



## MINUTES of 12/18/2014 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

### ATTENDANCE

#### Name

#### Representing

#### PRESENT

William Lehtola  
Mark Binnall  
Kelly Burke  
Jarrett Conner  
Leon Gaumond Jr.  
Dennis Lipka  
John Ostrosky  
Robert Spain  
Luz Vega

Spencer  
Auburn  
Northborough  
Worcester  
West Boylston  
Holden  
Shrewsbury  
Millbury  
Regional Ridership

#### ABSENT

Doug Belanger  
Alyssa Graveson  
Rudy Heller  
Timothy McInerney  
Kevin Mizikar  
Daniel Morgado  
Michael Pantos  
David Schiller  
Michael Ward

Leicester  
Douglas  
Brookfield  
Grafton  
Grafton  
Shrewsbury  
Rutland  
Charlton  
Clinton

1. Chairman Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.
2. **Attendance**

### 3. Acceptance of Minutes

- Mr. Lehtola made a request to amend the November 20, 2014 minutes by replacing a sentence in which he commented on the solar panels. On page six (6), last sentence in the next to last paragraph: “Mr. Lehtola commented that solar is not as great as the cost, but is a ‘green’ effort nonetheless.” This sentence should read: “the solar array isn’t providing the value to the WRTA as we were told, but it is nevertheless a ‘green’ effort.”
- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes as amended for November 20, 2014.
- **Motion: I move the board accept the amended minutes of November 20, 2014.** Mr. Conner made the motion and Mr. Binnall seconded. All other board members voted in favor. The motion was accepted.
- 8:34 a.m. Mr. Lipka joined the advisory board meeting.
- 8:39 a.m. Mr. Spain joined the advisory board meeting.
- 8:50 a.m. Ms. Vega joined the advisory board meeting.
- 9:00 a.m. Mr. Gaumond joined the advisory board meeting.

### 4. Administrator Report

- Mr. O’Neil gave a review of the Audit and Finance committee meeting to the board members. The Audit & Finance committee met on December 8, 2014 to review the first quarter budget figures. Mr. Conner had a lot of questions and comments for us, but overall the bottom line is pretty good and the WRTA is doing very well. We presently have a \$300,000 surplus although we are early into the winter. Notwithstanding that, we need to look at some things going ahead. We’ve already been warned about the potential 9c cuts going forward. Mr. Lehtola then asked if Mr. O’Neil could please explain to everybody what the 9c cuts are and what part of it would be affecting the WRTA. Mr. O’Neil replied in our case, it would be a cut the governor could take, which would affect the MassDOT funding or the funding the regional transit authorities receive. So what we were told several months ago was our potential share of the then estimated 9c cuts would be about \$69,000. At present, the WRTA feels it can absorb this cut in the current budget, but the deeper we get into the fiscal year, the deeper the cut would be. Mr. O’Neil indicated he would keep the board apprised of these potential cuts.
- Mr. O’Neil also commented on how Governor-elect Baker made it very clear he’s really looking at cutting on the revenue side and he’s committed to not raising any taxes or using any of the state’s stabilization fund.
- Mr. Lehtola indicated what the governor decides to do and what the legislature decides to do could be two different things. Mr. Conner interjected the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation expects he will make these cuts. This nonprofit group estimates a \$500 to

\$750 million problem out there. Mr. Conner explained the 9c cuts the governor can do himself directly out of his office without legislative approval. Mr. O'Neil indicated he will apprise the board on funding as more information comes out from Governor-elect Baker's office.

- Mr. O'Neil then introduced Ms. Anna Kusterski as the new head of PBSI. He explained she was hired two weeks ago. Mr. O'Neil stated he asked Mr. Carney, Mr. Coyne and Ms. Blunt to work with her on what the goals and objectives would be for PBSI over the next several years. We wanted someone who would take a leadership role and bring PBSI to a higher level. There were three candidates interviewed and Ms. Kusterski rose to the top. Mr. O'Neil asked Ms. Kusterski to say a few words to the board.
- Mr. Lehtola welcomed Ms. Kusterski to the board. Ms. Kusterski explained her educational background stating she has a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Assumption College and a Postgraduate Certification in Peripatology from UMASS Boston. She said her educational background will make it a very easy transition and be a good asset for the ADA paratransit service. This will help make sure the people who are applying for the service are the ones who actually meet the criteria. She went on to explain over the past ten (10) years her work with the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind incorporated holding three (3) different positions. She started to work closely with the WRTA and other transit authorities in the state as well as going to the TPAG meetings. She indicated her participation on the regional coordinating council too. There she met Ms. Blunt from CMRPC, Mr. O'Day from Elder Bus and other individuals of similar interest. Ms. Kusterski stated her confidence in her background will make this an easy transition and she expects to provide updates monthly on what is happening at PBSI. Mr. Binnall asked if she would be hiring an assistant director and Ms. Kusterski replied not at the moment.
- Mr. O'Neil introduced Mr. Clermont and Ms. Linscott from the Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE) to the board members. He described how CTE was hired by the WRTA as a result of the grant it received for the purchase of the electric buses. CTE provides the WRTA with objective analysis. The purpose of their reporting is to track the performance of the electric buses as compared to our existing fleet, assess impact on the agency's fuel costs and emissions. Their presentation will show these factors from September 2013 to October 2014.
- The minutes contain a summary of this report. The full report can be viewed by clicking on the following link: [WRTA KPI Presentation – December 2014](#).
- Ms. Linscott opened with the fleet count and designated routes used by the electric buses. She highlighted the following: mileage, diesel gallon equivalent, average fuel efficiency, and cost per mile, availability and emissions reduction.
  - ❖ WRTA has 52 buses and, of those, 12% are electric buses.
  - ❖ Electric buses are on routes 4, 8,18,25,80 (downtown circulator).
  - ❖ Electric buses run cumulatively close to 12,000 miles per month.

- ❖ Electric bus mile per gallon equivalent rate from an efficiency standpoint is 11 to 18 miles per diesel gallon.
- ❖ The rest of the fleet is getting anywhere between 4 to 6 miles per gallon.
- ❖ Average fuel efficiency spans from .80 to .25 cents with the monthly average of .53 cents per mile.
  - This is due to the following factors: change from G2 demand rate from May through July to G3; lack of availability due to start dates in September & December; inconsistent use of the buses due to manufacturing problems; January – March were estimated electric bills, so the figures were retroactively applied; winter months are more demanding due to running the heaters on the buses.
- ❖ Average fuel cost per mile for the electric is .20 cents per kilowatt hour vs. \$3.14 for diesel and the total fleet is running at .65 to .70 cents per mile.
  - Ms. Linscott noted the .20 cents is rather an anomaly because it is part of the supply component of the bill NSTAR inadvertently left off. She believes going forward the figure will be about .40 cents per mile for the electric buses. This figure is affected by the availability of the electric buses because the more they are used the more savings are generated.
- ❖ Availability for the electric fleet has averaged best at 85% and as low as 50%, whereby the nonelectric has been at a little over 90%.
- ❖ Emission reduction is at 305 tons, which includes the cost of making the electricity and the total diesel reduction is 27,000 gallons.
- Board members discussed the availability issue and agreed the upcoming maintenance schedule by Proterra should help address this issue. The board members noted the cost per mile increase due to summer air conditioning and especially heating the buses in winter months. Mr. Conner asked about the sustainability of electric bus technology and if there was any correlation between that and the WRTA problems. Mr. Clermont stated the electric buses perform well and save money nationwide. The availability problems are not due to electric technology, nor specifically to Worcester’s electric buses, but to the manufacturing of the buses themselves. He explained industry leaders have been slow in getting into this technology as the investment is so high and the market is small. Right now, there are only two companies making electric buses.
- Mr. Clermont stated as competition increases changes will occur. As for Proterra, they are a new company now under a third management change. This latest change appears to be focused on quality issues. We have seen their responsiveness at Seneca, SC as they had their buses adjusted and now are running with higher availability. Mr. Clermont believed the WRTA would also experience the same benefits. Ms. Linscott mentioned the increased use of electric bus technology across America. Both Star Metro in Tallahassee and Clemson Area Transit in Seneca are showing savings in line with their

specific situations. CTE feels the electric bus will be trending forward as a viable option for the transportation industries.

