

Seth Boyd, called the meeting to order at 10:01 am. Those in attendance and constituting a quorum were as follows:

Board Members:

Seth Boyd
Jason Rasmussen
Randy Capitani
Sue Fillion
Dan Thoemke
Joel Bluming

Members of the Public: None

Staff Present:

Christine Howe, General Manager, SEVT
Keith Johnson, Finance Manager, SEVT
Randy Schoonmaker, CEO, SEVT

Invited Guests:

Jeremy White, VTrans
Ross MacDonald, VTrans

Public Input: None

Amendments to the Agenda:

Act on a Board Resolution during Finance Committee discussion
New board member discussion
Discuss Changes to Route 53 and White Line
Discuss Red Line change request

Review October 17, 2023 Minutes: None

New Board Discussion: Randy S. wants to follow up on filling the open two board member positions for SEVT. He would like to meet with the town managers of Springfield and Ludlow to see if they have any candidates to bring back to SEVT's board for consideration. **Motion 1: Randy C to empower Randy S to bring board member recommendations, seconded by Joel motion passed 6-0.**

Review Finance Committee Documents: Keith reviewed the budget versus actual document. There were notes that the Medicaid income is behind by seventy-three thousand, even though we have received forty-five thousand more than this time last year. The income reduction is due to the Medicaid income being behind. In expenses our driver wages are a little over budget. When looking at all the wages, there is more spending this year compared to last mainly due to the wage increases. Also, there is one additional week's payroll from this year to last, which slightly inflates the year-to-year comparison. Other individual items were discussed. The company is only slightly behind budget year to date, even though the income is under budget. The line of credit is still at a zero balance. Keith explained that a board resolution is needed to update some bank documents to include back up people to open and close accounts and remove the previous board chair's name. The secretary of the board would need to sign that the resolution was approved. **Motion 2: Joel motioned to approve the board resolution for Mascoma Bank to add and remove authority names from the account. Jason second, motion passed 5-0, Randy C abstained.**

Ridership Review: Christine presented the ridership as of November 5, 2023. The Brattleboro routes continue to increase, as well as the Bellows Falls In Town. Upper valley routes are starting to climb. Rockingham fixed routes are up 8% from a year ago. Demand response is up 10% for vans and buses, but down 18% for volunteers. As discussed, demand response has a few less trips than a year ago, but the trips are longer miles. Rockingham is up 3%.

In Wilmington the Wilmington-West Dover MOOver route is down 30%, with the total fixed route down 20%. In Wilmington the demand response route is more than double a year ago and this is mainly due to the Townshend Shopper program success. Total Wilmington routes are down 18%. As a company SEVT is down 1%. Randy C asked if some buses in repair are going to jeopardize the winter route starts. Randy S. explained it will not, as the buses ordered will be delivered and ready to go prior to Christmas Week. Christine also noted that Stratton started yesterday morning.

Brattleboro Facility: Randy S. reviewed the independent cost estimate received, showing the high costs of the site and building. Randy S brought this information to Ross at VTTrans to have his input. Ross said it is not realistic to have this on the list for capital in the next few years. The focus will be on rolling stock capital and there is one facility that needs replacing in central Vermont that is a priority. Randy S would like to just suspend the project and would like board approval for that decision. Randy C asked if SEVT can have a land first right of refusal from the BDCC. Randy S. said he would ask Adam if that is a possibility. Sue asked if one of the other sites might be an option, and if VTTrans has a number that would be acceptable to keep the project moving forward. Ross said at this time he can not state a number the state would be comfortable with. Joel brought up that he would like to see funding for Route 30 then would accept the funding for buildings. Randy C. reiterated that Joel should continue to advocate for the Route 30 funding, and asked if there is a cost for rental space in Brattleboro that would offset some of this expense for the facility? Randy S. explained it is a small amount compared to what the facility would cost. **Motion 3: Randy C. motioned that the Board suspend any pursuit of a Brattleboro facility with the exception of the possibility of the first right of refusal for the land purchase of the identified sight. Dan seconded the motion, motion passed 6-0.**

Brattleboro Microtransit Grant: Randy S. presented the Brattleboro Microtransit funding options and asked the board for some input. It was explained the operating budget was for \$120,000 but that excludes an additional \$18,000 quoted for software. We have other items in place but have three funding options. Option One, is the BDCC identified \$75,000 to be used for either a match of federal funds, or to start and fund 100% for a partial year of service. Option Two offers funds SEVT applied for from the social service application in Brattleboro for \$24,000 that can be used to match federal dollars or match the BDCC funding. However, in speaking with Ross from VTTrans, Ross will not commit to this program right now, but would know more in the spring of 2024. Ross did say that the evening service of Microtransit is something VTTrans would like to see occur, however, he also needs to sustain all the current routes with funding. Ross is hopeful but wants to be sure there would be sustaining funds in place. He said the worst thing to do is start a service and then pull it due to funding. Randy S. said we are confident of the match dollars, but the board needs to decide if they want to fund a partial year with BDCC funds, letting the town know this is not a guarantee to continue, or wait until July 1st to see if VTTrans has funding. Jason expressed concerns about starting a service that SEVT may have to pull the plug on, although he agrees with the idea of the service. Randy C said the trade off is if you wait until July the service may not start at all. Randy C. said he is also mixed about this, seeing both sides. Sue said she does not see VTTrans funding this with all the funding pressures. Sue likes the idea of piloting the program and building the case, if successful, for why it should be funded by VTTrans. Randy S. clarified this is a BDCC initiative and it will have a great impact on the WCC. Randy S. said if we get to July and there is no VTTrans funding but we have BDCC funds until Dec of 2024 we have plenty of time between July and December to see if we can sustain locally. He said the safe way is to go with Option 2, and if that does not happen see if BDCC still has the funds to try to start the service. Randy C. asked if the vehicle and staff are in place. Randy S. said yes, except for the additional \$18,000 software cost not on this document. Randy S. said if the board decided to start this January 1st he would request additional money from

the BDCC. Seth is also conflicted about it not knowing what the funding will look like in the future but seems that the team is not willing to make a recommendation. Randy S. said we can table it for another month and crunch numbers more closely with BDCC to see if there would be future funding if VTrans does not fund in July. With the software development needed, the start date would most likely not be until March at this point, changing costs for this fiscal year. Joel asked if the BDCC initiated it. Randy S. said after SEVT did not get this service funded from VTrans SEVT presented it to the BDCC for funding. The funding would be \$75,000-100,000 for SEVT to start the program, and they would try to get more if needed. Ross said that VTrans is not saying don't move forward without VTrans. Ross would be interested in seeing other local commitments continue, but VTrans just cannot commit at this time. Jason stated that while he would like to fund this, he would also like to see Route 30 service, and microtransit in Springfield. Jason would like to give it more time. **Motion 4: Randy C. motioned for Option One with a date change to start February first with the caveat that new numbers are brought to the next board meeting. Sue seconded the motion. Motion amended to correct that staff will return at the next board meeting for further approval. Passed 5-0, Joel opposed.** Ross said that it may be something the SEVT board to identify the priorities in your region for new investments. Ross said how VTrans would like to see a mobility for all model, and where the service goes and is in line with the region needs. If one location comes up with the funding and another town follows suit, but SEVT now does not have the resources to accomplish that can create problems. If the board identifies priorities that would help. Seth asked if the motion intended that this comes back to the board. Motion was amended and approved.

White Line Schedule Change: SEVT has been getting requests for a change on the White Line schedule for Saturdays to include a stop at Winston Prouty for the winter farmers market, the Brattleboro Music Center and Living Memorial Park. Randy S. explained all the input and data we gathered. SEVT also needs to make a slight change to Route 53 as well. The board needs to vote on allowing SEVT to go forward with the route change process. **Motion 4: Randy C. motioned to authorize Randy S to proceed with the route change process, Joel seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0**

Red Line Request: Randy S. presented the request from the Brattleboro Select Board and the Collaborative for the Red Line to go up the hill to the Chalet. When the Brattleboro routes were updated in 2019 we pushed the Red Line to accommodate more stops with one-hour headways. This was an over ambitious goal and the Red Line runs behind most days as it is now. There was a meeting with the Collaborative to discuss this further. The Collaborative maintains that they would like us to flex the schedule and use the few minutes on paper from not going to Melrose now to go to the Chalet each run. SEVT was told that most of these riders have disabilities, so we recommended those riders apply for ADA paratransit which would provide door to door service. We committed to looking at the route, and pulled the GPS data for the last month that substantiates we are running behind regularly. Randy S. said it is time to revisit the entire Brattleboro system in the spring, but we cannot add a stop to the Red Line as the system is now. Randy S. said he is prepared to respond to the Collaborative this week with our decision to not add the Chalet as a regular stop at this time, but to revisit the entire system in the spring. Sue clarified some information in the write-up presented. Sue said in April when Groundworks asked for some assistance with trips to Walmart it was related to the tragedy that occurred at Morningside. Sue also said it is not a very long walk to the current stop, but it is up a hill with no sidewalk. Sue also said that while it is stated, and the Collaborative did agree that the ADA application was burdensome but did thank SEVT for bringing that solution to their attention. Randy S. thanked Sue for straightening the record. Seth said there is a real need there and would like to be able to just say yes, but with the on-time status presented we recognize it is not feasible now. Seth suggested to continue to work with the Collaborative now and look at the whole system in the spring.

VPTA True Up: Randy S. presented the Medicaid income distribution information from FY23. SEVT loses money on Medicaid in the spring and fall and makes money in winter because the cost

allocation plan allocates Medicaid expenses at lower levels during that time. All providers in VPTA share the surplus and share the losses based on percentage of Medicaid expenses. SEVT was overpaid due to the funding mechanism and now owes roughly \$145,000 back to VPTA to be disbursed to other providers. No one did anything wrong, but because the expenses are not reconciled at the VPTA level quickly it is just hard to manage our Medicaid income level from month to month. VPTA agrees that the funding system should be changed. VPTA has agreed to hire a consultant to have just expenses reimbursed to avoid over and under payments to providers in the future. Ross explained that there is a report called the braided service assessment of taking in the NEMT funds to see if that would help manage the transit system. Ross explained why changing the funding formula at the Department of Vermont Health Access is going to be a part of the discussion when the report is presented to the legislation. Discussion continued to ensure the Board is aware of the Medicaid funding adjustments.

Executive Session if Necessary: None

December meeting date will be changed to December 12, 2023

Motion to adjourn by Randy C. motioned seconded Joel by adjourned at 11:31

Submitted by: Christine Howe, General Manager