



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

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## WRTA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING APRIL 20, 2017 MINUTES

### WRTA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Chairperson Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

### ATTENDANCE

Advisory Board Members present: Douglas Belanger – Leicester, Luz Vega – Community Population, John Ostrosky - Shrewsbury, Mark Binnall - Auburn, Robin Craver - Charlton, Dennis Lipka – Holden, Robert Spain - Millbury, Jacob Sanders - Worcester, William Lehtola - Spencer, Noted activity of board members: *entered at 8:34 a.m. Ron San Angelo- Southbridge entered at 8:36 a.m. Barbara Connelly- Grafton, John Ostrosky – Shrewsbury left at 10:15 a.m.*

### ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Chairperson Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes for February 16, 2017. On motion by Robin Craver, seconded by Mark Binnall and carried unanimously, the advisory board accepted the minutes of February 16, 2017.

### BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

John Ostrosky asked if the driver’s selection by seniority was yearly. Mr. Parker stated it was done three times a year. John Ostrosky asked how the wear down factors of the fareboxes was handled. Mr. Parker stated that the fareboxes are under contract and are switched out when failing.

Mr. Lipka informed the board that the Administrator’s annual review process is underway. Mr. Church will submit a self-evaluation based on his accomplishments, administrative/operational changes, and future goals. The WRTA Advisory Board Personnel Committee will meet sometime in June.

### BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

The chairperson recognized the following persons for comment(s) regarding the fare increases and service cuts. Pamela Alvin, Lynn Norris, Winnie Octave, William Gauvin, Terry Kelly and Jo Hart. Some of the public and a minority of the board members were not favor of the amount for increase regarding the ADA and Non-ADA services. Speaking members of the public were concerned with the length of the plan and preferred a one year or year by year approach. Terry Kelly expressed the need for more shelters and for longer lobby hours.

### ***Communities Served:***

Auburn	Brimfield	Douglas	Grafton	Millbury	North	Paxton	Southbridge	Wales	West Boylston
Barre	Brookfield	Dudley	Holden	New Braintree	Brookfield	Princeton	Spencer	Warren	West
Berlin	Charlton	East	Holland	Northborough	Oakham	Rutland	Sturbridge	Webster	Brookfield
Boylston	Clinton	Brookfield	Leicester	Northbridge	Oxford	Shrewsbury	Sutton	Westborough	Worcester

Board members debated the purpose of a five (5) year plan and the numerous factors involving projecting figures. Board members agreed that each yearly budget review could affect the present five (5) year plan. Speaking members of the public suggested simplifying the website, increasing advertising revenues and seeking more grant funding. Mr. Lehtola acknowledged that the Administration was seeking to change the WRTA's website. Mr. Belanger commented on how the fare increases were one piece of closing the WRTA deficit. Mr. Belanger explained that the monies coming from the State remain level funded despite the raising costs of business. Mr. Belanger urged the public to contact their elected officials in this regard. Mr. Belanger stated that the WRTA continues to focus its efforts on providing the best service with the limited funding it receives.

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Mr. Coyne reviewed the budget process and updated the deficit figure to about seven hundred and eighty-four thousand dollars (\$784,000.00). Mr. Coyne explained how the fare increase and the service cuts fold into creating stability to the FY'18 budget and beyond. Mr. Coyne commented on the five (5) year fare projections and the need to work within the totality of the five (5) year plan.

**FINANCE**

*a. Presentation of public feedback received on proposed service changes and fare increases.*

Mr. Church supplied the board with the public feedback survey results and highlighted those topics that effected their amended proposal. The amended proposal shows a concern for gradual increases in fares and increases the maximum rides for day passes to eight (8). The zones for Paratransit remain the same in FY'18. The proposed changes are broken into two sections; fare increases and service changes.

*b. Review and discuss Administration's proposal based on public feedback.*

Mr. Church presented the board members with an amended June 2017 Fare Changes based upon the survey results.

<b>Fixed Route</b>	<b>Current Fare</b>	<b>FY2018</b>
Cash Fare	\$ 1.50	\$ 1.75
Cash Fare - Reduced	\$ 0.75	\$ 0.85
One Day Pass	\$ 3.50	\$ 4.50
One Day Pass - Reduced	\$ 1.75	\$ 2.25
31 Day Pass	\$ 48.00	\$ 57.00
31 Day Pass - Reduced	\$ 24.00	\$ 28.50
Charlie Card	\$ 1.30	\$ 1.60
Charlie Card - Reduced	\$ 0.65	\$ 0.80
UPass	\$ 100.00	\$ 125.00
ADA Paratransit *	\$2.25 - \$3.00	\$2.75 - \$3.50
Non-ADA Paratransit *	\$1.25 - \$2.00	\$1.50 - \$2.25

FY2018 – 3 zones, All Day passes are eight (8) rides maximum.

Board members discussed the perception of the five (5) year plan as a projection of the future needs and agreed that reevaluating figures annually had numerous benefits. Robert Spain, Robin Craver, and Barbara Connelly commented on the “no zone” goal for Paratransit services and their concerns with the fare increases. Luz Vega suggested waiting until the next change window in August to address the fare and service issues. Jacob Sanders acknowledged there were numerous factors regarding future budgeting but emphasized the need for a viable plan and objectives for the WRTA. Jacob Sanders commented on the importance of not having to repeatedly raise and cut service every year. Board members agreed overall that fare increases were necessary and Bill Lehtola stated the Board was less than proactive given the lapse in time from the last increase in 2009. Board members favored a more gradual approach to fare increases overall and a shorter duration for the initially proposed plan.

