



MINUTES of 5/21/2015 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

ATTENDANCE

Name

Representing

PRESENT

William Lehtola
Mark Binnall
Jarrett Conner
Dennis Lipka
John Ostrosky
Jacob Sanders
Luz Vega

Spencer
Auburn
Worcester
Holden
Shrewsbury
Worcester
Regional Ridership

ABSENT

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

Leicester
Northborough
Sturbridge
Douglas
Brookfield
Grafton
Grafton
Shrewsbury
Rutland
Charlton
Millbury
Clinton
Shrewsbury

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 April 23, 2015.
- **Motion: I move the board accept the minutes of April 23, 2015.** Mr. Sanders made the motion and Mr. Binnall seconded. Not being at the last meeting, Mr. Ostrosky abstained; all other board members voted in favor. The motion was accepted.

4. Business from the Public

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

5. Administrator Report

- Mr. O'Neil recognized Mr. Sanders as the new representative for the city manager. He informed the board Mr. Sanders now votes on behalf of the city. Mr. Conner stated he would remain as one of the alternative persons representing Worcester.
- Mr. Lipka entered the board meeting at 8:33 a.m.
- Mr. O'Neil then introduced Mr. Trabucco, Director of Operations, who addressed the board on the topic of driver recognition and two specific accommodations. Mr. Trabucco first wanted to recognize his people as a group. What the board does not always hear are the compliments received regarding our drivers. Our drivers are the front line for customer service. They have to handle any change and deal with the ridership all day, every day, they are the real heroes. Often I am called upon to review complaints on our service. When I pull video on issues I see the drivers using manners and being very professional. Everybody has a conversation with them like they know them. This is a testament to our people. The board may have issues and things that should be taken care of immediately and we understand that, but our drivers remain the most visual and approachable aspect of the WRTA. I know the board is aware of the high level of professionalism our drivers possess, but this is my chance to say they do a great job. Mr. Trabucco then recognized the following drivers for their outstanding work.
- Mr. Oscar Nieves for his compassionate response towards a rider who fell. Mr. Nieves was on Grafton Street when the incident occurred. Mr. Nieves got out of the bus and assisted the man until help arrived. He then returned to his scheduled route. This is an example of community involvement on a personal level. Mr. Nieves actions prompted someone to call in a complement for his actions. We thank him most sincerely for his efforts. Mr. Lehtola stated Mr. Nieves always does a great job and we are lucky to have him at the WRTA. The other driver is Ms. Lori-Ann Mayotte. She made the bus available to people seeking shelter when gunshots were fired along her route. She simply could have driven on, but she felt compelled to offer assistance regardless of the consequences. Ms. Mayotte opened the bus to the people for shelter while others were using the bus as a shield from the gun fire. The police came and she then returned to her scheduled route. Mr. Lehtola thanked Ms. Mayotte for what she did and stated he was

proud of actions taken. Mr. Binnall said thank you as well and commented on her being a nice driver. Mr. Lehtola expressed how he really appreciated both of their efforts. Mr. Trabucco informed the board there has been one hundred and thirty-two (132) accommodations for our drivers.

- Mr. O'Neil introduced Mr. Church who informed the board every three (3) years, the WRTA must file with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) its 2015 Title VI Report for compliance with FTA Circular 4702.1B. The report is due June 1, 2015, and pertains to the compliance of meeting requirements for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as outlined in the Circular. Mr. Church stated as requested by the board a copy of the report has been sent to them electronically. Mr. Binnall asked what the document actually covered. Mr. Church explained the document is public record. Title VI is the section of the 1964 Civil Rights Act making sure the WRTA does not discriminate against national origin, creed, religion etc. in regards to its passengers and employees. Therefore, we must submit to the guidelines as written by the FTA and show documents confirming that we are in compliance. An executive summary can be found at the beginning of the report. Mr. Church stated if the board approves the submission we will be covered for another three (3) years.
- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to approve the report as accepted.
- **Motion:** I move the board approve the. WRTA's 2015 Title VI Program and authorize the Administrator to submit said program to the Federal Transit Administration as required by the FTA Circular 4702.1B.
- **Mr. Lipka made the motion and Mr. Binnall seconded.** All other board members voted in favor of the motion. The motion was accepted.
- Mr. O'Neil stated Mr. Coyne summarized the FY`16 budget to the Audit and Finance committee met on May 8, 2015. The FY`16 budget components were reviewed. The committee had a few questions, but there were no issues. The Audit and Finance committee motioned to approve as presented to the full board. Mr. O'Neil stated we are asking for a motion to approve the budget as presented today. In answer to Mr. Binnall's inquiry about additional state funding, Mr. O'Neil explained the state has put \$2 million back into the transportation budget which means the RTA's would be getting a bump up from the level funding by \$2 million. In our case, we would be getting about a \$100,000 more in finding, but that has to go through the house/senate conference committee for final approval. If and when approved we will adjust the budget figures to reflect the increase. Mr. O'Neil then introduced Mr. Coyne who gave the highlights of the FY`16 budget to the board. The 2016 consolidated budget sheet can be reviewed at the following link: [WRTA Fiscal Year 2016 Consolidated Budget sheet.](#)
- Mr. Coyne stated the FY`16 budget is \$23.8 million representing an increase of 0.6% over FY`15 budget. There were no increases in health insurance for CMTM; diesel fuel has decreased from \$3.14 per gallon to \$2.77 per gallon, which will remain under contract until 2017. Vehicle insurance has increased by 31% which is about \$234,000.

Administration decreased mainly due to taking over the IT and bringing it in-house. Debt service and management fee show some increases and I am projecting a one million dollar increase on our borrowing. Mr. Coyne explained no contract negotiations figures for the union (local 22) have been estimated at this time. We will come back to the board late summer or early fall with a revised budget. On the revenue side, we are projecting an increase in farebox revenue based on current trends. The Elderbus contract will increase. MassDOT's Community Transit grant increased \$12,000 or 20.4% and this will cover the two (2) Elderbus services and the Holden Worcester service. This grant is a 50% / 50% matching grant. Administration revenues show a bit of an increase mainly due to the sale of surplus vehicles. CMTM's budget for other non-transportation revenue saw an increase due to handing the drug and alcohol program for all the WRTA's contractors.

- Federal operating assistance decreased by \$167,000 or 3.7% over FY`15. This is due to the elimination of JARC grant. We will see slight increases in some of the other line items including the New Freedom grant, which includes funding for the travel trainer that we hired this year. That grant is an 80% / 20% split. We are not reserving anything against our reserve for extraordinary expenses account because we are so close to the reserve cap. Mr. Coyne stated our state contract assistance is based on the \$80 million in the Governor's budget. We will be level funded and show a balanced budget and no deficit again for the fifth year in a row. Our state contract assistance is about 71.9% of the Net Cost of Service. The total budget stands at \$23,834,662.
- Mr. Lehtola asked for motion to approve the FY`16 budget as presented
- **Motion:** the Audit and Finance committee at its meeting on May 8, 2015 with the administration, having reviewed and unanimously recommended the fiscal year 2016 budget in the amount of \$23,834,662 recommends approval of this budget.
- **Mr. Lipka made the motion and Mr. Binnall seconded.** All other board members voted in favor of the motion. The motion was accepted.
- Mr. O'Neil thanked the Audit and Finance committee for all the work they did in regards to the budget review.
- Mr. O'Neil reviewed the work being done at the 42 Quinsigamond Ave site. He stated everything is moving along with the building footprint and all the hazardous material is gone in that area. The rebar and foundation work is about 20% done and our hope is to finish it by the end of July. All hazardous material outside of the building footprint will be gone this month as well. We will set-up a time for board members to visit and walk the site.
- This Tuesday we met on-site at the 287 Grove Street property with our representatives from Kelleher and Sadowski and with folks interested in learning more about the on-site contamination. Our LSP representative was present to explain the work done over the past ten (10) years. This consisted of defining what is on-site in terms of hazardous materials, making notations of the wells, and monitoring of hazardous materials. Specific

items detected were: fuel in the back area of the site, hydraulic fluid that leaked out within certain bays, asbestos wrapped pipes and some leakage from tanks in the front part of the site. We have another session this afternoon for those missing the meeting on Tuesday. Proposals are due on June 3, 2015 and we will sit down at the next meeting and review everything. We will not move forward until after our June meeting with the board.

- Mr. Lipka asked when we are looking to get a contract. Mr. O’Neil informed the board they would like to select a developer sometime in June or July and then have a purchase and sale executed by the end of this calendar year. This timing works as it gives us ninety (90) days between July and September 2016 to be out of 287 Grove St. Board members discussed the importance of timing and the integration of the two properties timelines regarding both moving and funding. Mr. Lipka spoke about the specifics of the transfer process from 287 Grove Street to the new facility. Members inquired about the process of inventory of equipment and disposal of old equipment. Mr. O’Neil addressed the following issues by breaking down the process. The following are the highlights of the process Mr. O’Neil explained:
 - ❖ Work with Skanska for the completion date for the new facility which is July 2016.
 - ❖ Mr. Carney is inventorying all equipment in conjunction with Skanska to determine what will be moved and what will be discarded.
 - ❖ We have already budgeted for the necessary replacement equipment.
 - ❖ We will sell-off or scrap equipment where applicable.
 - ❖ Computer equipment will be purchased new as the existing equipment is past its depreciated life.
 - ❖ Administrative offices and mechanical space is at the southern end of the facility and we are scheduled to finish that part of the building first.
- Mr. Sanders asked if there was a delay in the sale of Grove Street how would it affect 42 Quinsigamond Ave’s funding. Mr. O’Neil stated we have worked that out with the FTA. We asked the FTA if we could borrow against our succeeding years capital expense dollars. The FTA approved this. We would use a piece of every year’s section 5307 capital money to pay down the loan. Mr. Lipka noted the numbers are still somewhat flexible until we actually sell Grove Street and we arrive at a guaranteed maximum price.
- Mr. Conner asked about occupancy of the site. Mr. O’Neil stated we will need an AUL or an activity use limitation document. It states what the property can be used for and allows for occupancy for that purpose. We do not expect problems despite the previous hazardous materials since all the hazardous material beneath the building is gone. Mr. O’Neil stated I would be concerned if DEP was not such a good partner with us. They really worked with us side-by-side helping us throughout this process. Mr. Lipka interjected we were extremely proactive during the process. Mr. O’Neil mentioned how Grove Street has its own AUL and both of these properties cannot be used as residential. Mr. Conner asked if ongoing hazardous testing would be necessary. Mr. O’Neil replied

there are ongoing testing requirements for the portion surrounding the facility which will continue for three (3) years. Mr. Lipka then stated the testing is mostly to determine success of the mitigation so it's not a mediation test to monitor bad conditions; it's to monitor the effectiveness of the mitigation. As part of the project, there will be a liquid boot vapor control system installed.

- Mr. Lipka pointed out how the vapor control system is integrated into the building plan and mechanical systems. Mr. Binnall asked about the access road and the conference room. Mr. O'Neil stated the access road is being created and the conference room will be on the second floor. Their intention is to have the administrative areas finished first so as to facilitate a smoother transition. Mr. Lehtola asked how many elevators are in the facility. Mr. O'Neil replied there is only one elevator.
- Mr. O'Neil introduced Mr. Carney who gave a report on the economy of diesel drive versus electric drive buses. Mr. Conner requested a report on the life span cost estimates of the current bus fleet. Below is a brief summary of the report. The entire report can be viewed at the following link: [Economy of Diesel Drive vs. Electric Drive Buses.pdf](#).
- Mr. Carney described the common uses of the electric engine in transportation and explained how the components of the engines, batteries, and transmission function in relation to each type of engine. The WRTA uses the following engines: diesel, diesel-electric hybrid and all-electric. Mr. Carney explained that because of the advancements in batteries, we can charge our all-electric buses in eight (8) minutes. Mr. Carney explained the different engine configurations and their preventive cost measures. The net cost over the twelve (12) year life is \$7,805,640 for diesel, \$3,175,800 for hybrid-diesel, and \$508,176 for all-electric. Mr. Carney stated it was common practice that the engine would be replaced before the body of the bus. The new electric technology has turned that around. The bodies of the bus break down before the engine life. Mr. Lehtola asked how we can account for this. Mr. Carney stated those buses are made with aluminum frames, not steel. Proterra all-electric buses use carbon fiber for their exterior. So, the market has adjusted in some degree to this change. Mr. Lehtola commented the recommendation would be to have a fleet consisting of 40ft. hybrid-diesel buses and the rest all-electric buses. Board members discussed the numerous factors around the all-electric buses. Mr. Lipka asked about the cost of charging stations necessary to expand the fleet with electric buses. Mr. O'Neil replied about a quarter of a million dollars each. Then we would have to negotiate for the land they are placed on. Mr. Lehtola explained all-electric buses use dedicated routes due to their charging times. Our system cannot handle a majority of electric buses, as it is now. Mr. O'Neil stated some towns may benefit from what the all-electric buses can offer. Mr. Lehtola asked about the possibility of using CNG buses.
- Mr. O'Neil informed the board we have the versatility at our new site to seriously consider natural gas fueled buses. We will be right next door to a major CNG facility and we designed the new facility to accommodate storage of CNG. It is something we can

