



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

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Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Meeting Minutes October 17, 2019

Chairperson Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE

Present: Mark Binnall - Auburn, Kristen Las – Shrewsbury, Candria Gray- Worcester Ridership, Barbara Connelly – Grafton, Brian Bullock-Holden, Brian Pigeon-Worcester Alt, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt, Jacob Sanders – Worcester, Doug Belanger-Leicester, and William Lehtola - Spencer. Ron San Angelo-Southbridge entered at 9:02 a.m.; Jacob Sanders left 9:17a.m.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes for August 15, 2019

By: Doug Belanger. 2nd: Kristen Las.

Vote: All In favor (8 in favor 0 opposed).

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. Thielker, Chairperson Ridership Advocate Committee requested performances reports be sent to their committee. Mr. Burnham from CMRPC explained the various reports submitted. Ms. Lyver was named the contact person for reports.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Chairperson Lehtola thanked Candria Gray for her one-year service in the position of Worcester’s Ridership Community Population. Candria Gray asked if another person had been chosen for the position. Candria Gray commented how the position was not filled in a timely manner prior to her being chosen. Mr. Lipka informed the board that both the disability and ridership positions would be announced to the towns/cities by the end of November. Mr. Lipka stated that the appointments come from the city/town’s administration to the board as mandated by law.

Mark Binnall commented on the proposed housing development in Oxford/Auburn area. Mr. Lipka confirmed they would proceed with outreach after the necessary permits were secured. Adam Menard commented on permitting and general timelines for the project.

Communities Served:

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

Mark Binnall asked about the bus accident that occurred on October 16, 2019. Mr. Lipka reported that the incident took place near 6:30 a.m. and no passengers were on the bus. The bus tipped over on the side of the road and the driver was taken to the hospital as a precaution. The driver is under suspension pending the cause of the accident. CMTM was at the scene and bus service for that route had a negligible delay. The bus will need to be repaired but data is still being compiled and the investigation is ongoing.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Chairperson Belanger updated the board on the committee's progress regarding the contract extension. The committee acknowledged Mr. Lipka's good works as Administrator and there were no concerns regarding extending the contract for six (6) months with allowance for additional extension by mutual agreement. The term for this extension would be January 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020. A salary increase sum to \$135,000 prorated accordingly beginning January 1, 2020.

Motion: I move that the WRTA Advisory Board vote to approve the unanimous vote of the Personnel Board the following items to be incorporated into an Extension Agreement for the WRTA Administrator Dennis Lipka:

- a) **Reference to current contract Section II, TERM: The Parties have agreed to an extension of up to six months (January 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020), and further agree to allow for an additional extension by mutual agreement**
- b) **Section IV Salary: The parties have agreed to increase the annual salary sum to \$135,000, prorated accordingly beginning January 1, 2020**
- c) **All other terms and conditions of the current are in effect for the duration of any/all extensions.**

By: Doug Belanger 2nd: Mark Binnall.

Voted: All in favor (8 in favor 0 opposed)

UPDATE FY2020 BUDGET

Mr. Lipka informed the board that an amended budget would be presented at the November board meeting as well as the annual audit.

UPDATE ON AUDIT REPORT (FY19) PREPARED FOR THE WRTA BY THE AUDITOR FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

Mr. Lipka informed the board that the annual audit was completed ahead of schedule despite the absence of staff from the financial team. The audit will be reviewed at the upcoming Audit and Finance Committee meeting scheduled for early November.

Mr. Lipka announced that Al Hargrave is retiring at the end of FY19. The WRTA anticipates having an RFP for the purpose of finding another company. Mr. Lipka briefed the board on the current staffing issues. Mr. Coyne has returned to work part-time to assist in the audit while Ms. Perera did excellent work in assisting throughout its completion. Mr. Lipka stated how the WRTA administrative team remains leaner than other RTA's and he is working to build a stronger foundation. Mr. Lipka announced the hiring of Mr. Coyne as Assistant Administrator of Finance. Mr. Coyne will rejoin the company full-time on October 28, 2019.

SUMMARY OF FY20 GRANTS

Mr. Lipka briefed the board on the four (4) grants through MassDOT.

1. Workforce Transportation Program – \$363,000 new service connecting Southbridge to Webster and Oxford.

Three (3) Discretionary Funding for RTA's

2. \$41,655 Retain consulting services for new account-based fare payment system.
3. \$26,700 Service planning software program.
4. \$873,170 Institute pilot on-demand micro transit service in Westborough public-private partnership with Via.

CMRPC in partnership with WRTA & Worcester Chamber \$41,480 Workforce Transportation Program – technical assistance grant for TMA exploration in our region.

OVERVIEW JANUARY'S PROPOSED SERVICE MODIFICATIONS (taken out of order)

Mr. Lipka stated that the proposed service modifications are to improve ridership, performance efficiencies, on-time performance, and are "cost neutral". If approved the modifications would start on January 25, 2020. The Advisory Board is asked to vote on releasing for public meeting these modifications. Meetings would be set up for late October and early November. Recommendations and public feedback will be presented to the board for consideration of a vote at the November board meeting. Mr. Lipka stated that the underling goal is to offer the best ride for the lowest cost.

Proposed changes to Routes, 2, 3/3A, 5, 15, 24/24A, 27,30.

Route 2 – Alter schedule to align with flight arrival/departure times for trips to Worcester Airport. Add morning time and service peak times Sunny Hill Drive.

Route 3/3A - Route 3 will carry trips done by 3A and North High at peak times will be serviced by Route 5.

Route 5 - Add service to DTA offices at the Southwest Commons.

Route 15 - Eliminate 5:25 a.m. short trip to UMass, add midday and PM peak trip times.

Route 24/24A – Shift Front Street portion to Foster Street with Main Street stops staying the same. Inbound bus stop on Commercial and Foster Streets reactivated.

Route 27 – Extra bus added to the schedule, change schedule to 40 minutes Midday and PM Peak trips.

Route 30 – Will become 40 minutes service with two buses and with Route 31 there will be 20 minute service along West Boylston Street.

Jacob Sanders commented on the need to promote the WRTA at the Worcester Airport. Jacob Sanders suggested a reach out regarding available signage on that property. Mark Binnall asked that the service changes and meetings be listed with the Audio Journal. Candria Gray commented on the need for bus stop updating. Mr. Parker commented on the completion of the annual bus stop audit. They are working with the contractor and hope to move forward in November.

Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board authorizes the Administration to hold public hearings in regard to service modifications as presented by the Administration.

By: Doug Belanger 2nd: Brian Bullock.

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

Mr. Lipka extended an invitation to the board members to see the latest Proterra all-electric bus. Proterra will be at the WRTA Operations and Maintenance Building on October 22, 2019 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Ron San Angelo inquired into upcoming purchases regarding Proterra buses. Mr. Lipka confirmed that presently the existing fleet needs to be utilized more effectively. There is no specific emphasis for the newer models with their newer charging systems.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:42 a.m.

By: Doug Belanger, 2nd: Adam Menard

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

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on November 21, 2019 at 8:30 a.m., located at the Hub, 60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608 3rd floor.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly