



MINUTES of 9/19/2013 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

ATTENDANCE

Name

Representing

PRESENT

| | |
|-----------------|------------|
| William Lehtola | Spencer |
| Jarrett Conner | Worcester |
| Mark Binnall | Auburn |
| Dennis Lipka | Holden |
| Daniel Morgado | Shrewsbury |

ABSENT

| | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Doug Belanger | Leicester |
| David Schiller | Charlton |
| Kelly Burke | Northborough |
| Alyssa Graveson | Douglas |
| Leon Gaumond Jr. | West Boylston |
| Rudy Heller | Brookfield |
| Timothy McInerney | Grafton |
| Kevin Mizikar | Grafton |
| Michael O'Brien | Worcester |
| John Ostrosky | Shrewsbury |
| Michael Pantos | Rutland |
| Robert Spain | Millbury |
| Michael Ward | Clinton |

1. Chairman Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.

2. **Attendance**

3. Acceptance of Minutes

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes of August 15, 2013 and **Mr. Lipka made the motion and Mr. Connor seconded.** All voted in favor. The motion was accepted.

4. Administrator Report

Mr. O'Neil explained that Mr. Church is going to go over the schedule comparison which is a report for the purpose of monitoring the system overall. The report reflects changes under the timelines for the first week in the months of January 2013, June 2013 and September 2013. So what we are looking at here is a comparison of all the routes of the system and their on-time performance as well as information regarding the problematic routes and any other areas of concern.

- Mr. Church walked the board through the on time performance chart, the late by time period (peak times) and then times for Routes 19, 30 and 33.
- For all routes in the system, route lateness dropped from 41.2% to 32.1% while routes departing on-time rose slightly from June's 51.2% to 56.9%. Mr. Church also noted that January's on-time performance measured at 62.1%. Routes that were considered to be early increased from 7.7% in June to 11% in September, however that increase appears to be happening mostly in the early part of the day between 4:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m.
- In regards to the entire system, there is a slight increase in late buses, however the time periods of the day show decreases in lateness on all routes compared to the June. We also have added mid night service on several routes which we have started tracking and here it shows from August it is higher for lateness. Mr. Church explained this is due to the fact that some of the trips are held at the end of the night and then they all pulse out at 11:35 p.m. together. So the system is reading some of those so it will be higher than normal until we get to that pulse time. Mr. Church informed the board that the mid night service is doing much better than originally anticipated. There are a good amount of people riding between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m.
- Mr. Lehtola then asked if the five (5) minutes start measure for the determination of being late was an industry-standard or just WRTA policy. Mr. Church replied it is in fact an industry standard, but it is also is our present policy. Mr. Lehtola questioned if that was too narrow and perhaps it should be reviewed in the future. Mr. O'Neil replied that this is being looked at along with time points. Mr. O'Neil further commented that we may be putting more burden on ourselves by keeping that five (5) minutes late policy and we will be addressing this in the near future.

Mr. Church presented an overview of the three (3) routes that were the most late with the June changes and explained that significant improvement is being achieved.

Decreases:

- Route 19 30%
- Route 30 20%
- Route 33 11%

- Mr. Lehtola asked if route 33 was still the worst in the system. Mr. Church replied, route 33 remains to have a number of problems in terms of getting all its time points and that the planning group is looking at all the time points for every route in the system. Mr. Church explained that this will continue into October and doing so possible adjustments can be made that would help meet the specific needs of each route and thereby benefit adherence to scheduling overall.
- Mr. Church elaborated on the importance of time points explaining that each route has a start location, midpoint, and end point. Some longer routes have as many as six (6) points. For the public these would be individual stops. With the additional data now being collected we can weigh in the various factors involving making such determinations. Mr. Church explained factors such as that long term construction projects, miles on the route, traffic, present time points, as well as other geographic factors are considerations. Smaller construction jobs can cause delays, but are usually averaged out overall in the data.
- Mr. Lehtola spoke of the improvements being measured in this presentation, but was concerned as they were still lower than their overall expectation. Mr. O'Neil explained the WRTA is in the process of accelerating performance to the point of the board's expectations. Mr. O'Neil noted that Mr. Carney and Mr. Parker are measuring setbacks and given that overall missed trips are down significantly shows that the WRTA is headed in the right direction.
- Ms. Fuller asked if as part of the system for evaluating time points such factors as traffic and wheelchair boarding's and alighting's could be considered. After some discussion, Mr. Church responded that they will factor in the times of the days with heavy volume of traffic thereby allowing for adjustments in peak times and traffic. Ms. Blunt responded that they have average maximum and minimum on time data, whether due to construction or lifting events so we will know how much time it takes and what we need for those runs. Mr. O'Neil then replied that as we get more data like this coming in one can judge how major a factor it may be but right now we only have eighteen (18) to twenty (20) days of data as we are going from the August 24 changes to Tuesday, September 17, 2013.

Mr. Church continued with the individual route comparisons for routes 19, 30, 2, 5, 6.

- Route 19 is improving with increases in the on-time runs and decreases in late trips between 5 and 10 minutes, however that first week also showed an increase in early trips, but again compared to June the route is improving overall.
- Mr. Conner commented that the crisis stage on those problematic routes in question is passing and the decreases are pleasing to see. Mr. Connor also agreed that we all want to see better on-time performance, but this is what we've been able to track as real-time in just eighteen (18) days and it is a good start.
- Route 30 had an increase of 20% for its on-time trips along with decreases in the 5 to 10 minute late trips. In addition, significantly late trips (more than 15 minutes) are shrinking considerably.
- Route 2, which had a routing and headway change, saw a significant decrease in the number of early trips and an increase in the number of on-time trips. There was a slight increase in the number of trips that were 5 to 10 minutes late as well as a slight increase in the number of trips that were significantly late. Again, this route changed from a half-hour to hour headway. Mr. Church stated that continued monitoring will be ongoing.
- Route 5, which has a new interline connection with Route 27, performed relatively the same in terms of on-time and the 5 to 10 minute late. Mr. Church noted there was an increase in the number of very late trips. Again, this route will also be monitored closely and that monitoring will look at peak travel times, congestion and any other considerations.
- Route 6, which had its routing cut back to Tatnuck Square, saw an increase in the number of early trips, but also an increase in the number of on-time trips. Mr. Church explained that perhaps leaving two minutes early from its time point can trigger an early trip, however this could be an end of time point issue as well. A decrease in the number of significantly late trips was also noted.
- Mr. O'Neil stated that the use of this technology is paying off and the process is an ongoing one. Mr. O'Neil explained that as we get deeper into the data our ability to measure and report in a systematic and functional way will allow for better compliance with our present service standards. It will also aid in making recommendations to the board regarding whether to continue, cancel or determine the best placement of services.
- Mr. O'Neil stated to the Board that, in regards to this fiscal year, our considerations for expanding or adding additional services were not a priority as the main focus has been to stabilize the existing system and improve within those boundaries in the coming months. We are focused on making better what we have right now. Mr. Carney will address the setbacks and how well the shuttle is doing.
- Mr. Carney explained missed trips are down to one (1) or two (2) a day. As for setbacks, our maintenance department is doing a wonderful job maintaining the fleets as all the

newer buses have not arrived. Mr. O'Neil explained where we are going forward in regards to the capital assets. Noting that Mr. Coyne has been working on a schedule whereby the end of this calendar year we will have eighteen (18) new buses. These buses will be a mix of clean diesels, electric diesels and of course the remaining three electrics. Mr. Carney interjected that three (3) forty (40) foot buses are due on the road by the end of the month.