look at in the future. Mr. O’Neil stated his goal is to have a diversified approach to our fleet. Mr. Carney cautioned the board about CNG as it was a major trend on the west coast, but now they are looking towards all-electric’s buses. This is due to the high cost of maintaining the CNG equipment and their replacement factor is about six (6) years, but that may improve with time. Also the price of natural gas changes and while CNG’s buses get about seven (7) miles to the gallon, our electric buses versus at least double that. Mr. Lipka closed the conversation by stating as technology moves forward it behooves us to look at what matches us most effectively. Our priority should be to stay nimble as a company and focus on what our ridership needs from us. The biggest value of this presentation is that we have been able to do just that.

- Mr. Ostrosky left the meeting at 9:45 am.
 - Mr. Carney stated Proterra is building a very good bus. We feel the company will continue to grow and adapt its abilities going forward. They are becoming aware of the logistics of the running of a bus. The WRTA has become a showcase for their technology as people are coming to see the buses in action. We have saved 50,000 gallons which comes to about \$155,361 in fuel expense. This figure is through June 30, 2015. I expect even greater savings as the all-electric vehicles are used even more. Mr. Sanders asked if we would be able to generate revenue from being their showcase. Mr. Lipka stated the plus and minus of being on the cutting-edge. We were the guinea pig for this technology due to our climate and service area, but on the other hand, the commitment of the best people to get our problems addressed was the benefit. Mr. Carney informed the board we are well beyond the warranty. Mr. Carney felt the support would continue with us being their showcase and that has its own benefit.
 - Mr. O’Neil stated CMRPC provides us with the technical assistant we need. What we do every year as part of the budget process is to give an allocation to CMRPC. Each year, Ms. Blunt develops a program showing how CMRPC allocates and spends our funding. Mr. O’Neil introduced Ms. Blunt, Director of Transportation, CMRPC who reviewed their spending and its allocations. Below is a list of services. The entire report can be viewed at the following link: [CMRPC Technical Assistance to the WRTA](#).
1. Federal and State Reporting Requirements:
 - Preparation of MassDOT monthly and FTA National Transit Database (NTD) monthly/annual submissions.
 2. Data Management for Service Planning:
 - Maintenance of a system delineating the operating characteristics of the WRTA’s fixed route and paratransit systems, including documentation of system changes.
 3. Project Development/Service Planning:
 - Coordination of project development and major service planning functions. Data-mining of ITS for optimal data to use in weekly service planning sessions.
 4. Paratransit System Monitoring/Assistance:
 - Assistance in monitoring paratransit providers (SCM Elderbus, nine Councils on Aging (CoA) operators, and PBSTM), identifying opportunities to increase efficiency effectiveness.

5. Review of Federal/State/Local Requests/Materials:
 - Staff support to the Administrator for information and research on subjects related to transit.
 6. Other FTA tasks performed on behalf of WRTA:
 - Annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) capital project presentation & public outreach requirements; amendments as they occur. Coordination of WRTA with Intercity Bus and Commuter Rail.
- Ms. Blunt stated the service they provide is in transportation planning as well as assistance to the administrator in research. CMRPC staff performs data mining, validations, and coordination of the specific data needed for both federal and state compliance. My staff provides the needed ridership data for all aspects of the planning and auditing. We support the functions of the WRTA and do outreach on general service changes or those necessary for proposals. Ms. Blunt explained we have seen a huge increase in data due to the new IT technology. Another task is compliance planning for Title VI to the FTA. We have a federal transit contract and some work is charged to that area because the funds are for transit service planning for the region and because the WRTA is the largest provider they are the recipients of a lot of that work. CMRPC works with the Central Mass Regional Coordinating Council and connects the WRTA with workforce development and other various human service agencies. College transit issues and service improvements are additional items meeting the guidelines of the federal transit contracts. The road work on Routes 12/20 is an example of our planning efforts as we were able to get bus bump-outs and crosswalks installed. This will enable transit to be provided for along that stretch of road.
 - Mr. Lehtola asked what year Ms. Blunt started working at CMRPC. Ms. Blunt replied 1978, and we were already partnering with the WRTA at that time. Mr. Lehtola asked if she could describe how the amount of work has changed. Ms. Blunt replied back in 1978 it was really a partial funding of two (2) people, which equaled about one full-time position. Today it is about five (5) to six (6) full-time people. We do spread it out but there are about four (4) or five (5) of us directed towards the contract with the WRTA. Then we have a GIS person who does the route changes to the schedules and the website, while others do spot projects under the contract which is funded by FTA and FHWA. Mr. Lehtola commented there has been such a large growth in data since he came on board which makes 2000 and 2015 seem like night and day. Ms. Blunt explained when Mr. O'Neil came on we were at about three (3) people and it has expanded quite a bit. Mr. Lehtola stated the work done by CMRPC is invaluable and we use them so much in our planning. Ms. Blunt stated a link from their site has been placed on the WRTA website as requested by Ms. Yager at the last board meeting. Mr. Binnall asked about the Paxton route. Ms. Blunt informed the board the Paxton route runs on the college year. Mr. Binnall asked who was working on the college schedule. Mr. O'Neil replied they are looking to get it out in the fall of 2015. The schedule would come out in August and the route will be open to any rider.

