



MINUTES of 10/15/2015 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

ATTENDANCE

Name

Representing

PRESENT

William Lehtola	Spencer
Doug Belanger	Leicester
Mark Binnall	Auburn
Kelly Burke	Northborough
Rudy Heller	Brookfield
Dennis Lipka	Holden
John Ostrosky	Shrewsbury
Brian Palaia	Oxford
Jacob Sanders	Worcester
Luz Vega	Regional Ridership

ABSENT

Jarrett Conner	Worcester
Alyssa Graveson	Douglas
Leon Gaumond Jr.	Sturbridge
Nancy Lucier	West Boylston
Timothy McInerney	Grafton
Kevin Mizikar	Grafton
Daniel Morgado	Shrewsbury
Michael Pantos	Rutland
David Schiller	Charlton
Robert Spain	Millbury
Michael Ward	Clinton
Sharon Yager	Shrewsbury

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 for September 17, 2015.
- Mr. Lipka entered the board meeting at 8:35 a.m.
- Mr. Palaia entered the board meeting at 8:39 a.m.
- Ms. Vega entered the board meeting at 8:45 a.m.
- **Motion: I move the board accept the minutes of September 17, 2015.** Mr. Belanger made the motion and Mr. Ostrosky seconded. All voted in favor and the motion was accepted.

4. Business from the Public

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

5. Business from the Board

- Mr. Lipka updated the board members on the personnel committee's progress regarding the search for a new administrator. Mr. Lipka stated a contract has been signed with the Collins Center and Ms. Aicardi would be contacting specific board members. The purpose is to build the necessary profile for the position. Mr. Lehtola asked if members will be meeting with her at the Hub. Mr. Lipka stated the individual meetings can be done by phone or in person whichever is most convenient.
- Mr. Lehtola asked about the additional comments collected during the recent public hearings. Mr. Church acknowledged they were accounted for in general and Mr. Coyne asked if the board would like to receive them. Board members agreed the additional comments should be emailed to them for review. The board agreed to bring up anything relevant at its next meeting. Mr. Coyne stated administration will comply with their request.
- Mr. Lehtola commented on his participation in one of the public meetings. He mentioned that Mr. Binnall had attended the same meeting. Mr. Lehtola informed the board members about claims being made as to how the board had already approved the proposed service changes. Mr. Lehtola addressed these comments as false and misguided. Mr. Belanger spoke on how the board really does listen to the people and their recommendations. He stated certain mistrust arose regarding the historic governing of the WRTA, however that mistrust should be considered unfounded in the current governing of the WRTA.
- Ms. Vega suggested conducting a public hearing in Spanish. Ms. Vega felt the effort would better serve the Latino Community of Worcester. She recommended using 1050 Main Street or Centros Las Americas as potential meeting sites. Mr. Belanger agreed and stated a preference for Centro Las Americas as he felt its location would better service

the general Latino population. Mr. Lehtola stated they would add a Spanish language meeting to their public hearings agenda.

- Mr. Belanger asked if the WRTA reaches out to the Lions Club or other local organizations to build a shelter and/or maintain one. Mr. Belanger stated the Southbridge shelter request prompted him to suggest possible collaborations. Mr. Coyne explained that 1% of their federal dollars goes towards transit enhancements and shelters fall under that category. Mr. Coyne identified some of the guidelines for installation. The stop must meet a ridership threshold and have the required space that is properly permitted by the city or town. Mr. Coyne indicated how they strive for uniformity in shape and size of their shelters. Mr. Belanger suggested they could give the necessary specs to those outside groups interested in such a project. No conclusions were drawn at this time.
- Mr. Heller commented on Ms. Sebastian participation in the Brookfield event this year. Mr. Heller explained that the turnout was lower than expected with between 5000 to 7000 persons, but the event was successful. He thanked the administration for making it possible to have the travel trainer come out.
- Mr. Binnall inquired if the WRTA provided service to and from the polling stations. Mr. Lehtola replied they do not provide any such service. Mr. Belanger commented that candidates often arrange for rides to the polls.
- Mr. Sanders asked if any monies would be obtained through litigation with Eversource. Mr. Coyne stated the attorneys are waiting for MassDEP to issue a Notice of Responsibility (NOR) before a decision can be made on how best to proceed. If the WRTA were able to obtain money from a suit brought against Eversource, it would be well into the future. Mr. Palaia inquired about the overall financial history of the 42 Quinsigamond Ave project. Mr. Coyne agreed to brief Mr. Palaia at his earliest convenience.