- Mr. Lehtola stated the report reaffirmed a lot of things he had thought. Mr. Ostrosky asked Ms. Linscott what was her analysis on how we can get the demand charge cost down, specifically in terms of scheduling when we charge the buses. Ms. Linscott replied they have no official analysis on this. She explained the demand is calculated as a peak in the 15-minute window, so technically, if you had buses charging back to back to back, it costs more. We are not sure it would be worth the scheduling pains to ensure that doesn't happen to save that cost.
  - Mr. Lehtola requested from CTE a final recommendation in terms of keeping the electric buses. He specifically asked if they think we should have things modified and corrected in order to make our fleet more efficient. Mr. Clermont recommended going through the quality insurance check the WRTA is doing right now. He felt the data available already shows the cost savings. Mr. Clermont noted the switch to the G-3 utility rate lowered the electric cost per mile to below all other buses in the WRTA fleet from April to October 2014. He expects even through the winter you'll see a decrease in costs overall. Mr. Clermont indicated the positive benefits on the cost side and the reduction of your carbon footprint make it worthwhile.
  - Mr. Clermont closed by stating that the WRTA fleet could potentially raise the percentage of electric buses and see even further savings overall. This would entail additional purchases of buses and off-the-hub charging stations. Mr. Lehtola thanked the presenters for their report.
  - Mr. O'Neil informed the board of the reasons behind the upcoming route timing changes and then introduced Mr. Parker who reviewed the specifics of the timing changes. Mr. O'Neil explained they have been able to knock down complaints significantly since the last changes were made starting in July. This further modification will continue us on that path as well as provide a better match-up to what the conditions are on the roads. The monthly data report gives us the real ridership numbers to justify the timing changes. These changes will take effect on January 24, 2015. We don't feel these warrant any large outreach efforts on our part, as they are just very minor changes. Mr. Lehtola interjected it's basically just to improve our scheduling. Mr. O'Neil gave credit to Mr. Parker, Mr. Carney's staff, and CMRPC for the great job in handling the changes.
  - Mr. Parker stated these minor changes are specifically targeted to addressing those routes where we were experiencing some issues on maintaining our current schedule. These changes are all minor and all cost neutral, meaning no additional cost has occurred with these changes. A copy of the changes can be reviewed by clicking on the following link: [WRTA January 24, 2015 Route Changes](#).
1. Route 22 on weekdays will have additional time added for some mid-day trips surrounding Kelly Square.

- The added time will require the last inbound trip of the day to be express from Blackstone Shoppes to the Hub via 146 and 290. Mr. Conner asked how the change will affect ridership. Mr. Parker replied data showed last trip stops in Millbury Center and Massasoit Road are extremely minimal and the bus will stop at Kelly Square inbound.
  - 2. Route 25 on Saturday – the entire schedule block will move ten (10) minutes earlier due to electric bus charging.
  - 3. Routes 27 and 5 on Saturday will have additional time added between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
    - This will change the schedule but there is no loss of trips.
  - 4. Route 30 on Sundays will have time shifted between inbound and outbound trips.
  - 5. Route 9 inbound weekdays last trip will start five (5) minutes later.
  - 6. Route 31 inbound weekdays last four (4) round trips will start five (5) minutes later.
- Mr. Conner inquired as to the reasoning behind the last bus being express on Route 22. Mr. Parker stated there would be an issue of overtime paid in the eight (8) hour shift if the bus kept going through Millbury and Massasoit Road. Our data showed no ridership whatsoever on that last trip in Millbury and Massasoit Road. There was some ridership along Dorchester St. and the bus will come in on that first exit onto 290 not hitting Dorchester St., but there is a stop at Kelly Square.
  - Mr. Conner asked if that was a pretty well used route and Mr. Parker replied it is not one of the beefier routes, but the ridership we did see was more boarding at the shops and getting off at the hub. Overall we feel this change will be helpful. Mr. Lehtola said every time a change is up for consideration, the available data is checked to make sure that it's the best possible change.
  - Mr. O'Neil spoke to the board about the meeting he and Mr. Carney attended in South Carolina. Mr. O'Neil stated discussions were held in length with Proterra's staff and their CEO. He assured the board their message came through loud and clear to the officials at Proterra. Both he and Mr. Carney were very impressed with the staff, the timelines and the quality focus of this CEO. Mr. Carney informed the board as a result of the visit the improvement schedule has been revised. Also, in March his foreman and head mechanic will accompany the second bus to South Carolina. This will facilitate a wider learning curve for his staff.
  - Mr. Carney then continued with an overview of the revised improvement schedule and gave a brief summary of CMTM's fleet performance and fuel savings report. The full

