



## MINUTES of 03/19/2015 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

### ATTENDANCE

#### Name

#### Representing

#### PRESENT

William Lehtola  
Mark Binnall  
Jarrett Conner  
Dennis Lipka  
John Ostrosky  
Michael Ward

Spencer  
Auburn  
Worcester  
Holden  
Shrewsbury  
Clinton

#### ABSENT

Doug Belanger  
Kelly Burke  
Leon Gaumond Jr.  
Alyssa Graveson  
Rudy Heller  
Timothy McInerney  
Kevin Mizikar  
Daniel Morgado  
Michael Pantos  
David Schiller  
Robert Spain  
Luz Vega

Leicester  
Northborough  
West Boylston  
Douglas  
Brookfield  
Grafton  
Grafton  
Shrewsbury  
Rutland  
Charlton  
Millbury  
Regional Ridership

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

### 3. Acceptance of Minutes

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes for February 19, 2015.
- Mr. Conner questioned the timing in regards to the quarters only fare box change discussed at the last board meeting. He was looking for confirmation in regards to the specific timeline. Mr. Conner noted no specific reference to a definitive timeline was mentioned at the meeting or in the minutes. Mr. Lehtola informed the board members that meetings have been on-going in this regard as the board deliberated extending the timing of this policy change. Mr. Lehtola stated discussions are leading to a slower pace for the rolling out the initiative. They are now looking for its implementation in the fall 2015.
- **Motion: I move the board accept the minutes of February 19, 2015.** Mr. Ostrosky made the motion and Mr. Binnall seconded. All other board members voted in favor. The motion was accepted.

### 4. Administrator Report

- Mr. O'Neil gave a brief summary of the yearly MARTA Legislative Luncheon he recently attended. He listed the attendees as: the Senate President, the second-in-command, Senator Chandler, Sarah Peake, chairperson of the House RTA caucus, Chairman Strauss from transportation, and Senator McGee. Each of these members expressed their 5-year commitment to the RTA's and the need for an upward trend in financing. Mr. O'Neil also mentioned Ms. Pollock's remarks about her being a big proponent of the RTA's and how more discussions would ensue in regards to their funding needs.
- Mr. O'Neil explained to the board the funding breakdowns for the RTA's. In the Governor's budget there will be a single line item for the RTA's. The funding will total \$80 million, with \$40 million from the Governor's budget, and \$40 million from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. These figures are from the administrative side of the state, while the legislative side is working on an additional \$2 million dollars for the RTA's. If the additional funding materializes, the total would reach to \$82 million for all the RTA's. Mr. O'Neil stated we are looking at a base of \$80 million statewide. This means the RTA's are at level funding. The Governor is committed to doing something with the MBTA, and the RTA's will continue to be involved in this process, as well as with the legislature, in regards to overall funding.
- Mr. Lehtola asked how that reflects from the past fiscal year to the new one. Mr. O'Neil stated the FY'16 budget will be presented as a level funded budget. We will watch what happens during the legislative process from now until the end of the fiscal year. If we need to come back and adjust our budget upward, due to additional funding, we can certainly do so. Mr. O'Neil spoke about the timeline for the budget and it was proposed as follows. An Audit and Finance committee meeting will take place sometime before the April board meeting. The administration will presentation the budget to the full board

at the April 23, 2015 advisory board meeting. Then, up to two (2) Audit and Finance committee meetings will be scheduled (sometime between April 23, 2015 and May 20, 2015). The final budget will be presented for approval by the board at the May 21, 2015 advisory board meeting.