6. Administrator Report

- Mr. Coyne explained how they would start with the proposed service changes for January 2016 and yielded the floor to Mr. Church. Mr. Church explained he would be giving the board the revised proposed service changes for them to vote on. The services changes, if voted in, would not take effect until January 2016.
- Mr. Church reviewed the proposed service changes given to the board last month. He reviewed with the board the comments and feedback that came from the public hearings and provided the board with the revised service changes for their voting consideration. He provided a copy of a WRTA system map that was requested in the September meeting. The entire presentation can be viewed at the following link: [Proposed service change for January 2016 from CSA for Advisory Board 10.15.2015.](#) Below a brief summary has been provided.

- Mr. Church explained they revised the services changes after taking into consideration recommendations obtained from the recent public meetings. He informed the board there were four (4) public meetings held during the week of October 5, 2015. The locations were as follows: two (2) at Union Station in the CMRPC conference room, one (1) at Our Lady of the Angels Church, and one (1) at the Jacob Edwards Library in Southbridge. Mr. Church stated that additional comments came from an information table set-up at the Hub on Thursday and Friday of the same week. The meetings dates and times were posted in the following places; our website, the local paper, in the buses & bus shelters.

- Mr. Church stated it was generally understood that changes to the Routes 25 and 27 would be contentious but these adjustments would help eliminate the bunching on the Main Street Corridor. At the public hearing those attending were against any changes to the present schedules of Routes 25 and 27. Mr. Church informed the board the bunching problem on Main Street was not a priority, when coupled with changes to Routes 25 and 27. Mr. Church noted the one elimination in the proposal is Route 18. He informed the board that the public voiced concern over service on West Boylston Street and the possible overcrowding of Routes 30 and 31. Mr. Church explained there is less than a quarter-mile walk to W. Boylston St., Quinsigamond Community College or E. Mountain St. at the Summit. Route 14 would provide year-round service which is preferable to Route 18 which only operates September through June. Mr. Lehtola asked for some of the demographics along Route 14. Mr. Church stated the typical demographics show residents forty-five years or older, in single-family residential housing, with a high automobile ownership. Mr. Church explained how some crowding may occur on Routes 30 and 31. They are anticipating that the Quinsigamond students will take Route 14. If so, this will diminish any concerns of overcrowding on Routes 30 and 31.

- Recapped are the three (3) exceptions to be implemented from the original report. All other changes in interlines, frequencies, expanded services, and reallocation will proceed as recommended under the original proposal.
 - Route 25 will remain on its existing route with service to the Auburn Industrial Park on weekdays.
 - Route 25 will continue to provide service to the Auburn Mall on Saturdays and will provide new service to the Auburn Mall on Sundays.
 - Route 27 will remain on its existing routing with service to the Auburn Mall seven (7) days per week.

- Mr. Lehtola asked if there was any discussion or comments from the board members. Mr. Binnall mentioned a request for a new route designated to travel from the Hub to Webster Square. Mr. Lehtola stated that could be a possibility in the future. Mr. Belanger inquired about the Route 7 and 23 interline option. Mr. Church stated the interline it would replace, Route 19 and Route 23 runs on Saturdays only and is one way. Mr. Lehtola interjected we did make that argument and people remained split regarding this issue. Mr. Lehtola emphasized how the changes were basically to expand service. Board members discussed the benefits of the frequency changes and of the reallocation of some

routes. Mr. Belanger acknowledged the importance of serving the entire system. Mr. Lehtola commented on his and Mr. Binnall's attendance at one of the meetings. Mr. Lehtola summarized that meeting was well attended with people being extremely communicative about their needs.