report can be viewed by clicking on the following link: [WRTA Board Pres 2014.12.12](#).

- ❖ All buses will be returned to Greenville, S.C. and updated using the most current designs and quality processes. Each bus will take approximately six (6) weeks to update.
  - First bus will start January 12, 2015.
  - March 2015 buses will start going down in pairs.
  - All buses will be completed by July 2015.
- ❖ Mr. Carney stated the fleet's fuel savings for 2014 was \$135,000 and the performance comparison figures averaged days out of service were: Gillig Hybrid 33, Gillig Diesel 38 and Proterra electric bus 83. Mr. Carney acknowledged the high numbers on the electric buses and restated the improvement schedule laid out by Proterra should bring these numbers down.
- The WRTA Monthly Operations Report was not discussed. The report can be viewed by clicking on the following link: [WRTA November 2014 MOR.pdf](#)

## 5. Business from the Board

- Mr. Lehtola called for business from the Board and no one responded.
- Mr. O'Neil stated he would like to move onto the Quinsigamond Avenue site and recommend the board consider going into executive session. Mr. O'Neil reviewed the last meeting in which he informed board members about environmental and building site issues. One of them is the coal tar requiring off-loading. The other being the state code requirement of a pile system required by state building code as opposed to a spread footing system because of the lack of load bearing soil capacity. These two factors are adding approximately \$10 million more to the project. Mr. O'Neil stated he met with the city manager and updated him on the specifics of the project. During the course of the meeting, the city manager inquired about any possible potential for going back to NSTAR and litigating any charges in regards to the site. Mr. O'Neil added he has spoken with the WRTA's attorney and would like to give the board the opportunity to hear from them.

## 6. Executive Session - The board went out of open meeting at 9:39 a.m.

- In open session, the Board voted to meet in executive session to discuss the 42 Quinsigamond Ave project. The motion for this action was as follows:
- **Motion: I move that the Board meet in executive session to discuss 42 Quinsigamond Ave with respect to litigation, with the Board returning to open session. A roll call vote was taken to allow the executive session meeting.**

- **Mr. Gaumond made the motion and Mr. Spain seconded.** A roll call vote was taken to approve this action: 9:39 a.m.

|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| Kelly Burke     | yes |
| John Ostrosky   | yes |
| Luz Vega        | yes |
| Leon Gaumond    | yes |
| Mark Binnall    | yes |
| Dennis Lipka    | yes |
| Jarrett Conner  | yes |
| Bob Spain       | yes |
| William Lehtola | yes |

- The Board Members went into open session meeting at 10:43 a.m.

## 7. Adjournment

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to adjourn.
- **Mr. Lipka motion to adjourn and Mr. Spain seconded.** All voted in favor and the motion to adjourn was accepted. The meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

## 8. Next Meeting Date

- The next board meeting will be on January 15, 2015 at 8:30 a.m., located at the hub 60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.