- Mr. O’Neil made three (3) points of interest in regards to a recent article appearing in the Telegram & Gazette concerning the acquisition and environmental remediation of 42 Quinsigamond Ave. The article was published on March 17, 2015 and written by Robert D. Cox Jr, environmental attorney with Bowditch & Dewey LLP. The article was entitled “Cleanup at WRTA site is right.”
  1. It mentioned all the reasons why using public money to clean the site was the right thing to do.
  2. It mentioned the T&G site at 40 Franklin St. used public money for the same thing.
  3. The article appeared on the Opinion page of the T&G..
- Mr. Binnall requested a hard copy of the article to be mailed to him. Mr. O’Neil stated he would receive a copy in the mail.
- Mr. O’Neil furnished the board with an updated overview of the 42 Quinsigamond Ave project. Mr. O’Neil addressed the site progress in terms of coming down the home stretch. He informed the board members they are almost ninety (90) percent excavated within the building footprint. We have not encountered anything unsuspected as we move through the last stages of the site’s ground cleanup. We are about a month to five weeks away from having all the coal tar, friable and non-friable asbestos either buried on site or exported off-site to Niagara, New York. So, we are looking at the end of April or early May for the site to be freed up of these piles of soil. While we continue to excavate the site and the pile rigger has been set-up to drive piles. Fifty-five (55) percent of the three hundred and eighty-two (382) piles have been installed. We expect at this pace we should be done sometime in the middle of April with all the installation of piles. Our concrete work will start sometime in April as well and continue to June.
- Mr. Lehtola commented on a news report regarding an environmental cleanup in Northwest Louisiana, where the cost was estimated at \$6 billion! Mr. Lehtola explained the site was former military base. Mr. Binnall asked when purchases for furniture would be done for the new building. Mr. O’Neil replied sometime next year. Mr. O’Neil updated the board on the existing bids in process. He explained United Steel’s (our steel contractor) bid came in under budget at \$3.4 million. Manford Precision’s (our concrete work) bid is under review. The HVAC bid is still outstanding.
- Mr. Lehtola queried if the new building would withstand a F5 tornado. Mr. Lipka stated it would probably withstand about hundred and twenty (120) mile-per-hour winds. Mr. Lehtola commented that would not be the same caliber as a F5 tornado. Mr. Lipka indicated most buildings, where winds of extremely high velocity, will suffer damage. He felt this is a class one (1) building, so it would most likely withstand the storms we get in New England. Mr. Lipka then asked how much the lower steel prices affected the

project, since the steel market is down. Mr. O'Neil replied while steel process were lower than budget, concrete prices were higher than budget.

- Mr. O'Neil spoke to the board about the time-frame and process of the RFP in regards to the selling of the Grove Street property. He asked the board for their approval to work with Kelleher and Sadowsky in the process of preparing and advertising an RFP for the Grove St. site. He also asked for the board to authorize the administrator to negotiate the best deal for the sale of the site and any deals would be presented to the board prior to sale. Mr. O'Neil explained that part of our Quinsigamond Ave project is contingent upon us receiving money for the sale of Grove Street site. The board previously authorized an appraisal for the site. The review by the Federal Transit Administration has been successfully completed. Mr. O'Neil stated the site's appraisal came in at \$2.8 million and, while this is our base price, the real estate broker, Tom, and I feel the sale could be much higher. Mr. O'Neil briefly recapped the work Kelleher and Sadowsky did on the acquisition of Quinsigamond Ave. and how he felt confident working with them on the Grove Street sale as well.
- Mr. O'Neil stated the RFP would have the following considerations: commercial uses only, a significant down payment of \$250,000, state and local permitting process experience and an allowance for free rent for the WRTA for two (2) to three (3) months. The RFP is scheduled to be out by the end of the month. We expect the whole selling process to take six (6) to eight (8) months. The timelines we have worked, are listed by date:
  - End of March – RFP goes out.
  - June 3, 2015 by 5:00 p.m. Submitters reply
  - June 30, 2015 – Select bidder
  - July 21, 2015 – Signed purchase and sales agreement
  - January 2016 – Close sale on property
- There is a ninety (90) to one hundred and twenty (120) day due diligence process that would run from the signing of the Purchase and Sale to when the closing sale date is made. This time allows for a site and environmental report reviews. Also, there are provisions in the deposit taken at the Purchase and Sale signing that require a forfeit of down payment, should the prospective bidder decline the site during the due diligence process. The Quinsigamond Ave. site should be substantially completed by the summer of 2016. We made a conservative estimate that we may need up to three (3) months to move equipment from Grove Street to the new site. We have provided for that overlap in the Purchase and Sale agreement. Mr. Lipka asked about a backup, should the sale hinge upon not having free use of the sold site. Mr. O'Neil stated they will work to narrow any gap, should that be necessary. Unfortunately, our new facility will not be weather tight, as originally planned, by the end of this year. This is because of the timing on the environmental cleanup. We are going to have the contractor focus first on the operational and storage areas so that we can have some flexibility in our timeline. Mr. Carney and Mr. Parker are presently inventorying all equipment. Any new capital purchases will be done through next year's budget. We are working to store as much as possible at the new

facility. Mr. Lipka stated he was not necessarily opposed to paying for the overlap, as it can be viewed as an incentive to speed up the process. Mr. Binnall asked how large the Grove Street site was compared to the 42 Quinsigamond Avenue site. Mr. O'Neil replied the Grove Street site is 5.3 acres and the Quinsigamond Avenue site is 10.99 acres.

