

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

Board Members:

Randy Capitani
Joel Bluming
Seth Boyd
Jason Rasmussen
Dan Thoemke
Chris Company
Sue Fillion arrived late

Members of the Public: None

Staff Present:

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

Invited Guests:

Jeremy Whiting, VTrans

Public Input: None

Amendments to the Agenda: None

Review minutes of February 18: Reviewed with no changes

VTrans Update: Jeremy discussed the FY26 \$1.5 million shortfall and how VTrans is asking each agency to find efficiencies and cut spending where and when possible. Some of this is coming from the route performance report as a starting point with underperforming routes being the first thought of for efficiencies or cuts. Jeremy explained there are many one-time funds that are being received that will not be retained over the next few fiscal years. He explained that later in this meeting we will discuss the ideas SEVT has already identified. He noted that it is not just SEVT but that VTrans is asking to make cuts, it is all the Vermont transit providers so all share the cuts. CMAQ funding is also going to be in jeopardy and VTrans may need to have CMAQ funding shift to 5311 funding. Seth asked the total ask from SEVT. Randy S answered that the number was around \$200,000 and that this will be discussed later in the meeting. Seth noted he was expecting this to come down the pike after the Finance Committee Meeting and knows Randy S, Keith, and Christine have been working on it. Jeremy noted that making the cuts is to show the legislature that VTrans did due diligence so when asking them for future funding, it may be received more positively.

Cost Savings Plan: Randy S presented the potential FY26 route changes. We have already made \$120,000 in cuts in FY25. The second round of possible cuts are broken down to show direct cost savings, hours saved, and ridership loss. He defined each of the routes shown on the potential route changes presentation. Brattleboro Microtransit has no local financial support, and the private funding has run out. It has low ridership so it is not a priority for VTrans so that route will be eliminated. The effective dates are noted, and we would like to move on these as soon as possible and go through the public hearing process. Randy S explained we have Route 57 noted but not on the cuts list as of now. Jason asked about more clarity on Route 57 on hold. Randy S explained we would like to keep Route 57 for FY26 but if we find funding cut for that route, then we can revisit

to discuss further savings. Seth asked if there are cost savings that do not impact route service but would still help with the budget and funding request. Randy S explained we have looked hard and there really aren't any frills that we have. Ross told us last year we had the lowest admin rate in the state, so we are lean. We did look hard at line items and did not find other items. Randy C asked for definitions for CMAQ funding, what it stands for. Randy S explained it is Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Act funding, and Vermont uses it in part for new start routes, at 80% federal and 20% local. Randy C asked if there is any angel that will fund Brattleboro microtransit. Randy S explained the funding needed to keep it is about \$200,000, and that even searching for grants to fund the 20% local, we would need the 80% from the state. Ross has said he just doesn't have it, especially when you factor in lower ridership on that route. Seth asked about the impact on the vehicle capital for cost savings. Randy S explained we shifted the granted money for one new bus to purchase three used buses as previously approved by the Board. We also ordered two electric vehicles but we canceled those vehicles when the funding was held back for federal review. If those funds are solid, we will re-order the vehicles. Seth noted that it is important the public understand that we looked for other opportunities beside route changes. Seth asked Jeremy if the state had any guidance on messaging. Seth expressed concern that we asked and received additional funding from towns then quickly we are going to show cuts that affect the towns. Chris asked if Sue is aware of the Brattleboro Microtransit. Randy S said she was aware, and he tried to call her prior to this meeting. Chris asked if Randy S had reached out to Town Manager and Randy S explained he has and they are in the loop on all the communications. Randy S needs a motion to approve the route cuts under possible cuts as presented. **Motion 1:** Randy C motioned to approve the route cuts for a total of \$225,845 as presented. Chris C seconded. Chris asked if this is precipitated by federal funding. Randy S explained these are unrelated to the federal administration. Jeremy explained we are not the only agency making cuts and other agencies have also looked at internal costs as well. Jeremy explained for messaging the funding is staying low, but everything costs more to provide the service. Jeremy did not say if the GMT rural transfer proceeds that will save the state money as well. **Motion Passed 6-0 Sue Fillion abstained due to late arrival**

Randy S presented the route change communication plan for review. Seth thanked Randy S for the plan as it is important. Randy C said to add the cancellation of the electric vehicle order and cost and maybe lead with that point. Chris noted this should also prepare people, this may be just the beginning to note further changes could very well follow. Joel asked if we are going to lose funding in the future should we consider fee-based service and charge fares. Randy S explained that it would need a lot of thought. The expense to get fare boxes, admin to reconcile fares, ridership is generally lost by about 33%, also the fares collected are deducted from federal funding. We can't rule it out, but it would take a lot of analysis. Chris noted that maybe other things for messaging to the public should include possible Medicaid cuts.

Ridership: Christine presented ridership explaining the same trends are continuing in Rockingham with the fixed routes up 17%, noting the Blue Line is up 23% and even ahead of 2019 ridership. The Okemo route is up 25% from last year, and is seeing more in town ridership. Demand Response van routes are pretty much flat with a shift between Medicaid and O & D/Other. The volunteer rides are down 14% showing a lower percentage of rides. However, the trips are higher cost with more distance and wheelchair trips. Ridership for total Rockingham is up 9%. Seth asked for clarity regarding less drivers. Christine was referencing volunteer drivers. In Wilmington the same trends continue with Readsboro up 69% because of the international employees living along the route. Wilmington year-round fixed route is about flat. The winter routes are down 8% which ebbs and flows based on weather trends. The Stratton route is down 5% and the study showed the in-town trips are down because the riders are using the Microtransit service in Manchester for their shopping and errands on their days off which is a good thing. Total Wilmington ridership is down 5% and SEVT as a company is up 2%.

Financials: Keith presented financials as presented. The YTD revenue is \$215,000 behind budget, of which \$131,285 is Medicaid revenue. Expenses are \$379,000 less than budget and \$164,000 ahead

of budget. We have spent \$177,000 less than last year to date. Our line of credit is zero compared to \$54,000 last year at this time. Financials are trending very good year to date.

Fundraising Update: Randy S presented a fundraising update to show what was budgeted, actual income, and change to budget. There is close to \$600,000 in grants we are applying for which we may realize or not, to be determined. The town appropriations this year compared to last year showed some towns gave more than we asked and some new town funding. We asked Dover, Whitingham, Wilmington and Stratton for money for the first time. In Windsor we asked for \$20,000 for local match so support the MicroMOO. We are up \$24,000 over what we were a year ago. Seth noted that it was a success and let's keep that in sight for future years.

Board Vote:

Authorize the CEO to apply for a Holt Grant for additional O & D rides and/or Springfield Microtransit Randy S. explained he needs a change of authorization from the Board after reviewing the details of the grant. There is another grant that we are trying to fund Springfield Microtransit and if that does not go through we would go back to Holt to ask for a change in usage of the funding from O & D to Springfield Microtransit. **Motion 2: Joel motioned to authorize the CEO to apply for the Holt Grant for additional O & D rides and / or Springfield Microtransit Sue seconded, passed 7-0.**

Schedule a Board Meeting on April 8th to approve FY26 Operating and Capital Grant Budgets: Randy S will send a doodle poll to make sure April 8th will work for the board to do a quick meeting to approve budgets for the grant.

Executive Session: For employee contract entered at 10:53 AM Board only.

Meeting Adjourned 10:53am