



## MINUTES of 11/20/2014 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

### ATTENDANCE

#### Name

#### Representing

#### PRESENT

William Lehtola  
Jarrett Conner  
Mark Binnall  
John Ostrosky  
Robert Spain  
Luz Vega

Spencer  
Worcester  
Auburn  
Shrewsbury  
Millbury  
Regional Ridership

#### ABSENT

Doug Belanger  
Kelly Burke  
Leon Gaumond Jr.  
Alyssa Graveson  
Rudy Heller  
Dennis Lipka  
Timothy McInerney  
Kevin Mizikar  
Daniel Morgado  
Michael Pantos  
David Schiller  
Michael Ward

Leicester  
Northborough  
West Boylston  
Douglas  
Brookfield  
Holden  
Grafton  
Grafton  
Shrewsbury  
Rutland  
Charlton  
Clinton

1. Chairman Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.
2. **Attendance**

- 8:33 a.m. Mr. Conner joined the advisory board meeting.

### 3. Acceptance of Minutes

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes of October 16, 2014.
- **Motion: I move the board accept the minutes of October 16, 2014. Mr. Spain made the motion and Mr. Binnall seconded. All other members voted in favor. The motion was accepted.**
- 8:36 a.m. Ms. Vega joined the advisory board meeting.

### 4. Administrator Report

- Mr. O’Neil opened with a statement regarding the update on the electric buses. He explained the WRTA has been having some issues, especially over the past three (3) months. He credited Mr. Carney for his due diligence in regards to swapping out the electric buses with as little impact to ridership as possible. Mr. O’Neil stated a more permanent solution needs to be put into place. Mr. O’Neil introduced Proterra’s Director of Customer Service, Mr. Finnern. Mr. Finnern gave a brief overview of measurements for dispatch availability, average fuel economy, performance of the past 10 weeks, and the possible maintenance schedule for fixing the problems. A copy can be reviewed by clicking the following link [WOR Board Prez 2014-11-13](#).
- Mr. Finnern stated the electric buses fuel economy is strong at \$.36 cents per mile (at the time of this presentation), while last month numbers show hybrid diesel at \$.55 cents and diesel at \$.70 cents on average. The reduction of greenhouse gas pollutions continues with the use of the electric buses. What has not been seen, especially recently, is dispatch availability and road call trends looking favorable. Despite some significant improvements over the last year, we haven’t been where we want to be at all. Mr. Finnern explained dispatch availability refers to the buses ready to go in the morning, while road calls or service field incident reports involve issues while in use.
- Mr. Finnern acknowledged the dispatch availability and road call figures were lower than they should be. He explained the numbers were compared with fleet averages, new customers, and Worcester (WRTA). In response to requests and performance measures from their on-site staff, the following mechanical scheduling was given to the board. The mechanical scheduling for each bus would be five (5) weeks out and the entire electric bus fleet would be completed in the summer of 2015. This time-frame would allow for the needed upgrades, replacement parts, and resolving ongoing wiring issues.
- Board Members discussed reasons why the trending down of dispatch availability was occurring and questioned why the issue was related to the WRTA fleet but not to other regional transit authorities having these electric buses. Mr. Finnern replied the problem

is twofold: cold weather conditions and in-house wire manufacturing with their first generation of electric buses. He stated the proposed service schedule will benefit both parties, as each bus will be specifically evaluated and worked on.

- Mr. Conner commented on the absence of the buses during this period and the impact it would have on ridership and cost savings. Mr. Conner stated, in his opinion, this option was not really acceptable due to their primary issue of reliability to the ridership of the WRTA. Mr. Carney stated they would continue to shift the available fleet to cover the absence. Board members generally acknowledge the choice of Proterra buses in a cold climate was an experimental market, however, the general sense was the problem seems to be more specifically to Proterra itself.
- Mr. Conner suggested Proterra consider donating back the fleet or replacing the buses with the newer generation, which to his understanding, has more improvements. Mr. Finnern stated the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation is in the demo stage and manufacturing would not begin before the spring of 2015. Mr. Finnern told the board Proterra is dedicated to fixing the issues. They are having the engineers work bus by bus, with the expectation of putting in 1,500 man-hours on each bus.
- Mr. Spain commented if the problems are not happening elsewhere then a compromise may be warranted. He also stated Proterra must do better to work out their issues.
- Mr. Ostrosky asked if the problems encountered were with the major components of the bus. Mr. Finnern explained the problems appear to consist of wiring quality and wiring interconnections overall. He acknowledged the 1<sup>st</sup> generation wiring was done in-house and this has been swapped to an established sub-contractor. Mr. Finnern thanked the board members for their comments and relayed he understood their concerns.
- Mr. Lehtola reported he spoke with the Mr. Finnern regarding the ongoing concerns and the board members disappointment in the downward trending. He stated until the issues are resolved to our satisfaction and we will keep on this.
- Mr. Conner asked for the opinion of administration regarding the proposed scheduling. Mr. O'Neil replied he received the message loud and clear from the chairman. He believes the schedule outlined by Mr. Finnern is fair, doable and something Mr. Carney can work with. Mr. O'Neil spoke about his scheduled trip to Proterra on December 9, 2014 with Mr. Carney. The purpose is to convey your messages and push hard for the most WRTA favorable options. Mr. O'Neil stated they are looking to judge Proterra's commitment to resolving these issues. Mr. O'Neil mentioned the inclination to do a comparison chart of the hybrid-diesel, diesel, and electric busses to see how they all perform.
- Mr. Binnall suggested pull cords on the electric buses along with added sound when the bus is arriving. Mr. Finnern commented touch tape is the preferred method and the WRTA electric buses have a sound incorporated. Mr. O'Neil replied we can manage

