



## MINUTES of 06/19/2014 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

### ATTENDANCE

#### Name

#### Representing

#### PRESENT

William Lehtola  
Doug Belanger  
Mark Binnall  
Dennis Lipka  
John Ostrosky  
Robert Spain  
Dori Vecchio  
Luz Vega

Spencer  
Leicester  
Auburn  
Holden  
Shrewsbury  
Millbury  
Worcester  
Rider Comm. Population

#### ABSENT

Kelly Burke  
Jarrett Conner  
Leon Gaumond Jr.  
Alyssa Graveson  
Rudy Heller  
Timothy McInerney  
Kevin Mizikar  
Daniel Morgado  
David Schiller  
Michael Pantos  
Michael Ward

Northborough  
Worcester  
West Boylston  
Douglas  
Brookfield  
Grafton  
Grafton  
Shrewsbury  
Charlton  
Rutland  
Clinton

1. Chairman Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

2. **Attendance**

### 3. Acceptance of Minutes

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes of May 15, 2014.
- **Motion: To accept the minutes of May 15, 2014.**
- **Mr. Spain made the motion and Mr. Ostrosky seconded. All voted in favor and the motion was accepted.**
- Ms. Vega joined the meeting at 8:40 a.m.

### 4. Business from the Public

Mr. Lehtola called for business from the public and no one responded.

### 5. Administrator Report

- Mr. O'Neil introduced Mr. Murdoch from Destination Worcester. Mr. Murdoch explained that Destination Worcester serves as a facilitator on behalf of the City of Worcester for obtaining and promoting events for the city. The latest event was the Massachusetts Democratic Convention which was held last week. Mr. Murdoch thanked the WRTA for the buses as they were used as a shuttle service for the 6,200 delegates. Mr. Murdoch stated the first and last point of contact for people attending the event was the WRTA and it was very well received. Destination Worcester is very happy to partner with the WRTA and has continually worked well with operations during all scheduled events.
- Mr. Belanger joined the meeting at 8:45 a.m.
- Mr. O'Neil introduced the new board member, Ms. Luz Vega, who was chosen by the city manager to be the representative in regards to the legislative changes to C 161b requiring all regional transit authorities to include a rider on their respective boards. The legislative change requires the AFLCIO to submit at least three names to the city manager who in turn would make a recommendation to the WRTA board. Ms. Vega then introduced herself and stated she was very grateful to represent this region and looks forward to working with the board and the community on improving the services of the WRTA. Mr. O'Neil also commented that Ms. Vega has taken great ownership of ridership concerns as well as transportation issues state-wide through her employment at Neighbor to Neighbor.
- Mr. O'Neil asked the board to authorize the administrator to hold a public meeting to solicit comments in regards to implementing service changes on August 23, 2014. Mr. O'Neil explained the union allows for changes three times a year – December, June, and September. The September changes, if accepted by the board, would be cost neutral.

- Mr. O’Neil introduced Mr. Parker, who then reviewed and explained the proposed changes.
  1. Creating a new route 9 and interlining it with route 31
  2. Eliminating route 11A
  3. Resuming route 18
  4. Eliminating the interline of route 25 with route 31
  
- Mr. Parker explained we would be placing an electric bus on Route 25, therefore we would not interline it anymore. The passenger load and distance of 31 would not allow for an electric bus. Route 9 would travel Pleasant Street to Newton Square, and then go to WSU. There would then be scheduled service every 1/2 hour from the Hub down Pleasant Street to Newton Square. This frequency was lost when we changed Route 2 to every hour. Elimination of Route 11A is due to the route underperforming.
  
- Mr. O’Neil assured the board members these changes are not part of the comprehensive service review, but are in response to the ongoing dialog with Worcester State University. As stated in other board meetings, the neighborhood, alongside city officials and the college are looking for alternatives to the long-standing parking issues in the area. Mr. O’Neil explained these changes are not the sole answer to the WSU challenges, but it does help serve both the college and our riders. Mr. O’Neil advised the board he would present the findings from the public hearing and ask the board for a vote at its July meeting.
  
- Mr. Lehtola asked the administration if the promotion of the service would be handled by the college and Mr. O’Neil replied WSU will be promoting the service. Board members discussed options for WRTA promotions. Mr. Ostrosky commented on the visibility of the scrolling marquee on the front of the bus as an option, while Mr. Belanger suggested a coupon but in exchange for basic information or comments from the ridership. Mr. Lipka floated the option of two (2) weeks no cost promotion or minimal cost for a promotional period. No decisions or recommendations were made at this time.
  
- **Motion: The advisory board authorizes the administrator to hold a public hearing to solicit comments from the public on the following service changes to be implemented on August 23, 2014 if approved by the board: Create a new route 9 interlining it with route 31, eliminating route 11A, resuming route 18 and eliminating the interline of route 25 with route 31.**
  
- **Mr. Lipka made the motion and Mr. Belanger seconded. All voted in favor and the motion was accepted.**
  
- Dennis Lipka discussed the subcommittee recommendation for a 3-year contract for the administrator with a 2% pay raise for each of the three years, and a ninety day (90) re-opener for decisions to be made in regards to a public contributory retirement system, or an annuity, or some other similar retirement instrument. This recommendation was also reviewed by the company’s attorney, as is standard policy.