- Mr. Carney provided information on the new shuttle service. The City Hall shuttle is a success as from 300 to 400 people ride it every day. As we approach winter months, we anticipate a steady increase in use. Mr. Carney explained that inclement weather would move people to shuttle instead of walking. Mr. Carney noted that the City Hall shuttle is primarily an electric bus and the positive feedback has been numerous as to the new bus, the covered platform, Dunkin Donuts, and the ease of adjusting to the August 24th changes.
- Mr. Lehtola asked if the word temporary in regards to the shuttle is looking to be replaced with the word permanent. Mr. O'Neil stated that its continued success would make it extremely likely that the shuttle will be permanent.
- Mr. Binnall asked if the shuttle ran weekends. Mr. O'Neil replied that it runs Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Mr. Conner recognized the administration and their counterparts for their due diligence in getting the WRTA to turn a corner and continually work to improve the problematic routes and that overall the on-time performance of the system is trending upwards.
- Mr. O'Neil commented on the electric buses so as to assure the board that their use will be effective and efficient. Mr. O'Neil explained that presently the buses are used on Routes 8 and 18. Mr. O'Neil informed the board that the performance of the electric buses is being monitored by the WRTA and an outside consultant, CTE.
- Mr. O'Neil stated that three (3) out of the fifteen (15) RTA's right now have forward funding and that the WRTA will be forward funded in FY 15. The days of funding in arrears are gone as we will be receiving our final five percent (5%) for this fiscal year right after we submit our audit. Mr. O'Neil reminded that board that, despite the prior absence of forward funding, the WRTA has presented a balanced budget four (4) years running. The WRTA is working with MassDOT on its forward funding so that come May 2014, our notes should be paid down and forward funding will commence in FY 2015.
- Mr. Lehtola then added it doesn't mean that we're a shining star; it means we're finally getting up to a level playing field. Mr. O'Neil agreed and then explained that this comes with a price tag as well. Specifically, our performance will be measured and tied to succeeding year's allocation of state assistance.
- Mr. O'Neil explained that the FY 13 audit is complete and that Mr. Hargrave from McCarthy, Hargrave & Co. will be providing the board with an update.

Mr. O’Neil informed the board that the WRTA, PBSI and CMTS have been hearing quite a bit about changes on the hub platform. In a more intense effort to communicate with our ridership, all parties have been down to the platform listening to what people are saying, the good and the bad. In an effort to address these concerns two (2) recommendations are being proposed as well as an update on prior considerations that now have timelines.

1. Five (5) new benches for the platform will be installed in October. These have backs and are metal.
 2. One (1) three sided kiosk sign (metal) will be on the platform with displaying a system map, mobile device instruction and promotional information on our Charlie Card.
 3. A designated smoking area be provided and
 4. Extending the hours of operation of the hub.
- Mr. Binnall asked if benches could be placed in the front of the building. Mr. O’Neil responded that the underground pipes for melting the snow would prohibit the placement of benches at or around the doorways of the hub.
 - Mr. O’Neil will designate a smoking area by November 2013.
 - Mr. Coyne provided the board with the current hours of operation and what the cost would be to extend these hours.

| | M-F | Sat | Sun |
|----------------------------|----------|---------|------------|
| Current operation hours: | 7-5:30 | 9-5:30 | Closed |
| Proposed operation hours | 7-12 am | 7-10 am | 9:15 -8:45 |
| Cost labor annual | \$36,000 | | |
| Proposed labor annual | \$66,000 | | |
| Increase labor cost annual | \$30,000 | | |
| Increase custodial cost | \$2,600 | | |

Each additional or deducted customer service hour equals \$11.30.

- The board members discussed such measurements for expansion as within the following three (3) factors; the actually schedules of peak times of service, the existing bathrooms closed time of 7:00 p.m., and the closing time of Dunkin Donuts. Mr. O’Neil responded that Dunkin Donuts is not open on Sunday’s now and they would open talks with them to see if they would be willing to open on Sunday’s.
- The board members reviewed the duties and benefits of staffing customer service during any such expansion of hours or additional days. Mr. Morgado spoke about making adjustments without announcing an official policy for such adjustments, thereby extending closing hours until eight 8:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday and monitoring

the actual usage. Mr. Lipka agreed that a slow gradual change would allow for better monitoring. Mr. Lehtola commented that he didn't know if the numbers warranted being open on Sunday and felt that there was a balance to be struck as the board continued to review the recommendation. No vote on this issue was taken at this time regarding this issue.

- Mr. O'Neil commented that the board members discussion gave them some clarity and the administration will circle back next meeting with further recommendations regarding this matter.
- Mr. Binnall asked if there was security 24 hours a day. Mr. O'Neil replied that at certain times during the day there is security and the platform is video recorded and monitored

5. Business from the Board

- Mr. Morgado publicly acknowledged the efforts of Mr. Ostrosky who has been filling in for him and he then congratulated the administration, operations and others for the good job that they been doing over the past several months with opening the new hub.
- Mr. Lipka thanked the WRTA for their assistance during Holden Days stating it was extremely successful and people really enjoyed having the two (2) hybrid buses the WRTA provided for the event.
- Mr. Lehtola stated that it was a painful summer and a lot of our employees and a lot of people behind the scenes worked very hard to make things better and it was tough but hopefully we are on the upswing.