- Board members discussed having a base price on the RFP. Mr. Lipka was curious about the appraisal and sale prices of other similar properties in the city. Mr. Conner commented the FTA's function is to not have the property undersold, but since the figures are public knowledge, he would refer to the realtor as to how to best work the sale in the present market conditions. Mr. O'Neil stated the language included in the RFP will assist overall with the sale of the property. He agreed to place a base amount for the property in the RFP after consulting with representatives from Kelleher and Sadowsky.
- **Motion:** the advisory board authorizes the administrator to work with Kelleher and Sadowsky, the firm used by the WRTA to sell 287 Grove St., to prepare and advertise a request for proposal to seek prospective buyers for the property. Furthermore, the administrator is authorized to negotiate the best deal with a prospective buyer and, upon completion, present the deal to the advisory board prior to sale.
- **Mr. Lipka made the motion and Mr. Ward seconded.** All other board members voted in favor. The motion was accepted.
- Mr. O'Neil reviewed the progress on the buses being overhauled at the Proterra factory. He informed the board of his visit in February. Bus E333 is being worked on with another two (2) to follow by the end of this month. Mr. O'Neil stated their commitment to all the RTA's that purchased earlier versions of their buses, has been outstanding. Proterra is also committed to maintaining the parts and supplies needed going forward. The overhaul is being done at no cost to the WRTA. Mr. Lehtola asked Mr. Parker how the overhauled Proterra buses are running. Mr. Parker replied there have been no issues. Mr. O'Neil stated they will continue to have a full-time Proterra staff person on site until all the buses return. Mr. Lehtola remarked his reservation of judgment until all six (6) buses are back and operating efficiently.
- Mr. O'Neil introduced the topic of the URS final recommendations and their progress. He stated they are presently being finalized into a presentable format. The recommendations include our counter proposals from the transit advisory meetings. URS has incorporated about ninety-five (95%) percent of our feedback. We are looking to go out to the public in April. That feedback will be used by URS to complete the entire Comprehensive Service Analysis document, which is set for release in June of 2015. We will come to the board and ask for authorization to hold public hearings. Mr. O'Neil turned the conversation over to Mr. Church who outlined the major recommendations and potential growth in the URS comprehensive services report.
  - ❖ Elimination of specific routing, either partially or fully, due to low performance.
  - ❖ Refocusing those existing operating funds to more productive routes.
  - ❖ A development concept to better integrate and streamline service on Main Street particularly between South Main Street and Webster Square.

