including the proposed service changes?

We posed the question to IU this last week as to whether they know when face-to-face classes will resume with students. They tell us that their target date is the fall of this year. However, they do not have anything definite on that and it is going to be driven by the pandemic. Secondly, the question of what is the latest date of the opening of the new hospital. Based on the latest information from the Mayor's office, November of this year is when the hospital is scheduled to open. Board Member Horn noted there was discussion that the classroom section of the building would be open first followed by the hospital. Mr. May said that is the last that we heard. The Academic Health Center was scheduled to be open but Mr. May has not heard if that is the case. He will find out. Board Member Horn said the real question is this service change specific to the hospital itself or is it shared with the Academic Health Center. Are we concerned about offering service if the Academic Health Center opens first? Mr. May said our primary concern is to the hospital to the employees that work there and the people who go there for medical services. Getting students to the Academic Health Center is a lesser concern. Mr. May noted that IU Campus Bus is intending to service the Academic Health Center. Mr. May will talk with IU Campus Bus and find out the latest.

The next important question that is critical to our ability to implement service changes is how many additional drivers will we need to implement full service changes? He asked Zac to begin working on an employee run out for the new service changes. That will give us the answer we need in terms of how many drivers we are going to need to implement the full level of service changes. Our best estimate now is we will need an additional 8 – 12 fixed route drivers in order to provide the full level of service as recommended by the route optimization study keeping in mind the adjustments we have made to the study recommendations. We have struggled to recruit and hire drivers for several years now and the pandemic has made things worse. We have lost a lot of drivers to retirements and attrition. We could not implement the full service changes today with our current driver roster. Board Member Horn asked do you see implementing these changes if we are still under the COVID guidelines that we are currently operating under. In other words no fares and limited boarding and alighting. Mr. May said it would be hard to envision implementing service changes if we are still being affected by the pandemic to the same degree that we currently are.

Secretary McLary suggested that preparation for implementation will take several months which means if we want to start in September we would need to make a decision in April. Mr. May agreed with that assertion and noted that unless we see a big increase in our hiring of drivers, he would not recommend going forward with the proposed service changes as we would not be able to provide full service in accordance with the proposed changes. Vice Chairman McDaniel agreed and noted that it's not just the University that has this uncertainty. Mr. McDaniel stated we should not push too fast on that because at this point there are too many variables. Secretary McLary said if we don't implement the new service changes and the hospital opens in November are there other alternatives we can look to service the hospital. Mr. May said staff has some ideas that we are considering including the possibility of making a change on the Route 6 and 6 Limited. Another idea is the possibility of doing a micro-transit project to serve the new hospital. The idea would be to open a micro-transit demonstration to/from the new hospital until such time that fixed route service to the new hospital could begin. The idea would be to open up micro-transit to the entire city to serve the hospital. Mr. May noted staff has some concerns about whether micro-transit could handle the passenger load. Secretary McLary said he would love to see something like that.

Board Member Horn said as we look to a new director this would be something on a short list of topics to describe what challenges a new director face when they hit the ground. Mr. May said a couple of key experience attributes that you will be looking for in a new transit manager is experience with the implementation of major service changes. It will be important for whomever his successor is to have experience in implementing major service changes. Mr. May also noted that we are in the process of installing electrical charging stations anticipating the arrival of our new battery electric buses that will be here in the March/April time frame. Mr. May suggested a new transit manager to have experience with alternative fuels. Secretary McLary said a third attribute he would add is some experience with micro-transit or mobility on demand modes of transportation. He really believes that is the future of where we are going to go. As we are looking at general manager candidates or management firms that is going to be something that he would like to see them have experience with. Board Member Horn asked is this something that there would be a body of candidates that are familiar with or had experience with or is this something a little more focused than unusual. Secretary McLary said we have had discussions with the executive director of CTAA as to the wisdom of pursuing a management contract and hiring our own manager at the same time. Board Member Horn said he didn't know if this was something unusual in a candidate body that they would have experience with this or is this something new enough that very few people have experience with. Secretary McLary said there is a number of demonstrations out there and number of people that have worked with them. Board Member Horn noted that he doesn't mind a list of criteria as long as it is not something that we are not going to disappoint ourselves given this isn't a readily available skill set.

Mr. May noted there is a lot to do in preparation for implementation of the service changes including:

- Training of drivers and staff on new routes/schedules
- Relocation of bus stops and shelters
- Preparation and dissemination of publicity to the public on the new routes, schedules, and bus stops
- Recruiting, hiring, and training of new drivers
- In addition, there are numerous other small details as part of the preparation process.

Mr. May noted he has a minor service change to present to the Board on an informational basis. A few years ago we changed our service in the Whitehall Crossing Shopping Center because damage the buses were doing to private roadways we agreed to turn around in the back truck parking lot and the buses are causing damages to the parking lot there as well. The shopping center has suggested a new alternative that would get us completely out of their parking lot and roadways. There is a new roundabout just to the northwest of Lowes that has recently opened up and we think it would be a suitable turnaround point for the bus to use instead of the parking lot. We propose to turn the bus around at that location. We would put a bus stop on Gates Drive so people can catch the bus on Gates Drive which is a city street. The Board concurred with Mr. May's suggestion.