Chairperson Lehtola asked for a motion on the proposed amended version of the fare increases.

**Motion: Adopt the amended version of the fare increases as presented as a one year plan for FY'18 figures.**

**On motion by Doug Belanger seconded Barbara Connelly, the motion passed 10 votes in favor and 1 against, the advisory board approved to adopt the amended version of the fare increases as presented as a one year plan for FY'18.**

Chairperson Lehtola asked for a motion on the request to adopt policy for budgeting reports.

**Motion: Request Administration adopt a policy to provide the board with a five (5) year operations, capital, and revenue plan(s) (including projected revenues from the state, municipalities and fares) at the beginning of the budgeting process and to request that it be included with the performance review when the personnel committee reviews the administrator's goals and objectives going forward.**

**On motion by Robin Craver seconded Robert Spain, and carried unanimously, the advisory board approved the request to adopt a policy for a five (5) year operations, capital and revenue plan and its inclusion when the personnel committee reviews the administrator's goals and objectives.**

Mr. Church presented the board members with an amended June 2017 Service Reduction proposal based on the survey results. Listed is the amended June 2017 Service Reduction.

Routes 1 and 22 – Existing routes will be merged together to create a new route serving parts of Providence, Dorchester, Houghton, and Heywood Streets connecting to Walmart (Rt. 146).  
Route 4 will be extended to serve Millbury Center.

Route 10 – Eliminated

Route 14 – On Weekdays, reduce frequency from 30 minutes to 60 minutes after the midday schedule.

Routes 9, 16, and 31 – Routes would be merged together into a clockwise and counter-clockwise outer loop route.

Routes 19 and 30 – Eliminate extra trips.

Route 22 – Eliminate service on Saturdays.

Route 34 (Sundays only) – Merge existing routing to current Route 24 routing (Belmont St. to UMass).

Downtown Hub Loop – Will be retained in current form and free until August 26, 2017 when it will be replaced with longer fare producing loop.

Elder Shopper – modified but retained

Late Night Service – Eliminated

The amended proposal took into consideration the following elimination objections: Elder Shopper service, Saturday service for Routes 22 & 14, Sunday service for Route 25, and Route 1 weekend service. There were discussions by the public about the changes to Route 1 and Route 22 merge and the Route 4 extension.

**Motion: Adopt the amended version of the service reductions as presented.**

**On motion by Doug Belanger seconded by Ron San Angelo, the motion failed 2 voted in favor and 8 against.**

Robert Spain commented on the need to make an exception to the proposal regarding the Millbury service adjustments. Ms. O'Connor from the Millbury Senior Center asked to speak about the potential ridership that may come from developments in that area. Ms. O'Connor stated a methadone clinic is expected to open shortly and housing is being built along the corridor where Route 22 travels. Robert Spain commented on the disruption of ADA services (for a specific area) if the route section is eliminated. Board members debated the possibilities for keeping the route on the expectations of future increased service.

Administration commented that keeping the route would affect two other routes therefore recommended adhering to the original recommendation. Board members discussed the importance of having Administration work with Robert Spain and the Millbury community to adjust for any future needs. Robert Spain offered to amend the proposal to keep Route 22 for six (6) additional months and if expectations are not met to then eliminate the route.

**Motion: Adopt the amended version of the service reductions as presented with an amendment for Route 22 to continue for six (6) months and if no viable ridership or cost increases to eliminate the Route 22 on August 26, 2017.**

**On Motion by Robert Spain seconded Barbara Connelly, the motion failed 4 votes in favor and 6 against.**

Bill Lehtola suggested that the Administration formally work on addressing service issues brought up by Mr. Spain.

**Motion: to request that the Administration work with Mr. Spain to address the decrease in service due to the elimination of Route 22.**

**On motion by Doug Belanger seconded by Dennis Lipka and carried unanimously,**

**the advisory board request that the administration work with Mr. Spain to address the decrease in service due to the elimination of Route 22.**

Jacob Sanders proposed to keep the loop service until the pending downtown construction was finished. Jacob Sanders stated that the loop route affords people to get around the area where right now there are no sidewalks. Mr. Spain spoke against the exception for the loop service. Board members discussed a feasible timeline and the ongoing issue of ADA fares that exist with the free service. Jacob Sanders argued that the growth of downtown was a showcase for the City and for public transit. Administration suggested extending the loop service (as is) until August 26, 2017. Board members discussed the loop's usage and weighted the recommendation by Administration.

Chairperson Lehtola asked for a motion on the proposed amended version of the service reductions.

**Motion: Adopt the amended version of the service reductions as presented with the exception that the Hub loop remains in service until August 26, 2017 for free and then the creation of a new downtown loop with fare will be implemented as proposed.**

**On motion by Doug Belanger seconded Ron San Angelo, the motion passed 9 votes in favor and 1 against, the advisory board approved to adopt the amended version of the service reductions and extend the free loop shuttle until August 26, 2017 and create a new downtown loop with fare as proposed.**

#### ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Lehtola asked for a motion to adjourn. On motion by Dennis Lipka, seconded by Mark Binnall and carried unanimously, the advisory board meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

#### NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on May 18, 2017 at 8:30 a.m., located at the WRTA Hub, 60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.