



MINUTES of 07/17/2014 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

ATTENDANCE

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
<u>PRESENT</u>	
William Lehtola	Spencer
Doug Belanger	Leicester
Mark Binnall	Auburn
Jarrett Conner	Worcester
Dennis Lipka	Holden
John Ostrosky	Shrewsbury
David Schiller	Charlton
Luz Vega	Rider
<u>ABSENT</u>	
Kelly Burke	Northborough
Leon Gaumond Jr.	West Boylston
Alyssa Graveson	Douglas
Rudy Heller	Brookfield
Timothy McInerney	Grafton
Kevin Mizikar	Grafton
Daniel Morgado	Shrewsbury
Robert Spain	Millbury
Michael Pantos	Rutland
Michael Ward	Clinton

1. Chairman Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

2. **Attendance**

3. Acceptance of Minutes

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes of June 19, 2014.
- **Motion: To accept the minutes of June 19, 2014.**
- **Mr. Binnall made the motion and Mr. Belanger seconded. All voted in favor and the motion was accepted.**

4. Business from the Public

- Mr. Lehtola called for business from the public and no one responded.
- Mr. Lehtola asked that the motion be read in regards to the approval of the advisory board officers for FY` 15.
- **Motion: The advisory board approves the following members as officers for FY'15:**
Chairman – William Lehtola
Vice Chair – City Manager Augustus
Treasurer – Douglas Belanger
Secretary – Dennis Lipka
- **Mr. Belanger made the motion and Mr. Binnall seconded. All voted in favor and the motion was accepted.**
- Mr. Lehtola asked that the motion be read in regards to the approval of the service changes to take effect on the 23rd of August.
- **The WRTA Advisory Board approves the service changes as discussed at the June 19, 2014 meeting and at the public hearing held on July 9, 2014. The service changes are:**

Creating a new Rt. 9 interlining it with Rt. 31,
Eliminating Rt. 11a,
Resuming Rt.18 and
Eliminating the interline of Rt. 25 with Rt. 31.
- **Mr. Lipka made the motion and Mr. Belanger seconded. All voted in favor and the motion was accepted.**

5. Administrator Report

- Mr. O'Neil reviewed with the board thank-you notes regarding some of the specialized

services offered by the WRTA community outreach program. Mr. O’Neil mentioned the coordinated efforts of both Mr. Parker and Mr. Trabucco for arranging the following outreach activities:

1. Quinsigamond Community College Career Day
 2. Preservation Worcester’s Revolutionary War History of Worcester Tour and
 3. bus passes for the City of Worcester’s youth cleanup parks campaign.
- Mr. O’Neil next moved to public outreach. He explained the nine (9) meetings scheduled and advertised to start on July 22, 2014. He stated each meeting is expected to be 1.5 hours in length. Augmenting these meetings, will include surveys from both CMRPC and Ms. Vega as head of Neighbor to Neighbor. Mr. O’Neil spoke specifically about the importance of gathering information and efforts to bring forth “Mobile Listening Sessions.” Mr. O’Neil explained these would be located at specific high traffic areas, like Webster Square and Walmart in Leicester. These Mobile Listening Sessions would include a parked bus, personnel, as well as survey forms. Mr. O’Neil listed all the areas covered by the listening sessions as the following: central business district, city neighborhoods, towns and mobile sites (details listed below).

1. Central Business District - Union Station Union Hall

July 22, 2014 – 5:30 p.m.

July 24, 2014 – 1:30 p.m.

Aug 12, 2014 – 5:30 p.m.

2. City Neighborhoods

Centro Las Americas August 4, 2014 - 5:00 pm to 6:30 p.m.

Our Lady of the Angels August 12, 2014, - 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

South Worcester NC August 14, 2014 - 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

3. Towns

Southbridge Town Library August 7, 2014 - 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

4. Mobile Listening Sessions

UMass - TBA

Webster Sq. Plaza – July 25, 2014 - 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Walmart – Leicester – July 25, 2014 - 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