- ❖ Proposed a fixed route service along Park Ave.
  - ❖ Developed cross town routes going east/west & north/south with the addition of a northeast quadrant going from Quinsigamond Community College to UMASS.
  - ❖ Potential growth corridors were listed as West Brookfield, Holden, Barre, Webster and Dudley.
- Mr. O’Neil commented to the board about the company’s ability to think outside the box as to some different types of fixed route service.. One suggestion was rapid transit which is being tried in Hartford, Connecticut. Mr. O’Neil explained the concept of rapid transit involves municipalities working with the transit provider to apply signage, street painting, and sometimes configuration, to have a dedicated lane for the buses. Mr. Lehtola asked Mr. O’Neil to follow-up through MARTA in regards to Hartford’s rapid transit progress. Mr. O’Neil replied he would get details on their program and progress going forward.
  - Mr. O’Neil introduced Mr. Church who provided the board with an overview of the monthly operations report. Ms. Kusterski gave the customer service review from the same report. The report compared the figures from the month of February last year to February of this year. Listed were fare box and total revenues, ridership figures, passenger per revenue mile, passengers per revenue hour, missed trips, and others. The WRTA Monthly Operations Report can be viewed at the following link: [WRTA February 2015 MOR.pdf](#).
    - Fare box revenue for February FY`15 was \$128,664, which was 8.92% lower than last February’s total of \$141,262. Total revenue for February FY`15 was 7.71% lower compared to February FY`14. Despite declines in fare box and total revenue, monthly passes are up 3.37% compared from last year. Charlie Card stored value increased this month, up 4.77% versus February 2014, and up 5.29% year to date.
    - Ridership for fixed routes in February FY`15 was 263,684 down from February FY`14 which was at 278,764. This is attributed to two (2) primary factors: fewer weekdays in February; the extreme weather conditions where two (2) no service days were decided during the month.
    - Passengers per Revenue Mile saw a drop in FY`15 to 1.76 compared to 2.0 in FY`14, and lower than January FY`15 at 1.85. FY`15 YTD shows a 2.5% decrease in Passengers per Revenue Mile over FY`14 YTD. Mr. Church explained the goal is for 2.5 Passengers per Revenue Mile as part of the metrics. Ten (10) routes surpassed this goal: Routes one (1), six (6), seven (7), nine (9), eleven (11), nineteen (19), twenty-four (24), twenty-six (26), twenty-seven (27) and the loop.
    - Passengers per Revenue Hour for February FY`15 was 20.50, which is lower than last year at 22.84 and lower than January FY`15 at 21.05. Also, FY`15 YTD shows a slight decrease of 1.65% in Passengers per Revenue Hour over FY`14 YTD. Mr. Church stated the goal is thirty (30) and five (5) routes surpassed this goal: Routes eleven (11), nineteen (19), twenty-four (24), twenty-six (26), and

twenty-seven (27).

- Missed Trips for February FY`15 had 71 compared to 61 missed trips in February FY`14, and 42 missed trips in January FY`15. Routes twenty-seven (27) and thirty (30) had the highest number of missed trips at seven (7) each. Top reasons for missed trips were: thirty (30) buses were late and eight (8) had breakdowns. The majority of missed trips occurred on days of significant weather events (snowstorms, ice accumulation, narrow roads and extreme winds).
- Mr. Church explained the majority of the figures by category were lower than normal for the month of February. This was likely due to the heavy weather conditions experienced during the month. Mr. Lehtola commented the drivers did an excellent job overall given the weather conditions. Mr. Church stated ridership overall is trending upward within the WRTA system. Route 9 is showing more use from Downtown to Newton Square. Mr. Lehtola commented this factor may be a due to the fact that Route two (2) previously had thirty (30) minute service in that stretch which was reduced in 2013 and replaced by Route 9 last August. Mr. Binnall asked how the Paxton route was doing. Mr. Church replied given the Town of Paxton's operational budget the service is limited and is not increasing in any noticeable way. The route runs three (3) days a week for three (3) hours in the morning and afternoons and is not increasing in any way.
- Mr. Lehtola commented passenger totals were not down according to the report he receives from Grove Street. Ms. Blunt explained the report from Grove St. is from fare boxes and depends upon when buses are probed. Some lapping occurs over different time periods, and it is not always accurate to the date and month. The report does give you a breakdown of ridership on and between the routes. Mr. Lehtola then requested from CMRPC a report on passenger total per-route-per-month be sent to him. Ms. Blunt stated she would supply him with a report going forward.
- Ms. Kosterski gave a brief overview of the customer service figures from Salesforce. The entire WRTA Date Slides Customer Service Report can be viewed at the following link: [WRTA Data Slides Customer Service 3.19.15.](#)
- February FY`15 saw a total of 8,860 open fixed route cases and 8,846 were closed within the same time period. Paratransit open cases totaled 3,030, and 3,023 closed for February FY`15. Customer service window visits were slightly down in February FY`15, at 7,025 compared to the February FY`14 totals of 7,488. Complaint Cases opened for February FY`15 were 104, and those closed were 95. The majority of closed complaint cases come in by phone or voicemail at 76%, while the website feedback is at 21%, and email is at 3%. Outreach activities included Worcester Senior Center, Ascentria, and Centros Las Americas. We reach 115 individuals and have two (2) active travel trainees.
- Ms. Kosterski stated they would be starting to promote the Charlie Card & monthly passes on the TV Screens within the WRTA. The wording in a power point type presentation would be posted internally. Mr. Lehtola asked if it would be used anywhere externally and Ms. Kosterski stated it would not. The presentation slides can be view at

the following link: [WRTA Charlie Card & Passes Presentation 3.19.2015](#).

