



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

Union Station Hub 60 Foster Street Worcester, MA 01608

508.453.3403 Fax: 508.752.1676 therta.com

Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Meeting Minutes January 23, 2020

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

Chairperson Lehtola introduced and welcomed Stacy Barr as Oxford’s representative and Hollie Lucht as alternative board member for Shrewsbury and Gary Rosen of Worcester.

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE

Present: Mark Binnall - Auburn, Brian Bullock – Holden, Kristen Las – Shrewsbury, Hollie Lucht – Shrewsbury Alt, Barbara Connelly – Grafton, Nancy Garr-Colzie - Worcester Disabled Commuter Population, Brian Pigeon- Worcester Alt, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt, Stacy Barr – Oxford, Jacob Sanders – Worcester Alt, Gary Rosen – Worcester and William Lehtola - Spencer.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the corrected minutes for December 19, 2019

Discussion: under Business from the Public- Brenda corrected is “Brenna”

By: Mark Binnall. 2nd: Nancy Garr-Colzie.

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

Jacob Sanders announced his new status as appointed Alternate Board Member (to take effect 1.24.2020) and introduced Gary Rosen as the City of Worcester Representative for the WRTA Advisory Board. Jacob thanked the board members and the WRTA Administration for their professionalism and support during his leadership term. Jacob Sanders informed the board that he will remain in the loop and attend meeting as the alternative when needed.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. Thielker, Chairperson Ridership Advocate Committee, inquired about the policies and laws pertaining to idling buses at the WRTA Hub. Mr. Thielker requests a reply in this regard. Mr. Lipka stated that exceptions existed regarding vehicles and he would address the issue at the next board meeting. Mr. Thielker commented on how short the timing was regarding schedule distribution when there is a change. Mr. Parker explained the approval process timeline for the Union and Mr. Lipka reviewed the public hearing process. Mr. Thielker asked if the schedules could be posted earlier on the website and that announcements could be made. Mr. Lipka informed the board that website functions were not a direct input and limitations to data would need to be reviewed. Mr. Lipka will report back to the board regarding any possibilities regarding viable change considerations. Mr. Lipka stated that announcements were being done.

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

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Mark Binnall asked for specific paratransit on-time performance data regarding vans and taxis. Mr. Binnall asked for a report concerning Rt. 25 boarding and alighting. Mr. Lipka stated that information requested would be sent to Mr. Binnall.

Ms. Barr commented on the present survey and the importance of reaching those persons not involved in riding through the Senior Centers. Mr. Lipka referred her to Ms. Koterski for further discussions.

Brian Pigeon requested more information on a regular basis pertaining to capital replacement planning and other financial topics. Mr. Lipka informed the board members that he would be issuing quarterly reports that included the budget, finances, and grants which will be reviewed by the Audit and Finance Committee.

UPDATE OF FY'20 BUDGET

Mr. Lipka asked the advisory board to approve the amended FY20 budget as presented and introduced Mr. Coyne who updated the board members concerning the FY20 budget. The following are highlights given regarding the presentation. This budget reflects the Community Transit and Discretionary grants awarded and shows small increases in fixed route labor costs, and demand response service costs. Some decreases from the original FY'20 budget are due to local assessment funding adjustments and the decrease in State Contract Assistance received. The amended FY'20 budget totaled \$27,287,918.

Mr. Lehtola asked for a vote on the amended budget.

Motion: The Worcester Regional Transit Authority's Advisory Board accepts the Amended FY'20 Budget as presented by the Administration in the Amount of \$27,287,918.

By: Jacob Sander 2nd: Mark Binnall.

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

Board members discussed the pros and cons of electric buses regarding the next capital bus purchases. Mr. Lipka stated that 5 to 6 buses will be purchased over the next 10 years. The WRTA is looking into newer electric bus technology and needs to address the current electric fleet. The WRTA has an intern who is looking into operations and repairs as well as a viable cost package with Proterra to meet possible MassDOT funding options for electric buses. Mr. Lipka stated that the present solar use and possible expansion is also being reviewed.

Mr. Lipka informed the board that three options were being researched to increase ridership; school transportation options, Polar Park transportation and frequency of service measures. Mr. Lipka stated that fixed route is not the only service provided by the WRTA and a viable system is built across the transportation options offered by the WRTA. Mr. Lipka stressed that working within the capability of the fleet inventory is a key factor.

Gary Rosen asked if the surplus buses were sold. Mr. Coyne informed the board members of the auction process and how efficient the WRTA is regarding parts and inventory. Mr. Lehtola asked about the title for the paratransit service. Mr. Lipka replied that (PBSTM) Paratransit Brokerage Service Transit Management is under the direction of CMTM. It used to be PBSI but changed when First Transit received the contract.

UPDATE ON FY20 GRANTS

Mr. Lipka informed the board that he is still hopeful they will receive the Workforce Development grant for Southbridge and Dudley. Mr. Lipka informed the board how they are ironing out the recently awarded Pilot Shuttle Program for Westborough. Mr. Lipka stated he is expecting to meet the March 2020 start time and will keep the board updated as this moves forward with MassDOT.

Mr. Lipka informed the board members that quarterly reports will be issued and reviewed by the Audit and Finance committee in an effort to keep the board up-to-date on grant activities and ridership initiatives under his direction. Mr. Lipka is working on grant developments with the City of Worcester. Administration is making adjustments to accommodate the need for compliance with increased grant activities.

MEDIA ON FREE FARE UPDATE

Mr. Lipka informed the board that several media outlets have approached him for comments pertaining to fare free systems. Mr. Lipka stated that more studies need to be done and the funding issue needs to be addressed. Mr. Lipka commented on the need for a viable & updated fare management system which would replace the present system. Updates to fare management would allow for great pricing flexibility, apps, cashless, and better data control. Brian Bullock requested a copy of the Worcester Research Bureau Fare Free Study. Mr. Lipka stated he would have the study sent to the board members. Brian Bullock requested that a report and discussion be held at a next board meeting. Mr. Lipka stated he would make it an agenda item for the February or March board meeting. Suggestions for invitations to be extended to Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and Worcester Research Bureau were discussed regarding the fare free agenda item.

Mr. Lipka stated that the WRTA is showing responsiveness regarding efforts to increase ridership. Increasing ridership is presently the marker for any allocation of increased funding (if voted by the legislator) however there is no dollar for dollar increase from the state should the system or parts of the system go free fare. There is also paratransit service to be considered within a fare free system. Gary Rosen asked if the increase in ridership numbers from free fares would mean a loss of State revenue or from their formula of distribution. Mr. Lipka stated that there is no talk of state funds given to make up for the loss of revenue if a bus system goes to free fares and that the data collection via the present system would still be needed to report to the state for funding purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:28 a.m.

By: Jacob Sanders, 2nd; Mark Binnall

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

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on February 20, 2020 at 8:30 a.m., located at the Hub, 60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608 3rd floor.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly