



MINUTES of 04/17/2014 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

ATTENDANCE

Name

Representing

PRESENT

William Lehtola
Jarrett Conner
Dennis Lipka
John Ostrosky
David Schiller
Robert Spain
Michael Ward

Spencer
Worcester
Holden
Shrewsbury
Charlton
Millbury
Clinton

ABSENT

Doug Belanger
Mark Binnall
Kelly Burke
Leon Gaumond Jr.
Alyssa Graveson
Rudy Heller
Timothy McInerney
Kevin Mizikar
Daniel Morgado
Michael Pantos

Leicester
Auburn
Northborough
West Boylston
Douglas
Brookfield
Grafton
Grafton
Shrewsbury
Rutland

1. Chairman Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
2. **Attendance**

3. Acceptance of Minutes

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes of February 20, 2014.
- **Mr. Spain made the motion and Mr. Ostrosky seconded.** All board members voted in favor. The motion was accepted.
- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes of March 20, 2014.
- **Mr. Schiller made the motion and Mr. Ostrosky seconded.** All board members voted in favor. The motion was accepted.
- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the special meeting April 10, 2014.
- Mr. Ostrosky abstained from the vote as he was not at the meeting of April 10, 2014.
- **Mr. Schiller made the motion and Mr. Conner seconded.** All board members voted in favor. The motion was accepted.
- Mr. Lipka joined the meeting at 8:40 a.m.

4. Administrator Report

Mr. O'Neil started off by explaining at the last meeting we talked a lot about cleanliness of the buses. The WRTA finds that attention to cleanliness is equally as important as security and the administration acknowledges the comments made by Ms. Fuller, a rider, in this regard. Mr. O'Neil introduced Mr. Carney who gave a brief report on the status of the buses cleanliness since the mention of the issue last meeting.

- Mr. Carney reported the buses were periodically inspected by him personally as well as other key people in operations. These inspections were done during peak riding times on the most travelled routes, and one incident was cited and the bus was swapped out in accordance with the policy. Mr. Carney stated operations has addressed this issue and will continue to do so, while in the meantime he would welcome additional comments and even photos of any other concerns going forward from Ms. Fuller.
- Mr. O'Neil addressed the safety concerns mentioned regarding the platform during peak times, and stated the Worcester Police Department would monitor the situation by sending patrol cars down to the hub from 1 p.m. though 3 p.m., on a periodic basis. The administration will continue to monitor the situation, and if necessary, move to a paid detail as a recommended option. Mr. O'Neil continued by stating there have not been any incidents here since the last meeting, except for the damage to the men's room door by the fire department due to a lock in. Mr. O'Neil stated he will keep the board updated as they move forward.

- Mr. Lehtola then asked Ms. Fuller if she had noticed any changes since the last conversation. Ms. Fuller stated with the cruisers coming, it seems like everything has settled down and in the last couple of days the buses have been much cleaner. Mr. Lehtola thanked Ms. Fuller for her input and efforts regarding the matter.
- Mr. Schiller asked if any progress was made on installing a direct telephone line to customer service. Mr. O'Neil replied that nothing yet has been done. Mr. O'Neil commented that Mr. Delage would be giving a summary of the volume and intensity of customer feedback, and this report shows a significant decline in response time. The board members made no official recommendations in regards to this issue.
- Mr. O'Neil then went into the FY'15 budget stating the administration kicked off its budget review at the April 10, 2014 meeting of the audit and finance committee. At the meeting they reviewed and discussed the budgets of CMTM, PBSI, Customer Service and the Councils on Aging. The next meeting is scheduled for April 29, 2014 with review and discussion regarding the administration budget and the Elder Bus budget. Mr. O'Neil looks forward to finalization of the budget and a recommendation to the full board for the May 15, 2014 advisory board meeting.
- Mr. O'Neil asked the board for a vote to have a public hearing in regards to the seven (7) route adjustments recommended by Mr. Parker, Assistant General Manager for CMTM, with an effective date of June 28, 2014. Mr. O'Neil explained the WRTA would be making periodic changes throughout the year, despite the fact that we have a comprehensive survey analysis on the way by URS. Administration and operations met to finalize the recommended changes to the following routes.
- Mr. Parker then gave an overview of the four (4) weekday and three (3) weekend changes.

