



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

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WRTA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING JANUARY 18, 2018 MINUTES

WRTA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Chairperson Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Advisory Board Member present: Mark Binnall-Auburn, John Ostrosky – Shrewsbury, Jarrett Conner-Worcester, Rudy Heller – Brookfield, Anita Scheipers – West Boylston, Doug Belanger – Leicester, William Lehtola – Spencer.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Chairperson Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes for November 16, 2017. On motion by Mark Binnall, seconded by Doug Belanger the vote was carried unanimously and the Advisory Board accepted the minutes of November 16, 2017.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chairperson asked if there was any business from the public and no one responded.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Mark Binnall made inquiries regarding the separate telephone numbers regarding van trips to senior centers. Ms. Kosterski explained that all calls, comments, and complaints regarding van trips are handled through PBSTM. Mark Binnall asked if the vans could be equipped with 4-wheel drive. Mr. Church stated that due to funding procurement specifications, 4-wheel drive vans are not included. Mark Binnall asked if the “Adopt a Shelter” Program was still active and Ms. Lyver stated she would look into the possibility of renewing this program. Mark Binnall asked if the present security company was under a contract. Mr. Coyne replied that the present company was not under any contract.

John Ostrosky commented on bus stop signage by UMass Memorial Hospital on Belmont Street. Bus stop signage numbering showed Route 30 and this caused confusion as to whether the Route 24 bus would stop for riders. Mr. Parker explained how that specific signage is likely a construction oversight. Mr. Parker will be sending someone to review the matter. Mr. Parker informed that board that Operations does an annual system wide check of signage after each snow season. John Ostrosky suggested that the busses scroll information regarding snow routes and possible weather related closure while in service to inform the public.

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

WRTA Operator Commendation: Lori Mayotte

The WRTA Advisory Board recognized Lori Mayotte for her outstanding efforts in assisting and protecting a pedestrian who had collapsed in the middle of the road. Chairperson Lehtola expressed the board's gratitude for her actions and congratulated her on being an outstanding employee, outstanding citizen, and a good human being. A letter of commendation will be placed in her file and recognition will be given in the upcoming WRTA newsletter. Mr. Parker informed the board members that this is actually the second commendation for Ms. Mayotte. In 2015, she was commended for assisting riders during a shooting on Canterbury Street.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

ADMINISTRATIVE

a. Update on upcoming FY'18 FTA Comprehensive Review

Mr. Church announced that the administration is on track to send the necessary paperwork by the January deadline. The site visit is scheduled for May 22, 2018 and will take about two days. Ms. Shea is managing this project. Mr. Church is confident that the WRTA will be ready for the review and will achieve the necessary compliance.

b. Review of WRTA Program Preview with MassDOT Rail and Transit Division

Mr. Church and Mr. Coyne attended a meeting with MassDOT in December. In the meeting they answered questions regarding the WRTA's financial and operational information over the last two years. Mentioned in the meeting were the fare increases made by the WRTA and how much of the Comprehensive Service Plan is still relevant going forward. Mr. Church stressed that the lower funding levels (which produce lower ridership numbers) makes it difficult to sustain service and/or grow service. Improved and expanded services listed under the Comprehensive Service Plan are not possible if state funding continues to be level at \$80.4 million or declining.

Board members discussed that a doing more with less approach is not viable given the consistently lower budgeting levels and higher employee and operational costs. Mr. Church reminded the board that the FY'18 budget override was \$80.4 million for all the RTA's. Funding in the governor's budget for next year is expected to be the same despite inflation increases. Mr. Church explained that originally the RTA's proposed a five year plan for state funding starting at \$80 million dollars (in FY'15) and increasing \$2 million dollars every year through FY '18. The RTA's planned their budgets and service plans under these numbers as a conservative measure to sustaining services and seeking moderate growth. Mr. Church stated that if the funding levels continue without the necessary increases sustaining services and potential growth are not viable options. Mr. Lehtola questioned why the MBTA is receiving \$723 million dollars for the upgrade of their fare collection system but the RTA's cannot get their original five-year plan funding.

c. Communication of Suspension of Service on January 4, 2018

Mr. Church responded to the article written about his decision to suspend transit services on January 4, 2018. Mr. Church stated that his decision was based on the changing weather conditions in the morning and continued communications with operations staff.

The goal was to ensure the safety of our ridership and our employees during the storm. Mr. Church explained the communication protocol for social media, website, and text messaging. He informed the board that throughout the day, a road supervisor was making the rounds of bus stops for potentially stranded riders. Ms. Lyver stated that she called the multiple hospitals serviced by our routes regarding the stoppage of service.

Board members discussed the difficulty of predicting what a storm could or could not do. Board member accepted Mr. Church's decision making process in regard to weather related issues. Doug Belanger stated he was disappointed by the article he read and commented on how other city leaders make similar choices due to weather related conditions.

FINANCE

d. FY'19 Budget Preparations

Mr. Church informed the board that the Governor's budget was due out by the end of January 2018. This will give the WRTA a viable number for calculating projections for the FY'19 Budget options. Mr. Church explained that they anticipate a level funding approach from the State which means \$80.4 million for all the RTA's. This figure will mean additional service cuts to the WRTA budget at this figure. Mr. Church will present a list of options to the board for review and approval at the February 15, 2018 board meeting. Options will include staffing levels which can affect services provided by the WRTA. Mr. Church announced his intentions to contact and meet with all of the state delegation regarding funding for the WRTA. Mr. Church passed out a copy of the initial letter sent to each state legislator.

Board members discussed the future bus procurements and discussed which technologies would best serve the WRTA's specific needs. Mr. Church stated that a wide view would be taken in respect to procurements. In regards to the all-electric bus technology, Mr. Church suggested a wait and see approach due to the continuing advances in battery technology. Mark Binnall asked if bus parts are saved for future use. Mr. Parker commented on how the practice of saving parts goes with a fleet's maturity schedule and that they do save parts.

MARKETING/EVENTS

e. Update on meeting with City Manager Staff on POW! WOW! Bus wrap

Ms. Lyver is working with City Manager's Office to procure an artist for creating a bus wrap design for the annual POW! WOW! event. Also, through the Worcester Public Schools, there may be an opportunity to foster an art contest regarding a bus wrap design for the event.

f. Update on advertising and potential new clients

The remaining queen and tail ad spaces are being worked on for fulfillment to October 2018. The Worcester Pirates are being approached for possible ad space. There are two pending contracts for February 2018.

g. Newsletter

The newsletter will be out next week and reports of the successful Stuff-a-Bus Campaign, as well as the employee recognition, will be featured.

h. Plan to update the website

The redesign project continues and changes to the website will be seen in the upcoming weeks. These changes will begin to make the site more user friendly.

OTHER

i. City of Worcester engagement of talks for police substation at Union Station

Mr. Church informed the board that talks are continuing regarding funding and participation in having a police substation at Union Station. Mr. Church will be meeting to discuss cost considerations as well as the level of participation the WRTA could expect. The WRTA hires a security firm for its property and needs to weigh security coverage and cost. A meeting is set for the afternoon of January 18, 2018 with the Worcester Police Chief.

Board members discussed the benefits of having a police substation nearby the Hub. Doug Belanger suggested a hybrid budgeting approach to funding with 10%-20% private security and support for the substation as opposed to an “all or nothing” approach. Mr. Church stated he was open to a hybrid approach.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Lehtola asked for a motion to adjourn. On motion by Doug Belanger, seconded by Anita Scheipers and carried unanimously, the Advisory Board meeting adjourned at 9:16 a.m.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on February 15, 2018 at 8:30 a.m., located at the hub 60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608 3rd floor.