GBV – TBA

- Mr. O’Neil informed the board the sessions would continue throughout July and August 2014, and the information is for the purpose of collecting the necessary data for the Comprehensive Service Review analysis initiated by URS, the consultant hired by the regional transit authorities. Mr. Conner asked about the platform surveys tally and when an expected report would be issued to the board. Mr. Church stated presently CMRPC has about 150 surveys and their goal is to reach 400 to 500 surveys. He explained, at the completion of all the listening sessions, the information will be compiled and reported to the board, which should take place at the September meeting. Mr. Conner also inquired about the level of data and whether URS is equipped to handle such a task. Mr. O’Neil stated URS was chosen because they have the capability to handle our high level of data. Mr. O’Neil explained URS is extremely impressed by the level and organization of the data it receives from the WRTA, and they noted that we are leaders within the state in this regard.
- Board members discussed the need to pay additional attention to the non-rider when planning the WRTA’s outreach and marketing. Mr. Schiller mentioned the “7 Bucks To Go Out The Driveway...” as a slogan used by others, while the members agreed in principle targeting non-riders would also encompass working towards alleviating people’s fears of service limits, especially out in the towns. Board members shared individual experiences and their opinions on the importance of personal contact when reaching into the communities, whether through neighborhood groups or cable access stations. Mr. Belanger emphasize the long term benefits of using existing cable media outlets, as they often re-air shows over long periods of time. Mr. Conner suggested the Worcester’s media services can be a viable source. Mr. Binnall requested the listening sessions be posted on the Audio Journal, which is Worcester Reading Radio Service. Mr. O’Neil indicated he would check on the availability of some of these resources.
- Mr. O’Neil next discussed a number of conversations he had recently with Ms. Blunt, Mr. Borbone, the city’s traffic engineer, and Mr. Rolle, the city’s chief planner, regarding certain corridors in the city that, because of street width and traffic volume, are contributing to missed trips and delays. Mr. O’Neil mentioned some ideas discussed and reviewed were: better use of CAD/AVL, transit signal priority, eliminating some on-street parking, coordinating traffic lights with transit signal priority and then participating in future city traffic planning studies.
- Mr. O’Neil stated that the WRTA must work within the public right of way and, while we don’t control the right of way, we need to bring people to the table who do control this right away to help focus our needs for the long run. As an example, Mr. O’Neil explained Rt. 19 which serves Webster Square area, sees delays due to overall congestion of cars, parking issues, narrow streets along with school buses and weather conditions in the corridor between Federal Plaza and Webster Sq. The board members agreed we should have to do this together and the city should become part of the picture to change things.
- Mr. O’Neil informed the board of a meeting he had with Mary Ellen Blunt and the

developer of the former Spag's property. The developer reached out in a coordinated effort to review the possibility of using public transportation for employees on a new mixed development being designed in Shrewsbury. Mr. O'Neil explained this type of proactive approach is preferred so the WRTA can express its thoughts early on regarding turning movements, stops and safety as the project is being designed. No conclusions were drawn from the meeting. Mr. Binnall asked if the administration has a general package to cover these types of inquiries. Mr. O'Neil replied that since site development and usage varies from site to site, the best course would be to take each project individually.

- Mr. O'Neil updated the board in regards to the state's FY`15 budget stating over the past five (5) years there was a governor veto, especially regarding funding for regional transit authorities, but such was not the case this year. As a result, he expects the state will forward contracts to the regional transit authorities earlier than normal especially now that forward funding is in place.
- Mr. O'Neil then spoke of 42 Quinsigamond Ave. He stated the bids for the environmental clean-up would be out on Friday, the 18th of July. The clean-up time period is expected to be four (4) to five (5) months. Mr. Conner asked when the guaranteed maximum price would be established. Mr. O'Neil stated January of 2015. He explained the time frame is due to the expected difficulties of the site itself, some being environmental and others due to the various levels of debris under the soil within the site.
- Board members had a serious discussion in regards to the recent Telegram and Gazette article on the 42 Quinsigamond Ave project. The members express individually their dissatisfaction with the negative slant they felt the article gave in regards to the timing and cost of the environmental factors of the site. The board members defended their record on the due diligence as it applied to the site selection, environmental concerns and needed state and federal funding.
- Board members also discussed the importance of brownfield clean-ups and the overwhelming support from state and federal agencies as well as the neighborhood residents. Mr. Lipka expressed concern for the snap-shot approach of reporting and restated the benefit to the city and the overall environment with a cleaner useable site. Mr. Ostrosky suggested a letter to the editor or speaking directly to the editor. Mr. O'Neil stated he would be happy to sit down with the reporter and discuss it.
- As the reporter who wrote the aforementioned story arrived for the meeting, Mr. Lehtola explained the board's exceptions to the article and stated her absence from the meeting reported on, resulted in a lack of balance and fair reporting, in his opinion.
- Mr. Binnall asked when the next building committee meeting was. Mr. Lehtola stated in September. Mr. Lehtola asked to include and inform Mr. Binnall when this occurs.
- The monthly summary was not reviewed due to time restraints, but the full report can be viewed at the following link [WRTA Monthly Operations Report June 2014](#).