- The Board discussed the recommendation specifically in regards to the length of term alongside the need for a re-opener for pension considerations. The board discussed the ninety (90) days as a viable timeframe to resolve the retirement issue, as opposed to a wider timeframe in general. Mr. Belanger explained that a longer term offers the least amount of flexibility for both Mr. O'Neil and for the financial interests of the WRTA. He recommended a one-year contract with the re-opener for pension considerations. Mr. Lipka noted the re-opener was not issued as a specific factor for Mr. O'Neil, but rather reflected the need for continued adjustments in this area.
- **Motion: Based upon the highly favorable review of the administrator and his accomplishments during the course of his recent contract, WRTA Advisory Board hereby recommends a one-year contract with a (2%) salary increase with all other benefits remaining unchanged from the previous contract and the new contracts contain a provision to re-open negotiations within 90 days, at which time a decision will be made to enter into a public contributory retirement system, and annuity, or some other similar retirement instrument.**
- **Mr. Lipka made the motion and Mr. Spain seconded. All voted in favor and the motion was accepted.**
- Mr. O'Neil gave the board an update on the permits and packages regarding the 42 Quinsigamond Avenue project. He explained the permits from the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals have been obtained, while some DPW permits are still pending. We anticipate they will come to fruition in the very near future. We have prepared and submitted the environmental and foundation packages and our exploratory work is moving forward. Any significant findings will be reported to the board on an ongoing basis. Mr. Lehtola asked the administration to report on the exploratory work as soon as July's board meeting and Mr. O'Neil confirmed that could be done.
- Mr. O'Neil recapped the URS report and procedures for the new member. Mr. O'Neil stated the Comprehensive Service Report is due for 2016 implementation. Mr. O'Neil stressed the recommendations from the upcoming report can help us to better define our service to our riders. Mr. O'Neil confirmed the public would be involved both in a variety of meetings as well as specific surveys. Mr. O'Neil commented the new-rider community population directive would be very helpful in expanding the present community goals.
- Ms. Vega commented on her expectations as a liaison between the ridership/community groups and the WRTA. Ms. Vega stated she feels some current perceptions can be changed by her becoming a bridge of communication between the ridership and community groups. Ms. Vega explained that continual engagement with the community is paramount.
- Mr. Lehtola commented on the previous Urbitran study, which he graded as positive, but with no significant implications arising from the review. Mr. Lehtola acknowledged he

looks forward to the URS findings, but does not feel it will generate a 180° turn-a-bout for the WRTA system. Ms. Vega spoke about the idea of a mini survey throughout the ridership community, where the three top benefits and three top improvements could be calculated and possibly added to the USR reporting procedures.

- Mr. O'Neil recapped the FY'15 budget in regards to the Senate's House Ways and Means committee, as on schedule for closeout by the end of the fiscal year. Meanwhile, the state legislature should pass the expected budget at the end of June and we will be moving forward within these assumptions. Mr. Coyne explained the MASSDOT' state's payment schedule is \$11.2 million dollars total, with \$5.2 million in September 2014, \$3.0 million in December, 2014 and \$3.0 million in March 2015.
- Mr. O'Neil asked the board for a vote on applying for an FTA grant for the purchase and installation of a fast charger to be located at the end of a designated route.
- **Motion: The advisory board authorizes the administrator to file a grant with the Federal Transit Authority for the upcoming round of Bus and Bus Facilities Program, known as the Ladders of Opportunity. Said grant will be used to purchase and install a fast charger located at the end of a specific bus route.**
- **Mr. Belanger made the motion and Mr. Spain seconded. All voted in favor and the motion was accepted.**
- Mr. O'Neil introduced Mr. Church who gave a summary of the monthly operations report, which outline the performance measures for the WRTA. The full report can be viewed at the following link [WRTA Monthly Operations Report May 2014](#).
  - Year to date farebox revenue is lower than last year's (9.29%), however total revenue is also 2.20% lower than last year, despite the substantial increase in Charlie card stored value (30.18% compared to last year) and monthly pass sales (27.39% higher than last year.)
  - Overall, year to date, ridership is 5.5% higher compared to this time last year.
  - Passengers per revenue mile goal is 2.5 and the following routes exceeded this number in May: Route 1, Route 6, Route 7, Route 11, Route 19, Route 24, Route 26, Route 27, and the Downtown Loop.
  - Customer service window visits continue to trend higher. May had a total of 7,699 visits to the window. The largest number of visits was to purchase passes/tickets. Call volume through the ZenDesk system showed 711 tickets were created in the month of May, with 2% of the tickets originating via Facebook, 3% through the WRTA website form, 26% originated as voicemails, 33% were phone calls and 35% were through e-mail.

## 6. Business from the Board

- Mr. Belanger commented on number of inquires he fielded recently regarding the bus timing around the Webster Square area. Mr. Belanger asked the administration if Routes

19 and 33 are reported as running late on a consistent basis. Mr. Lehtola answered the reports for on-time performance are not reflecting this. Mr. Lehtola stated reports come out everyday regarding on-time performance and he has not seen a pattern for those routes. Both Mr. Belanger and Mr. Lehtola concurred that public education in regards to new schedules and any updated changes may be the answer. Mr. Belanger recommended the administration participate in the Webster Square neighborhood meetings as a ways to further communication in this regard. Mr. O'Neil agreed with this recommendation.

- Mr. O'Neil explained that the corridor from Federal Square to Webster Square was built when it was much less populated. Mr. O'Neil acknowledged this corridor is very heavily populated even without the schools being in session. For the WRTA itself, we could look at placing a mini hub in the area or perhaps the city could work on land allocation to widen the road, however, that would be a huge project. Mr. O'Neil stated we are aware of this issue and look forward in particular to the USR report regarding recommendations.

## 7. Adjournment

- **Mr. Lipka motion to adjourn and Mr. Spain seconded. All voted in favor and the motion to adjourn was accepted.** The meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

## 8. Next Meeting Date

- The next board meeting will be on July 17, 2014 at 8:30 a.m. located at the Hub 60 Foster Street Worcester, MA 01608 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.