## **5. Business from the Public**

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

## **6. Business from the Board**

- Mr. Binnall introduced himself as a TPAG member and broached the subject of reprogramming the automated call-back system within PBSI. Mr. Binnall recapped the importance of knowing whether a yellow cab or van would be used for pick-up's. Mr. Binnall explained in the past a person called the night before with the type of vehicle to be used. Mr. O'Neil stated he is aware of Mr. Binnall's recommendation and both he and PBSI administration have explained the policy that allows for changing the type of vehicle arriving at any given time. This is why the night before call does not specify which would be coming. Some changes happen in the morning, thus creating a margin of error. Ms. Kusterski stated those riders who want to and need to know who is scheduled to pick them up can call the morning of the pick-up and ask which type of vehicle has been assigned. She cautioned this may also be subject to change under policy.
- Mr. Lehtola asked if the request was an issue of assurance. Mr. Binnall said it was both assurance and practical, because many pick-ups are done at places accommodating multiple vehicles. For someone visually impaired, knowing what type of vehicle is coming would be most helpful. Mr. Lehtola asked Ms. Kusterski if there was another means to get information out if a vendor change occurs after the rider has called in the morning to recheck. Ms. Kusterski informed the board that cell phone numbers are listed for some riders. Those riders who call asking for vendor information in the morning could be notified via cell phone if the vendor changes again, but if they do not answer the issue will remain unresolved. Mr. Lehtola asked if they could implement calling cell phones to those asking for vendor information. Ms. Kusterski replied they can try to do so. Mr. O'Neil extended the possibility of researching the costs associated with changing the system. Mr. Lehtola interjected, if acceptable, both the call-in option and as needed cell phone contact of listed riders would be good going forward.
- Mr. Binnall asked if there is any way the electric buses could be automatically hardwired to produce a sound when turning or stopping. Mr. Parker informed the board members all the electric buses are equipped with a manual switch for sound. All drivers have been trained to use the switch. Specifically, in the downtown area or when visually impaired people are at the cross walk. Mr. Binnall then informed the board, in his experiences, the WRTA bus drivers are not manually applying the sound. Mr. Parker stated another concern is within the neighborhoods as the sound is outside of the bus itself. Mr. O'Neil indicated they could look into this further, but there would be a significant cost. Mr. Lehtola then implied using the established method, should be the first advancement before pursuing further cost considerations.

- Mr. Binnall asked for details regarding the consortium bus and its routes. Mr. O’Neil informed the board members a meeting has been set-up for this afternoon. He would be updating the board at the next meeting. Mr. O’Neil confirmed the bus route would accommodate the following three (3) colleges: the College of the Holy Cross, Assumption, and Worcester State University. Mr. Lehtola mentioned any service would not be like the old Route 10 which was a fixed route in the area of Holy Cross.
- Board members discussed the change to a quarters-and-dollars system. Mr. Conner recommended a slower paced campaign. Mr. Conner commented on the benefits of a “soft sell approach,” with slogans like “Quarters Only Speeds Up The Line” and “Be Courteous Please Use Quarters.” Mr. Ostrosky recalled the importance of telling riders what they can use in the fare box. He suggested having signs at the city bus stops, stating quarters and dollars are used. Mr. Ostrosky asked if the fare boxes accept half dollars. Mr. Parker replied he would look into whether they do. Mr. Parker specified the drivers still have discretion as to whether the fare boxes will continue to take change, but the preference is a quarter-and-dollar system. Mr. Binnall suggested a bus on the platform to promote the change.

## 7. Adjournment

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to adjourn.
- **Motion: I move the board adjourn. Mr. Binnall motion to adjourn and Mr. Conner seconded.** All voted in favor and the motion to adjourn was accepted. The meeting adjourned at 9:48 a.m.

## 8. Next Meeting Date

- The next board meeting will be on April 23, 2015 at 8:30 a.m., located at the WRTA Hub, 60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.