



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

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Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Meeting Minutes May 16, 2019

Chairperson Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE

Present: Kristen Las – Shrewsbury, Mark Binnall - Auburn, Brian Bullock - Holden, Jacob Sanders – Worcester, Michael Suprenant – Sturbridge, Roseann Carrier – Brookfield, Doug Belanger – Leicester, Robert Spain – Millbury, Candria Gray – Worcester Ridership, and William Lehtola - Spencer. (Jacob Sanders left the meeting at 9:17am)

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes for April 18, 2019 and executive minutes January 17, 2019.

By: Doug Belanger. 2nd: Mark Binnall. (Robert Spain abstained)

Vote: All In favor (9 in favor 0 opposed 1 abstention).

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

Public comment was made regarding the elevator’s general operational status as it appears to go down frequently. Mr. Lipka informed that board the elevator’s control boards have been updated and all safety inspections have been passed. Mr. Lipka stated during this tenure no one has been stuck inside the elevator. Comments were made regarding better signage on the smaller buses and substitute buses should they be used have better signage. Board member discussed the COA van signage and technology vs. fixed route buses.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Mr. Binnall asked about paratransit service two towns out and the Ms. Kusterski will follow up with the details of that service. Doug Belanger informed that board that the town of Leicester has not had results with getting a disability position at this time. Board members suggested call the senior centers and town administrations personally regarding this issue. Board members discussed the possibility of petitioning the legislature to expand the serving timeframe or to adjust the protocols for participation. Mr. Lipka informed the board that the last round of inquiries did not lead to any participants from the towns but that Worcester as the largest population has interest. Mr. Lipka stated that Worcester can’t appoint both the ridership position as well as the disability position for the board.

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

CMRPC PUBLIC HEARING SESSIONS FOR PROPOSED SERVICE MODIFICATIONS

Mr. Todd Fontanella from CMRPC gave a talk regarding the public comments from the 8 public meetings. Worcester and Southbridge were the most attended. Bus Route 29 changes would affect buffer for paratransit rides for Masonic Home Road. The WRTA has made a minor change with a stop by CVS to allow for a continued buffer zone. Mr. Lipka stated that one (1) person complained about Bus Route 29 changing away from the Charlton center but he was informed that paratransit services would be applicable for use. WRTA has accommodated this issue but ridership in Charlton Center is extremely low to none and redirection would allow for increased demand in Southbridge. Bus Route 25 not change stop at Holy Cross and two people did not want the Route 2 change off Mower Street. Conversations regarding Mower Street pointed to the issues on Pleasant Street pertaining to no sidewalks and fast traffic. Both changes are based upon having consistently shown extremely low to no ridership. Added service to Southbridge to the Big Bunny was supported as well as expanded service in Southbridge. The added Park Ave service had mixed reviews. Bus Route 25 had an objection from a board member about Industrial Park change.

Listed are the service modifications:

Route 2, no longer serve Mower Street, on Sundays only would divert at Park Ave to service upper Chandler Street and end at Tatnuck Sq; Outbound: by request only Mower St – on all service days.

Route 7 on Sundays only would stay on Chandler St instead of serving Health Center which is closed on Sundays;

Route 11 – service hours on Sunday increased/extended;

Route 14, weekend service stopped, reduced summer schedule (June 22-August 24) to retain hourly coverage;

Route 16/31 Saturday service increased from the Saturday stopped on Rt 14;

Route 24 – re-routed to cover North Main Street to replace Route 40, extra 24A trips moved to regular Route 24;

Route 25 – restructured after Canterbury Street, turn right on Cambridge, to serve Price Chopper and EOL at Webster Square Plaza, no weekend service;

Route 26 – Saturday service increased;

Route 29 – eliminate portion of route in center of Charlton, extend route in downtown Southbridge to EOL at Big Bunny Plaza;

Route 40 – replaced with Park Avenue Connector route running between Webster Sq Plaza and Greendale Mall.

Minor changes to the proposed service modifications were as follows:

- Bus Route 29 inbound stop at CVS on Rt 20 and this will create the necessary buffer for paratransit service on Masonic Home Road.
- Bus Route 1 will go into the Worcester Senior Center front entrance off Providence Street.

Motion: The Worcester Regional Transit Authority’s Advisory Board approves the service modifications, as presented May 16, 2019 with giving administration authority for the minor adjustments presented today and to the implementation of the service modifications as of June 22, 2019.

**By: Doug Belanger, 2nd: Robert Spain.
Voted: All in favor (9 in favor 1 opposed)**

STRATEGIES FOR SERVICE MODIFICATIONS

Mr. Lipka gave a brief summary showcasing the strategies for the upcoming service modifications. Mr. Lipka stated that the WRTA is seeking to enhance the fixed route system to define where ridership is going. Mr. Lipka is working with new businesses to implement possible new locations that have definable demand for fixed bus route services. The WRTA is also providing ideas for enhancing paratransit models for the region. Mr. Lipka informed the board that these strategies all tie in towards meeting state funding agreements. Mr. Lipka stated that proposed service modifications are not a reduction in overall service. The WRTA is working towards balancing the need for sustainable ridership with the necessary fiscal responsibility despite funding challenges.

RAN PRESENTATION

Mr. Lipka gave a brief presentation regarding the history and details of RAN (Revenue Anticipation Notes). RAN are a form of note, or short-term loan that a governmental agency usually repays from a named revenue source within a period of one year. In order to maintain the necessary cash flow due to current funding constraints such as; small restricted reserve, State Contract Assistance payments distribution scheduling, and assessment to member communities payment schedules. Board members discussed the interest paid and the saving that could be achieved if funding allocation could be changed at the State level. Board members discussed the reserve account's cap and the need to have the statute changed in the law to expand that amount.

UPDATE ON ELECTRIC BUSES

The WRTA is running the electric buses on a schedule of 2 in reserve and 4 out. The WRTA is working with Proterra on some minor charger operational issues.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:40a.m. By: Doug Belanger,
2nd: Mark Binnall

Vote: All in favor (9 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on June 20, 2019 at 8:30 a.m., located at the Hub, 60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608 3rd floor.