Weekday Service Changes

1. Summer month changes (suspend service) effect routes 11A, 18, 24A.
2. Route 11A is proposed for total elimination at a future date and to redirect service. If redirected, a new route would be made for lower Pleasant Street/Worcester State University service.
3. Route 8 would see all inbound times adjusted to accommodate electric bus re-charging. Hub times would not change.

Saturday and Sunday Service Changes

4. Routes 7 & 19 would see additional time on their runs, but have fewer trips overall as their midday runs are not on time.
5. Route 12 which is not performing at our standards, would be eliminated for the summer and then considered for permanent elimination at a future date. Redirecting those assets to route 5 and route 27 weekend services would occur.

- Mr. Connor asked if the routes were simply too long for the schedule, as traffic is not an issue on the weekends. Mr. Parker confirmed this and Mr. O'Neil stated that the assets from an elimination of route 12 would be re-directed to route 5 and route 27, thereby adding more runs on those routes on the weekends. Mr. Lehtola stated that the Auburn Mall route could use additional runs on the weekend.
- **Motion: The advisory board authorizes the administrator to hold at least one public hearing to notify the public of seven (7) proposed service changes (four weekday and three weekend) to take effect on June 28, 2014 and as described by Mr. Parker.**
- **Mr. Lipka made the motion and Mr. Conner seconded. All voted in favor and the motion was accepted.**
- Mr. O'Neil explained in the past it would have taken Ms. Blunt two years to get to where we are in a matter of weeks, due to the data we obtain from Clever Devices. This is a great example of how much more efficiently we can review and determine best practices for the WRTA.
- Mr. O'Neil gave the board an update on the overall progress regarding of the 40 Quinsigamond Ave project. Mr. O'Neil explained the facility needs numerous permits. One such permit was recently received that being the environmental certificate from the state's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Applications for permits from the planning and zoning boards have been filed. Environmental work is expected to begin in June 2014 and the contract with Skanska has been signed and executed. Mr. Merryman who assisted us with acquiring the property at Quinsigamond Ave., will do the same for 287 Grove Street. Mr. O'Neil indicated the property will be placed on the market in the fall of 2014. Mr. O'Neil informed the board the groundbreaking would be on June 6, 2014 at 10 a.m. at the site.
- Mr. Connor asked if we know what the guaranteed maximum price would be. Mr. O'Neil replied at a 60% design phase, which is scheduled to be done in August 2014. Mr. O'Neil commented we are working to keep the cost within the realm of the numbers the board previously had given us. We are at 30% design phase and are about \$5 - 8 million over budget. As part of the normal process we will circle back with the engineers and address areas such as IT, environmental sustainability elements and security, as opposed to structural items to the facility itself.
- Mr Connor wanted to know how the administration would feel about having some of the buses parked outside of the facility as opposed to having all of the present fleet of fifty-five (55) buses kept inside. Mr. O'Connor stated expense for such a large building may be curtailed if a change was made in the overall design. Various board members gave their opinions on the structural support necessary for the facility as well as the benefits of having a fully covered operations facility. Mr. Carney explained the ultimate goal for maintenance and overall care of the buses is to have them covered 365 days of year.

- Mr. O’Neil commented looking at adjusting other items for the project is preferable to taking off the sides of the building. He also informed the board a roof with all its cost and internal infrastructure would still be needed, so the cost factor may not yield as much of a savings. Mr. O’Neil closed the topic by stating they were proceeding within the natural progression of the projects design phase, and redefining for budget constraints as well as overall sustainability would remain a key factor in that progress. Mr. O’Neil informed the board the building subcommittee would be advised as they move forward. No recommendations were made by the board regarding this discussion.
- Mr. O’Neil addressed some questions regarding cost with a statement about the continuing efforts made by administration to look for additional grant monies. He also noted through our relationship with CMRPC specifically, Ms. Blunt was able to make us aware of additional funding coming from the state. That money for transportation enhancements programs will add the following amounts: \$426,000 to the FY’ 15 budget and \$800,000 to FY’16, along with \$426,000 to FY ‘17 for environmental use. Mr. Lehtola asked Mr. O’Neil if he could please elaborate on some of the terms used when discussing the 40 Quinsigamond Ave. project. Mr. O’Neil replied he would be happy to translate any such items.
- Mr. O’Neil moved on to the Governor’s visit on March 27, 2014. Mr. O’Neil informed the board Governor Patrick is big on sustainability and his visit reflects this, as his primary interest was in our electric buses from Proterra. He was impressed with the electric buses, as he was quoted as saying “wicked cool buses,” but also showed interest in the WRTA’s Hub technology. Mr. O’Neil noted also on that day we were fortunate enough to receive the go-ahead from national grid to turn on the PV array.
- Mr. O’Neil then turned over the summary of community outreach to Mr. Carney who gave an overview of the community activities the company has been engaged in.
 1. Vocational school kids tours.
 2. Bus for Colin Powell arrival.
 3. Canal District Business Event in March.
 4. Earth Day at the EcoTarium-- All Electric Proterra Bus.
 5. Buses to go to each of the Boston Firefighters Funerals.
- Mr. O’Neil extended to the board members an open invitation for the towns to request a bus for special events. Mr. Connor noted these events go hand-in-hand with our mission to support the community as well as with marketing needed to promote the WRTA. Mr. Lehtola stated that he personally supports efforts such as these.
- Mr. O’Neil then updated the board on the comprehensive service analysis project and their efforts. URS was hired by the ten (10) RTA’s in aid to updating current and future services. We have formed a steering committee made up of various public and not-for-

profit entities in the region to assist in defining better service in the future. The committee will meet monthly for about six (6) to nine (9) months. The committee is presently awaiting information from URS and will create a report, which will be combined with our surveys and presented as a recommendation to the board.

- Mr. O'Neil introduced Mr. Delage, who gave a summary of the customer service outreach and the feedback system operated through Zendesk.
- Mr. Delage commented new service in Paxton, Westborough, Grafton and Northbridge were beginning to take shape. More specifically, Mr. Delage spoke about efforts in Grafton and Northbridge, with their various visits within the community and new signage set to be posted in June. Mr. Delage explained to the board the Northbridge route would include the Shaw's Plaza as well as the senior center. He also noted Westborough and Southbridge are continuing to grow and looking into possible expansion considerations due to increasing demand and the possibility of future needs.
- Mr. Delage showed a report breaking down the communication from the Zendesk system. The report stated about 70% of all communication comes from voice-mails. Meanwhile feedback tickets for the last thirty (30) days were 834 with 718 solved and 42 back-logged. Tickets include PBSI and yellow cab whereas back logged tickets can involve waiting for a third party or an employee on vacation. Mr. Delage explained the system allows for on-time data research, which in turn provides for a more efficient use of time for collecting the necessary data to complete a ticket. On average the first contact is made within eleven (11) hours of receiving the ticket, for those coming in during weekday hours of operation.
- Mr. O'Neil spoke about the possibility of expanded services with the town of Westborough, as its town manager and planning board chairman are actively considering new service opportunities. Westborough started its funding with the intention to meet the growing need of business employees, who needed to be shuttled to and from the commuter rail station to specific office parks in the a.m. and p.m. hours. This service has seen a steady increase from 51 in December 2013 to 274 in February 2014. The remainder of the day has service across Main Street and East Main Street and now expansion may come with downtown service to commuter rail as well as shopping plazas and apartment complexes identified by town officials as needed. Mr. O'Neil informed the board Westborough has over 18,000 people living within its boundaries.
- Mr. O'Neil introduced Ms. Blunt who spoke about Southbridge as having possible expansion plans based on growing educational opportunities in the area. Ms. Blunt stated that, since its inception, the ridership in Southbridge has doubled to 4,500 riders per month and the direct connection to the hub added this year, was extremely successful. In regards to future growth, Ms. Blunt explained that Quinsigamond Community College, which is expanding its campus, may also host space for Worcester and Fitchburg State as well as UMass. Mr. Lehtola noted that most of the community routes have been gaining ridership and suggested to Mr. Carney a 35 or 40 foot bus maybe needed. Mr. Carney stated he would monitor the volume and adjust accordingly.

- Mr. Church gave a summary of the monthly operations report, which outlines the performance measures for the WRTA. The report can be viewed at the following link [WRTA Monthly Operations Report March 2014](#).
 1. Year to date farebox revenue is lower than last year's (8.95%), however total revenue is only 1.47% lower due to the substantial increase in Charlie Card stored value (32.42% compared to last year) and monthly pass sales (23.25% higher than last year).
 2. Year-to-date, ridership year to date is 5.0% higher compared to this time last year.
 3. Passengers per revenue mile goal is 2.5 and the following routes exceeded this number in March Route 1, Route 24, Route 26 and the Downtown Loop.
 4. Missed trips for March were 33 which was lower than last month's 62.
 5. Customer Service window visits continues to trend higher and call volume shows 834 tickets were created in the month of March.
- Mr. Lehtola asked if our incentives to move people away from cash are working and Mr. Church said it would appear so.
- Mr. O'Neil said he wanted to acknowledge the work that Mr. Coyne does every year in regards to upgrading the fleet. In this regard, an additional 16 vans will be replaced, and the outgoing vans will be sold and some undetermined amount will be kept for setback use. Mr. O'Neil also thanked Mr. Connor and the city manager for their prompt attention to the request for backup should Mr. Connor not be available for a WRTA board meeting.

5. Business from the Board

- Mr. Ward asked if there was any type of follow-up mechanism for calls repeating the same request. Mr. O'Neil replied reports can be generated by the specific tags on the tickets and then management can look for and report any participial developing patterns. Mr. O'Neil also noted that the customer service staff has direct access to on-time information so many tickets can be solved immediately.
- Mr. Ostrosky stated he was surprised only three (3) percent of the incoming communication came from the websites feedback form, but was impressed by the first contact numbers as compared to the past where response time was 48 hours or longer. He also mentioned his request for written clarification identifying the anonymous statement had been posted appropriately, and Mr. O'Neil thanked him for his comment and stated that Ms. Pokoly takes care of these details.
- Mr. Ward questioned if the numbers would continue to trend down or go up regarding the shift from cash to stored value. Mr. O'Neil replied the company is striving to get away from cash so you may see the spikes going up and down as we go forward, but over the course of the year it will end about the same.

- Mr. Ostrosky inquired about the affiliation between the WRTA and Elder Bus for the town on North Brookfield, as there had been a recent accident. Mr. O’Neil explained each specific Council on Aging operates the service and some contract with a vendor to do so. In the case of North Brookfield Elder Bus is the vender operating the service, while the WRTA provides the vehicle. Unfortunately, when the media reports an incident under these circumstances, they only see the WRTA logo on the van and assume it is under our scope of operation.

6. Business from the Public

- Ms. Fuller spoke about how she feels the elderly perceives feedback, specifically as it related to low-tech participation. Ms. Fuller explained the elderly take the time to actually come to the hub and would feel more appreciative if a system of direct reporting occurred at the customer service window. Mr. O’Neil stated feedback is available in many methods and that the person at the window has a system to pass such feedback to customer service. They will continue to monitor this as they move forward.
- Ms. Hart asked for copies of all back presentations and the minutes for this meeting. Mr. O’Neil stated agendas and minutes for the present meetings are left for the public while presentations are posted to the website where they can be reviewed and printed out. Ms. Hart asked if she could receive a copy of the schedule changes prior to the public meeting and Mr. O’Neil replied that a copy would be made available to her.
- Mr. Fuller inquired whether the Southbridge routes could go to the Big Bunny. Mr. Lehtola responded by saying they were aware of this request, but would actually have to create a whole other specific route in order to accommodate that area, simply because the area is well beyond the designated route. Mr. Lehtola explained we are looking at working on this issue, but any additions or changes will be in the future.

7. Adjournment

- **Mr. Lipka motion to adjourn and Mr. Spain seconded. All voted in favor and the motion to adjourn accepted** the meeting adjourned at 10:04 a.m.

8. Next Meeting Date

- The next board meeting will be on May 15, 2014 at 8:30 a.m. located at the Hub 60 Foster Street Worcester, MA 01608 3rd floor.