those items ourselves and he would look into addressing the driver's use of the sound and see about pull cords options availability.

- Mr. Binnall asked if Proterra would be making the 35 foot buses as a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation model. Mr. Finnern commented the company is working on 40 foot buses as they are the overall industry standard. The company may look further into the future at the idea, but for now they are focused on one product.
- Mr. O'Neil introduced Mr. Lawson of CDR McGuire, project manager for 42 Quinsigamond Ave. Mr. O'Neil commented on the extraordinary efforts made to meet the necessary regulations governing hazard materials. Mr. O'Neil explained other hazardous substances were found on site and all parties worked to meet needed regulation requirements and contain costs. Mr. O'Neil informed the board any financial gap created by the site's expanded hazardous substances would be handled by the following options: proceeds from the sale of Grove Street property, use of the 5307 allocation, internal fiscally responsible budget adjustments to the project, and additional funding from the State (MassDOT) and the Federal Transit Administration.
- Mr. Lawson explained briefly to the board the site preparation is now underway and stated overall the project should remain on schedule for the installation of concrete in January. Listed below are the soil details and considerations:
  1. Additional Coal Tar Obstructions – to be shipped off site by rail.
    - Under the DEP 21E regulations, the WRTA chose an option of removing in small stages all coal tar and mixing it with cement. The removal of the coal tar is an extra step taken by the WRTA to prevent further environmental efforts in subsequent years. Estimated removal in yards would be about 6,000 to 8,000 yards, under the building area and twenty feet from the sides of the building. Mixing the coal tar with cement would bring down the removal cost by about \$100 a ton and it is estimated about 12,000 tons will be removed. Original cost without cement is estimated at about \$385 a ton. This alternative is approved by the DEP.
  2. Asbestos - will be properly buried on-site.
    - This action meets the DEP regulations.
- Mr. Lawson explained it appears as far back as the late 60's all buildings on the site were bulldozed back into the ground and then covered with fill. Reports we had provided showed two (2), three (3) or four (4) feet of soil covering the area. When we went back in to mine out those obstructions, we found a lot of additional coal tar on the site not showing up during our initial evaluation and probing activities. This is because when one drills in a particular location, there can be minimal findings, but once you dig with a bigger bulldozer more gets revealed. The site also exhibited asbestos, which is considered

a hazardous waste material.

- Several options in regards to coal tar were laid out by the DEP. The WRTA prioritized the health and safety of workers and what was best for the building site overall.
- The contractor has an approved system that can mix the coal tar with cement to stabilize it. The mixed product will be shipped off-site by rail. The asbestos will be buried sub grade on the site. The WRTA will install a passive vapor collection system underneath the concrete slab for 120,000 ft. Everywhere else (3 - 4 feet down) an orange fabric will cover the whole site. Therefore, if anyone were to dig on the site to subgrade level, this barrier will inform them they are coming into hazardous materials.
- Mr. Lawson stated Ms. Shefler, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) project manager, visited the site this week and was impressed with how smoothly the options were addressed and implemented compared to other jobs in similar situations. Mr. Lawson commented they were originally hoping to accelerate this phase of the project, but that will not be the case.
- Mr. O'Neil highlighted the due diligence done by all parties to meet the necessary regulations. Mr. Conner asked if Mr. Lawson expected to find additional hazardous material. Mr. Lawson stated there may be more products on the site, but you don't know until you peel back the earth. Mr. Conner asked what additional costs will look like. Mr. O'Neil replied early December is the deadline for our best estimate on the additional costs. Skanska and McGuire will provide this information to us. Mr. O'Neil indicated the WRTA will approach the state and FTA for consideration of additional funding.
- Mr. O'Neil confirmed a shortage on funding right now. When the final numbers are in we can judge what to defray and what to allocate towards our allocation of 5307 funds. Mr. O'Neil commented on the numerous considerations needed to be firmed up, like the cost of steel, IT and security before obtaining exact numbers and needs.
- Mr. O'Neil mentioned the union was advised of the issues regarding environmental remediation and additional building costs in November. He further advised that because of additional environmental costs, additional reductions in the overall budget had to be made.
- Mr. O'Neil stated the union had concerns regarding some of the proposed cuts. Specifically, the decisions to postpone the installation of hydric lifts (\$500,000 saving) and the building of a paint room (\$700,000 savings) in the facility. Mr. O'Neil explained a meeting was held with maintenance employees in regards to their concerns. Mr. O'Neil stated the administration had candid discussions regarding the changes and assured them these postponements would not lead to elimination of any union jobs in maintenance.
- Mr. O'Neil recommended further details be discussed in meetings of the Audit & Finance