- Mr. O’Neil introduced Mr. Dale Hill the original designer of the Proterra electric bus. Mr. Hill explained Proterra has worked to iron out previous challenges with the 1.5 version, and incorporated those changes into the V2 second generation all-electric bus. Mr. Hill invited the board members to view the advances as the new bus was at the hub from 9:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. Mr. Hill noted the V2’s longer length at forty (40) feet and lighter weight by 12,000 pounds, alongside a drop in price due to new design efforts. Mr. Hill also explained the importance of the feedback received from the WRTA, especially regarding the winter season describing it as a valuable asset in the designing of this latest version. Mr. Hill commended the WRTA for their participation in this cutting edge technology and thanked them for all their efforts.
- Ms. Vega asked how many electric buses were currently in the WRTA inventory. Mr. Lehtola responded that currently there are six (6) all electric buses, with four (4) being assigned to Routes, 8, 18, 4 and the downtown loop, while another will be added to Rt. 25 in September 2014. These buses will run between eight (8) and sixteen (16) hours per day.
- Mr. O’Neil explained to the board an independent agency - the Center for Transportation and the Environment - has been monitoring these buses since they were placed into service last September. Mr. O’Neil then introduced Stephen Clermont of this agency. He presented a report showing how the electric buses stacked up against the other buses in the WRTA fleet. The data for this report comes from Mr. Carney's operations as well as from Proterra, while measurement standards come from the EPA. The comparison uses the data against the old RTS buses, hybrids and regular diesel buses. This report reveals the efficiency, environmental impact, and cost analysis during the period from September 2013 to May of 2014. Details of the report can be viewed through the following link [WRTA KPI Presentation – July 2014.](#)
- Mr. Clermont explained the importance of the WRTA’s leadership in the electric bus project. Mr. Clermont stated collection of data is under a two-year plan and with less than a dozen agencies deploying electric busses, it is extremely important for the progress of this technology to be well analyzed. This data provides the opportunity to help educate other transit agencies into the future of efficient and viable transit solutions. The report compared the cost and usage of the fleet, as it was divided by the type of vehicle: diesel, hybrid diesel and the all-electric buses. The report showed detailed usage by mileage, averages for fuel efficiency, fuel cost per mile, electricity costs and emission reductions over the nine (9) month period.
- Mr. Clermont pointed out 11% of the fleet was electric and combined overall the WRTA saved 171 Tons of CO2 emissions over the 9-month period. He noted the resolution of early deployment issues is leading to higher availability and utilization and overall higher utilization will lower cost per mile, even given the seasonal factors and higher utility demand changes of New England.
- Mr. Conner asked for more frequent reports on the electric bus savings and Mr. Lehtola

suggested a quarterly report. Mr. Binnall asked when the diesel contract was up for renewal and if buying with other RTA's would be of a benefit. Mr. O'Neil stated the contract runs until May 2015 and they have the successor contract on the radar screen. Mr. O'Neil explained the distribution points factor in on pricing, so collective purchasing would not necessary reduce costs. The WRTA has done very well locking in favorable fuel prices for the past five years.

- Mr. Lipka asked about a maximum allocation of electric buses given our route configuration and terrain. Mr. O'Neil responded he doesn't think the WRTA could reap huge benefits with a much larger all-electric fleet since electric buses must be designated to certain routes. More all-electric buses would also entail on route charging stations to accommodate their usage. However, we will continue to look into all viable options.

6. Business from the Board

- Ms. Vega commented on the positive change with the communication regarding the June 2014 changes. Ms. Vega thanked the administration for the well-timed distribution of schedules in this last round of changes.
- Mr. Binnall inquired about the protocol on the platform when seeking to report something. Mr. Binnall noted he was approached for change from a person claiming to use the bus. Mr. O'Neil stated security rotates where it stands on the platform therefore security may not see all this activity.
- Mr. Conner thanked Mr. Hill from Proterra for coming out and stated that the experience with Proterra has been positive, despite some of the working challenges earlier on. Mr. Lehtola spoke about the good working relationship he has with Mr. Carney in regards to optimization of the electric buses within our fleet. Mr. Lehtola noted that complacency is not part of his vocabulary and there's certainly room for improvement with the electrics, and he expects to see improvement. Mr. Lehtola explained he was a big critic of the electric as far as performance is concerned, but he is also very happy we have them. He wants to see them continue to be a success and a bigger success here in the WRTA area.
- Mr. Belanger commented on the importance of being on the cutting-edge of technology and despite the few hiccups and adjustments made to accommodate for the numerous technologies added, including the all-electric buses, the WRTA has established itself as a leader in positive growth. The riders of the future will look for and expect technological changes, as happened with smart phone. Mr. Belanger also reminded the board of the fact that seven (7) to eight (8) years ago we were looking from a totally different point of view.
- Mr. Carney stated he was confident the all electrics will continue to be optimized. Mr. Carney informed the board members that a person from the New York Transit Authority will be visiting the WRTA to look over our fleet. Mr. Carney stated that this factor speaks volumes about the future of transportation and of the WRTA.

7. Adjournment

- **Mr. Conner motion to adjourn and Mr. Lipka seconded. All voted in favor and the motion to adjourn was accepted.** The meeting adjourned at 10:14 a.m.

8. Next Meeting Date

- The next board meeting will be on August 21, 2014 at 8:30 a.m. located at the Hub 60 Foster Street Worcester, MA 01608 3rd floor.