6. Business from the Board

- Ms. Vega asked about the timing regarding the URS report. Mr. O’Neil stated the report is in its final stage and should be presented to the board in June. She commented on the lower end attendance she witnessed at some of the meetings. Ms. Blunt assured Ms. Vega the last meeting at Centro Las Americas was well attended with over forty-five (45) people. Ms. Vega had compiled some comments and asked where to send them. Mr. O’Neil stated she could send them to Ms. Blunt or to him. Ms. Vega stated a longer lead time for advertising the meetings was needed. Mr. Lehtola asked if a thirty (30) day lead time would be enough in her opinion. Ms. Vega replied thirty (30) days would be enough time. Ms. Vega commented it was nice to hear about exceptional drivers as she does hear some complaints regarding drivers.
- Mr. Binnall asked about the upcoming changes in August 2015. Mr. Parker stated the new college route would become active and Route 18 will go back in service. Mr. O’Neil stated they may change some portions of some routes, but any adjustments to accommodate increased service are more likely to happen in FY`17. Any changes will go out for public response as is the policy.
- Mr. Binnall inquired into the responses from the listening session. Ms. Blunt stated they were compiled for the URS report as well. Mr. Binnall asked if the achievement acknowledgements to the two (2) drivers were being done so publicly. Mr. Carney replied they were acknowledged in the electronic newsletter and an accommodation letter is placed in their employee file. Mr. Carney informed the board of their second annual employee appreciation outing. The date for the Employee Appreciation Day picnic will be Sunday June 14 here at 287 Grove Street. There will be a rodeo at 8:30 a.m. followed by the picnic near 11:00 a.m.
- Mr. Binnall asked about the possibility of purchasing a specific model vehicle for the van service. Mr. Coyne replied the state procures the vans we get so there is limited availability. We can choose from smaller or larger vans. Smaller vans used by Elderbus and some towns hold eight (8) people, while the larger vans hold twelve (12). Mr. Binnall asked about four-wheel drive on the vans. Mr. Carney informed the board they use snow tires and sometimes chains. Van service is limited in snow storms as people are less likely to go out. Ms. Vega asked if the loop shuttle would be cancelled due to budget cuts. Mr. O’Neil replied with the recent public meetings regarding URS recommendations rumors are everywhere. Mr. O’Neil stated they are not going to cut the loop shuttle and they are looking to increase service within the existing system over the next two (2) years.
- Mr. O’Neil stated he would like to recognize the talent and skill set Mr. Conner has brought to the board. He added that from the Administration, CMRPC and Mr. Carney’s staff, I would like to offer a collective thank you for the time, knowledge and commitment you put into being a board member. Mr. Conner was a valuable asset and kept us focused on the importance of background information and data. We sincerely appreciate the time and effort he brought to the WRTA Advisory Board and again we thank you. Mr. Conner stated he would like to thank the staff and the board. He really enjoyed being a member of the board. Mr. Conner explained he learned a great deal and

has seen this organization grow and service the public better. Mr. Conner joked he was not only a board member, but also a (client) rider of the system. Mr. Lehtola stated Mr. Conner's service has been invaluable to us, especially from a financial point of view. Mr. Lehtola specified Mr. Conner's financial knowledge was a big help to him while serving on the board. Mr. O'Neil stated Mr. Sanders is welcome and we are sure he will follow in Mr. Conner's footsteps.

7. Adjournment

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to adjourn.
- **Motion: I move the board adjourn. Mr. Lipka motion to adjourn and Mr. Sanders seconded.** All voted in favor and the motion to adjourn was accepted. The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

8. Next Meeting Date

- The next board meeting will be on June 18, 2015 at 8:30 a.m., located at the hub 60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608 3rd floor.