Next, Mr. May noted we would like to schedule a special Board meeting on March 2 to consider award of contract for outside legal services. We have a RFP currently out with proposals due by February 22. The Board has designated a committee to review the proposals and make

recommendations to the Board for award of contract. Vice Chairman McDaniel said his concern is that he doesn't want to unnecessarily spend public money on things may not need. He said the RFP is clear that they will only work when we ask them to and it is clear that we will continue to use the City for routine and normal matters. His question that he wanted to put before the Board was we talked about taking a dual path in our efforts to hire or contract for a new General Manager. Mr. McDaniel noted that the management contract strategy has served us well for many years. Mr. McDaniel again suggested why not pursue the dual path of an RFP for a management company as well as trying to hire our own manager. Secretary McLary said Board member Hartman and Controller Browning and himself had a meeting and discussed that. Board member Hartman suggested that we get legal counsel onboard before we make a final decision. We have not made a decision as to whether we go with the parallel or if we make a decision that we go with one or the other. We are still in discussion stages but we are moving on it. Vice Chairman McDaniel said what we are moving on is hiring general counsel. Why aren't we moving on hiring for a general manager, or RFPs for management companies? Secretary McLary said Ms. Browning has an RFP for management companies that we have used for years. Board Member Hartman strongly recommended that we obtain legal counsel on the best approach. Ms. Hartman noted that sometimes here are situations that come up when it is hard for the City Legal Department to provide us with the kind of legal advice that we really should have. Vice Chairman McDaniel said if we decide to go for the role of a general manager can we put out a few ads and that shouldn't take nearly as long as a RFP for a management company. Secretary McLary said that is true and you can put feelers out. Mr. McLary noted that he thinks the Board should make the decision on which way we go rather than to pursue the dual patch. It creates confusion in the industry otherwise.

Lastly, Mr. Huneck updated the board on the January Operation Statistics. He stated that the January fixed route ridership was down 81.5 percent compared to January 2020 due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

BT Access ridership was down 63.9 percent in January compared to January 2020. Included in your packet are monthly statistics and performance for fixed route and BT Access service.

Mr. Huneck responded to a previous question from Board Member Horn who asked the question about what impact does bus stop improvement projects have on the wider system? Overall our accessibility is ranked by four ratings for accessibility:

- Excellent (no issues with access)
- Good (minor accessibility problems, improvements could be made)
- Difficult to access (someone with a disability may avoid this stop)
- Inaccessible (hazardous, consider relocating)

Bus stops are to be improved as follows:

Inaccessible: 16% >> 14%
Difficult to access: 30% >> 26%
Good: 37% >> 35%
Excellent: 17% >> 25%

Board Member Horn asked were these internal reviews or third party reviews? Mr. Huneck noted that we brought on a couple of interns and worked with the local advocacy group, CCA, to come up with a 30 point survey that was conducted in 2019. The accessibility was evaluated according to the federal guidelines and the interns went out and surveyed the bus stops according to those guidelines. Board Member Horn asked if there were any standards or mandates that we need to respond to or are these numbers within those parameters. Mr. Huneck responded the survey itself was initiated by INDOT seeking information on accessibility numbers around the State. There is no deadline for transit systems to do anything to improve bus stop accessibility. Secretary McLary said there is no federal mandate. Board Member Horn said as we add stops or change stops does the corporation have a policy related to whether or not we will add a stop that is inaccessible or hazardous or are we targeting excellent to good stops. Mr. May said we will do everything we can to avoid creating a new inaccessible or hazardous stop. We will endeavor to make any new stops accessible where we can with the understanding that we don't build sidewalks or pathways to bus stops. In the case of a state road it's a state function and often the state does not build sidewalks on state roads. We will work with the City or the State to try to get these stops made as accessible as possible. Board Member Horn said he would encourage to think about this for the future to develop some type of objective to visit and consider some objectives to make things better regularly and deliberately and with some priority. Secretary McLary noted that's a good idea.

MESSAGES FROM THE CONTROLLER

Controller Browning noted on the agenda for the Board's consideration and approval is Resolution 21-05; a resolution requesting an audit by the State Board of Accounts for Calendar Year 2020.

Secretary McLary asked if we have talked about not using the State Board of Accounts for audits. Controller Browning noted that this year we will have to use the State Board of Accounts since we don't have time to procure private auditing services. Secretary McLary asked when is the report due. Controller Browning noted it needs to be filed by September 30. Secretary McLary said we don't have enough time to even get an outside firm to do it. Controller Browning said she is not opposed either way. Secretary McLary said he didn't know if that was one of those things that we wanted to do or wait until next year. He said he is okay with it this year but thinks we should look outside next year.

Controller Browning gave an overview of the January Financial Report as included in the Board Packet.

PUBLIC COMMENT – ACTION ITEMS

There was no comment from the public.

NEW BUSINESS – ACTION ITEMS

Vice Chair McDaniel made a motion to continue operating fixed route and BT Access service fare-free through March 16, 2021; continued closure to the public of the indoor passenger waiting areas of the Downtown Transit Center and the Grimes Lane facility; and continued remote working for designated administrative and management employees. The motion was seconded by Secretary McLary. The motion was approved unanimously.

Vice Chairman McDaniel made a motion to approve Resolution 21-05; a resolution requesting an audit by the State Board of Accounts for Calendar Year 2020. The motion was seconded by Secretary McLary. The motion was approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business.

MINUTES

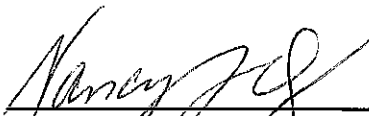
The minutes for the January 19, 2021 meeting were presented for approval by Vice Chair McDaniel and seconded by Secretary McLary. The minutes were approved unanimously.

CLAIMS

The claims for February 16, 2021 were presented for approval by Vice Chairman McDaniel and seconded by Secretary McLary. The claims were approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

APPROVE:



Nancy Obermeyer, Chair
Board of Directors BPTC

03-16-21

ATTEST:



James J. McLary, Secretary
Board of Directors BPTC

03-16-21