Committee and the Building Committee. Mr. O’Neil restated the specific amounts for the project where not in yet, so estimating would not be feasible. Mr. O’Neil assured the board members when the figures were released, he would bring them to the board. He recommended scheduling meetings in early December.

- Mr. Conner spoke to his concern for the cost overs and if present proposed foundation work will meet their budgetary expectations. Mr. O’Neil commented the figures will be analyzed and presented to the board. He emphasized the importance of getting the necessary numbers before going to the state for additional funding.
- Mr. O’Neil closed the 42 Quinsigamond Ave. update by stating we are moving forward on the RFP for the 287 Grove Street property. By the end of December, he anticipates the appraisal should be completed. He expects the review appraisal to be completed in January and pending acceptance of these appraisals by the FTA, an RFP will be advertised.
- Mr. O’Neil introduced Mr. Coyne who gave a brief overview of the FY`15 First Quarter Budget. An outlined list of the Financial Highlights and 2015 issues going forward are provided. The full report can be reviewed by clicking the following link [Q1 Report to Advisory Board 11.2014.](#)
  - Operational revenue higher than budget by \$63,000 or 6.6%
    - increase in farebox and monthly passes
  - Federal grant revenue lower than budget by \$20,000 or 1.8%
    - transportation planning and travel training
  - Operational expenses lower than budget by \$279,000 or 4.9%
    - wages & fringe benefits lower than budget largely due to decreased overtime
    - Materials and supplies lower than budget due to fleet age (avg. 3.10 yrs.)
  - Overall actual results are lower than budget by \$318,000 or 9.9%
  - Electricity Supply rates under contract with City of Worcester’s provider will not see widely reported winter increases
  - Worker’s Compensation rates came in lower than expected
  - Increased Security ~ \$44,000
  - Potential 9C budget cuts ~ \$69,000
- Mr. Lehtola asked if the benefits of the solar panels are materializing. Mr. O’Neil commented the payback would actually be a twenty (20) year timeframe. This factor will be reviewed in regards to the new facility. Mr. Lehtola commented the solar array isn’t providing the value to the WRTA as we were told, but it is nevertheless a “green” effort. Mr. Ostrosky mentioned the use of rebates for the cost, if they can apply.
- Mr. Coyne spoke about the cost of fuel and their present locked-in rate of \$2.77 per gallon on diesel for 2016 – 2017. The electric rate is \$.08 cents per kilowatt due to a tie-

in with the City.

- Mr. O’Neil advised the board of the MARTA estimates of funding reductions for the RTA’s in general. Mr. O’Neil stated the WRTA is prepared to absorb the \$60,000 and \$69,000 estimate at this time. In further explanation, Governor Patrick’s finance secretary, Mr. Shore, blames the gap on the expected drop in the state income tax from 5.2% to 5.1% and new initiatives.
- Mr. O’Neil stated that URS met with staff and the chairman to discuss preliminary results of the Comprehensive Service Analysis. The following slides can be viewed by clicking on the following link. [WRTA 2014-2015 Workshop Presentation Board Review](#)
- Ms. Blunt presented several slides that showed examples of the URS work, including Ridership by Stop, System Productivity by Route, and Frequency Demand based on Population and Employment. She indicated that URS analyzed both existing routes and demand factors for potential service expansion. Regarding existing service, URS developed preliminary Candidates for Service Investment and Restructuring in increase efficiency where needed by re-structuring and consolidating routes. A Market Demand Analysis was used to identify possible expansion areas.
- Mr. Conner inquired if any of the recommendations at this point suggests any disruption from our hub and spoke structure. Ms. Blunt stated recommendations ranged from a type of flex service to a hybrid of the rapid transit service. Ms. Blunt explained strict rapid transit uses a dedicated lane servicing about 5,000 riders per day, while our applicable routes handle 1,500 riders. Hybrid options like lane sharing signal priority and TSP would be feasible, but they come at a cost. Future recommendations included additional service to the boroughs and to Park Ave, with a tie in to Webster Square. Ms. Blunt reminded the board members of the progressive factors already present with the existing community shuttles and Southbridge.
- Mr. O’Neil reiterated the city can help in this regard, mentioning specifically the Worcester State University area. The city needs to engage the WRTA more creatively using this entity as an asset and solution to long standing parking issues in the neighborhood. Mr. Lehtola stated Main Street is our highest density, but given the cost and space available, rapid transit would not be feasible. Ms. Vega asked about the information gathered at the community meetings. Ms. Blunt stated comments were tabulated by the administration and sent to URS for their purposes. Ms. Vega asked what factors deterred a Park Ave route. Ms. Blunt replied the numerous lights and peak-hour traffic does not allow for continual on time scheduling.
- Mr. Conner asked if data quality was an issue in regards to URS. Ms. Blunt replied there are no quality issues with the data given to URS. She further explained the recommendations from this session are being reviewed for clarification and any additional data needed will be submitted. Ms. Blunt commented on giving the recommendations a “reality check” as there are always specific considerations within the routes, traffic patterns and general topography. Mr. O’Neil added we will work on the

final recommendation and price out items to bring to the board to help us identify what to change and when. Our goal is to have plans for one (1), three (3) and five (5) years. Mr. Conner asked that a copy of the report be made available to the board members and Mr. O'Neil replied in the affirmative.

- Mr. O'Neil updated the board members in regards to the Quinsigamond Ave. records request by Mr. Russell of the Telegram and Gazette. The initial request for information was hand-delivered by Ms. Pokoly. Mr. Russell requested eight (8) additional items:
  - Documents relative to the purchase and sale
  - Appraisals of the Property
  - Environmental studies
  - Property references
  - Documents relating to the cleanup costs
  - LSP on site
  - Correspondence level relevant to the covenant not to sue
  - All other documents regarding cleanup
- Mr. O'Neil explained he provided all the requested information in one form or another. Mr. Russell visited the WRTA administrative offices on Monday and Tuesday of this week. Mr. O'Neil told the board members he expressed their desire to meet with Mr. Russell and walk him through the reasons why they chose the site. Mr. O'Neil commented Mr. Russell was appreciative for the timely manner in which the overall information was given to him.
- Mr. O'Neil stated Mr. Russell is keen to know how well the WRTA will clean up the site. Why the WRTA paid what it did for the property? Why NSTAR asked for something less than it was worth? What is the potential for on-site contamination migrating to other properties?
- The WRTA Monthly Operations Report was not discussed. The report can be viewed by clicking on the following link. [WRTA October 2014 MOR.pdf](#) as well as the [September 2014 Revised WRTA Monthly Report.](#)

## **5. Business from the Board**

- Mr. Binnall asked if the public is being notified about the Cambridge Street detour. Mr. Carney responded the website, bus posting, and a community meeting were all part of the WRTA outreach efforts. Mr. Binnall asked about "adopt a stop" campaign. Mr. O'Neil stated the current WRTA coverage coupled with the city's policy would be sufficient.
- Mr. Ostrosky commented on the possible need for an Ebola virus crisis emergency plan. He elaborated on his previous concerns with questions about cleaning the buses and rider

notifications. Mr. Lehtola asked if MARTA has been having discussions. Mr. O’Neil replied “not so much” but he and Mr. Carney have been in contact with First Transit for details of their contract.

- Mr. Ostrosky asked if this would be on a regional basis. Mr. O’Neil stated they are in the process of researching this and would share the information regionally. Mr. O’Neil commented that feedback from the State Department for Health, or any feedback from anybody in the State Administration has not been forthcoming but we will follow up. Mr. Ostrosky commented on the potential problem this could become not only for back-up but for public safety. Mr. Ostrosky felt that steps should be implemented immediately rather than scrambling after it happens.

## **6. Business from the Public**

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

## **7. Adjournment**

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to adjourn.
- **Motion: I move the board adjourn. Mr. Binnall made the motion and Mr. Ostrosky seconded. All other members voted in favor. The motion to adjourn was accepted.**  
The meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

## **8. Next Meeting Date**

- The next board meeting will be on December 18, 2014 at 8:30 a.m., located at the hub 60 Foster Street Worcester, MA 01608 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.