6. Business from the Public

- Ms. Fuller recommended to the board at 10:30 p.m. Monday through Friday in her opinion was sufficient and Saturday evening would be 8:30 p.m. and Sunday could be a 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. schedule. Opening times should remain at 7:00 a.m. Monday - Friday as it catches the peak morning travel. Ms. Fuller requested that the timing on the handicap push buttons for the hub doors be extended as they now open and close too quickly. Ms. Fuller recommended that a pay phone be added to the facility. Ms. Fuller asked that route two (2) which passes three (3) HUD projects could be placed back onto a one half an hour schedule as those riders now have to bring their groceries to the hub as opposed to before when they could take one route home and back with their groceries.
- Ms. Hart commented that the changes in the schedule from City Hall to the hub in her opinion are a civil rights issue and that it was done specifically on purpose to move people and inconvenience them. Ms. Hart feels that the \$16 million spent on the hub would have been better spent on service. Ms. Hart also stated that she feels that the recent changes in scheduling has degraded the system and shows poor management. Ms. Hart now walks or finds other modes of transportation as the changes have left areas

without coverage. Ms. Hart also asked about Brooks Street and Wyman Gordon sites in regards to the placement of the new garage facility. Ms. Hart commented that in her opinion the Quinsigamond site is in a flood plain and therefore unsuitable. Ms. Hart also questioned by an executive session was needed and not an open session. Mr. Lehtola replied that the Brooks site was in purchase to another party and that the Wyman Gordon site was not available for sale when the board discussed site issues and options. Mr. Reich the WRTA attorney explained that the topic of real property falls under executive session because the meeting is not a general discussion about which property is being considered, but instead has to do with very detailed matters involving specific properties and specific rights and interests. Furthermore, should these matters become public through a public discourse they could have a detrimental impact on the authority's ability to construct and fulfill the terms to any agreement in respect to the property.

- Mr. Provost commented that he wants to see things work out and is concerned with the Foster Street light. Mr. Provost questioned why the DPW could not give make a break in the median thereby improving the on time performance. Mr. Provost requested that route 30 and route 31 be placed back on to Main Street in the future.
- Mr. Conner stated that he has talked with the DPW and is working to get the signal right and that they are studying the issue. Mr. O'Neil commented that the traffic signal in question had missed 4 or 5 loops and people sat in the bus watching their connections go by. To the credit of the driver, the situation was handled very well despite the ridership upheaval and we gave that video to the DPW to show how important effective use of traffic signals is to everyone.
- Mr. O'Neil also mentioned that some technology such as Transit Signal Priority, while used effectively by others, does not lend itself to everyone. The fire department has a pass through system but this system has limitations e.g. no use on coordinated signals.
- Mr. O'Neil stated that the WRTA will continue to make its point and communication with the DPW regarding traffic signalization. When we planned and built this facility our buses were considered as part of the growth/no growth scenarios complied as part of the various downtown development projects regarding levels of service at various intersections in the area especially at periods of peak volume.
- Ms. Kelly asked whether the shuttle is permanent. Mr. Lehtola explained that the original plan was to make it temporary, but with its success it will be kept.

7. Executive Session

- **Mr. Morgado made a motion at 10:01 a.m. to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing the purchase of real property and at the conclusion of the executive session that adjournment of the advisory board meeting commences. Seconded. By Mr. Binnall.**

Roll call.

- Mr. Lehtola - Y
 - Mr. Lipka - Y
 - Mr. Binnall - Y
 - Mr. Connor - Y
 - Mr. Morgado - Y
- **Mr. Morgado made a motion to close executive session at 10:27 a.m. Seconded by Mr. Connor.**

Roll call

- Mr. Lehtola -Y
- Mr. Lipka -Y
- Mr. Binnall -Y
- Mr. Connor-Y
- Mr. Morgado -Y

8. Adjournment

- **Mr. Lipka motion to adjourn and Mr. Connor seconded. All voted in favor and the motion to adjourn accepted** the meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.

9. Next Meeting Date

- The next board meeting will be on October 17, 2013 at 8:30 a.m. located at the Hub 60 Foster Street Worcester MA 01608 3rd floor.