- Ms. Vega stated how she attended one of the meetings at Union Station. Ms. Vega acknowledged what she termed "the emotional factors". Ms. Vega stressed making decisions solely on the basis of financial needs is not always well understood by the public. Ms. Vega spoke to the point that our riders see our service as a necessity and we need to be sensitive to that factor. Mr. Belanger commented on how the board does take into account the inconveniences that may occur due to changes. Mr. Belanger stated their goal is to not be in a position where they would be short serving the general ridership. Mr. Lehtola reminded the board members of all the cuts occurring in the early 2000's and how the public still remembers that transitional period. He stated how the WRTA is in a different position and adjustments are being made to generally provide better and in some cases expanded service within their ability. Ms. Vega then stressed the importance of giving the ridership enough time to have the public hearings and for any changes to take effect. Mr. Lehtola responded the changes would take effect at the end of January 2016. We are overall improving service and adding more weekend service where we need it.
- Mr. Lehtola reminded the board members of the changes in communication and on-going participation with the public that has been occurring over the past three (3) years. Mr. Lehtola closed the discussion by stating how basically the revised recommendations were in compliance with the general consensus generated at the public hearings. Mr. Church clarified that the WRTA does not have fleet capability on the weekdays. The WRTA does have some fleet capability on the weekends. Mr. Church informed the board that most of the proposed service changes and many of the ideas came from the Comprehensive Service Analysis report completed in June 2015. Mr. Lehtola asked if that report was paid for by the WRTA and was mandated by the state. Mr. Coyne explained the report was mandated and payment was in collaboration with all the RTA's in Massachusetts.
- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the Proposed Service Changes as presented.
- **Motion: After reviewing feedback from its customers and with the recommendation of its Interim Administrator, the WRTA Advisory Board approves the January 2016 service changes as presented to the board on this Thursday, October 15, 2015.**
- **Mr. Belanger made the motion and Mr. Lipka seconded. All Board members voted in favor and the motion was carried.**
- Mr. Coyne informed the board there was a lot of information regarding the WRTA's Maintenance and Operations facility to be discussed. Mr. Coyne indicated there was an increase in the environmental cleanup costs, a pressing deadline for the signing of the GMP, and for a contract signature from the Secretary of Transportation to pay for on-going environmental costs.

- Mr. Coyne recapped the funding process discussed at the March building committee meeting and explained the capital plan has been revised to meet the necessary increases. The projected funding gap was at \$11.5 million and we intended to borrow against our future federal 5307 funds. We developed a capital plan that could justify the borrowing and not give up other projects. The WRTA has a fairly new bus fleet (average age 4 years) and we will be getting our vans through the states MAP program.
- Mr. Coyne stated we would continue to fund the increased gap through the borrowing on the future 5307 monies; however the capital plan would be adjusted so as to postpone expansion of the bus fleet that was recommended in the CSA report. Mr. Coyne indicated it was unlikely there would be increases in state monies in upcoming years to assist operationally with the CSA recommendations. Mr. Coyne stated there would be an increase in the maintenance and operations facility bond to \$16.5 million. The revised capital plan does reflect one (1) new bus for FY 17 and more to be procured in 2020 as the fleet will begin reaching its twelve (12) year expected life. Mr. Lehtola commented how we are constrained in regards to expansion due to the capital projects. Mr. Lipka commented the newer facility should produce some cost savings over the Grove Street facility. Mr. Coyne stated the larger square footage would increase utility costs. Mr. Lehtola questioned the purchasing of only one (1) bus under this 5-year capital plan. Mr. Coyne stated we are projecting one (1) bus purchase based on our current spare fleet ratio, which the FTA requires to be no more than 20%, and the WRTA is currently at 18% so adding the additional bus meets our requirements.
- Mr. Coyne indicated he is uncomfortable signing the GMP without funding in place or approval from the Secretary of Transportation. Over the past nine weeks, he has been going back and forth with MassDOT stressing the pending timeline for signing the GMP. Mr. Coyne informed the board that the deadline is October 25, 2015 but he would need to sign by October 23, 2015. Mr. Coyne asked the board for their suggestions on how best to proceed in this matter. Mr. Coyne stated he was working with MARTA on this issue and was told the approval was in the offices of the secretary of transportation. Board members discussed the importance of direct contact with both specific political representatives as well as with the Secretary's office. Mr. Lipka suggested directly calling the Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, as they are up against a deadline. Mr. Sanders offered his assistance in contacting officials through his office at City Hall. Mr. Coyne stated that delaying the signing of the GMP would mean delays and cost increases. Mr. Ostrosky asked if we do not sign the GPM how will that effect funding. Mr. Coyne replied federal funding will not be affected but will increase costs and move the schedule. It is important that we keep the project as close to schedule as possible. Mr. Lipka stated delays will affect all the contractors and our move in date to the new facility. Mr. Lipka asked about the sale for 287 Grove Street. Mr. Coyne stated the buyer is in the 90-day due diligence period. Mr. Coyne stated the buyer will allow for some flexibility on our moving out date, but it will be at an expected cost. The proceeds from the sale will be \$3.675 million which has been accounted for in our M&O budget figures.
- Mr. Coyne addressed the issue of the paying invoices due to the absence of a signed

FY 16 MassDOT contract. As it is known, we received \$14 million from MassDOT and an additional \$2.2 million from Energy of Environmental Affairs for a total of \$16.2 million. As of the end of fiscal year 2015, there was a remaining balance of \$5.9 million. We still have not received our contract for the current fiscal year. Mr. Coyne explained we have invoices coming in from the contractors who are continuing to do the environmental work but we are not able to pay them. A July check was released which was 45 to 50 days past due and totaled \$3.6 million, of which \$600,000 was MassDOT's portion and the other was available federal funding. On October 1, 2015 we were told to submit the invoices and that the contract was with the secretary and ready to be signed. The WRTA also has \$2.5 million in additional invoices that need to be paid regarding environmental expenses. There has been no contract update or reimbursement from the state as of today.

- Mr. Coyne explained the \$16.2 million that we received for the cleanup will not be enough due to the additional coal tar found on the site. Last week while digging for the utilities additional coal tar was discovered. The cost to remove and chase this new coal tar was \$700,000. Mr. Coyne informed the board members there are other trenches to be dug as the site work continues. Mr. Lipka inquired about the size of the area they cleaned as opposed to what more needs to be done. Mr. Coyne stated he did not have that answer but the manhole was 50-60 yards from Quinsigamond Ave. Exact costs to complete the cleanup are not known because it all depends on what they find going forward. Most of the environmental clean-up work will be done by Thanksgiving so a figure should be available within the next four to five weeks. The last phase of the clean-up will be the placement of the underground storage tanks set for spring 2016. Mr. Coyne estimated an additional \$3 million which would be above the \$16.2 million we received. So the total could be \$19.2 million. Mr. Lipka stated all the stakeholders went into this site knowing there was great potential for additional environmental problems. Mr. Lipka emphasized the importance of site safety and continuing the environmental clean-up within the construction phase.
- Mr. Coyne indicated he has set-up a meeting for October 23, 2015 for the purpose of explaining to the state legislatures and other interested officials the importance of obtaining the necessary funding. He welcomed the board to attend this meeting. Mr. Belanger inquired as to his present lists of attendees and suggested casting a wider net to include the representatives of all the communities the WRTA services. Mr. Sanders offered his assistance through the city manager's office. Mr. Belanger stated that their constituents could see drastic service changes if the WRTA has to carry the full burden of the additional environmental costs. Board members agreed the site was made viable due to the compensational funding given by state and federal agencies. Board members agreed upon the importance to build a legislative network in regards to finding solutions to the current situations. Mr. Lehtola suggested listing all towns on the letterhead used when writing the letter. Mr. Lehtola questioned why the present letterhead does not list all the towns the WRTA services as it did previously.
- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion regarding contacting various officials for the purposes of securing the necessary documents and regarding the additional funding needed.

Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board directs the Interim Administrator to send out notice to each legislator of the cities and towns under the WRTA service area regarding the needed additional funding and to directly contact the Lt. Governor's office in regards to the needed securing of a contract with the Secretary of Transportation.

- **Mr. Belanger made the motion and Mr. Palaia seconded. All board members voted in favor and the motion was accepted.**

7. Adjournment

- Mr. Lehtola asked for a motion to adjourn.
- **Motion: I move the board adjourn. Mr. Belanger motion to adjourn and Mr. Lipka seconded.** All voted in favor and the motion to adjourn was accepted. The meeting adjourned at 9:56 a.m.

8. Next Meeting Date

- The next board meeting will be on November 19, 2015 at 8:30 a.m., located at the hub 60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608 3rd floor.