

## RECORD OF EVENTS

Pursuant to written notice sent to Board Members and pursuant to notice posted at least forty-eight hours prior to the meeting, copies of said notice having been sent to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William F. Galvin and the Secretary of the Executive Office of Administration and Finance, Michael Heffernan, the meeting of the Advisory Board of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority was held on June 3, 2021 virtually on the Zoom.us platform by computer and by phone.

### 1. INTRODUCTIONS:

Present were the following Advisory Board Members and/or Member Designees:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>
Joshua Garcia	Blandford	1.34
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.48
Jan Gibeau	Chesterfield	1.12
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.96
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.58
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.98
Megan Rhodes	Rider Community	1.00
	Total	53.46

Also present were:

Thomas Schiavone, MassDOT Rail & Transit Deputy Administrator, Representative Natalie Blais, Representative Paul Mark, Kevin Chambers, Aide to Senator John Velis, Elena Cohen, Aide to Senator Joanne Comerford, Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator, Molly Chambers; FTM General Manager, Wayne Waldron, FTM Assistant General Manager, and Elizabeth Quirk, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Vice-Chair.

Chairman Eric Twarog called the meeting to order at 10:00am and it was noted that a quorum **was not** present to hold a meeting.

### 2. DISCUSSION WITH MASSDOT ON WEEKEND FIXED ROUTE SERVICE:

Michael Perreault summarized that the reason for this meeting, which started a few months back during an Advisory Board meeting in which there was a discussion about weekend service and funding for weekend service. Subsequently, the Advisory Board passed a motion instructing the Advisory Board Chair to send a letter to the Secretary of Transportation requesting a meeting with MassDOT to discuss the need for weekend service.

Eric Twarog thanked MassDOT and members of our local delegation for attending today's discussion. Eric Twarog initiated the discussion asking what the different types of funding

sources the FRTA receives from MassDOT. Thomas Schiavone stated that there are two basic types of funding that RTAs receive: operating funding and capital funding. Operating funding starts with a total funding amount for all RTAs in the annual state budget adopted by the state legislature and the Governor. There is a formula agreed upon by all of the RTAs on the distribution of state operating funds to each individual RTA. MassDOT distributes funding based on the formula to each individual RTA through a contract agreement.

Over the last few of years MassDOT has also provided discretionary grant funding to the RTAs in addition to the state operating funds. This has been an additional \$3.5M competitive grant program where MassDOT funds specific projects put forward by the RTAs. This funding source has supported FRTA's microtransit pilot project.

Additionally, MassDOT works with the RTAs on an annual basis to submit development scenarios for capital projects for the upcoming 5-year period. These rolling 5-year project requests are funded through Capital Improvement Program for all RTAs.

Jeff Singleton asked to better understand the formula that all RTAs have agreed upon for distribution of operating funds. Tina M. Cote also noted that in addition to state funding from MassDOT, RTAs also receive federal operating funds. Urban transit agencies such as BRTA and MART receive federal 5307 funds, while rural transit agencies, such as FRTA, receives federal 5311 funds. Tina M. Cote added that while the RTAs needed to come to consensus for distribution formula for state operating funds, she has voiced her opinion in the past that she is not in complete agreement with the formula and how it impacts funding for FRTA. The formula is based on populations, ridership, and square mileage. Tom Schiavone agreed that there are many different funding factors that go into RTAs for operating transit service including federal operating funds, state operating funds, local assessments, and other revenue sources such as advertising. The federal government has their own formula funding for distributing federal funds to RTAs. MassDOT does not determine how much funding each RTA receives, rather it is the vehicle to getting funding to each RTA. MassDOT is not opposed to RTAs operating weekend service but is the decision at the local level what and how much service is operated at each RTA.

Jeff Singleton stated that funding is a very complex issue and his intention for today's meeting is to learn more in order to move forward through the next year to figure out how FRTA can create a plan for operating weekend fixed route service. Tina M. Cote added that part of the funding puzzle includes local assessment contributions from Towns and there will need to be a complementary increase in local assessments along with any additional funding we receive for additional services. One of the benefits to using state discretionary funds to pilot microtransit service on the weekends helps to establish other needed positions to support weekend service, such as supervisors, dispatchers, and maintenance personnel.

Elizabeth Quirk stated that at the federal level there are discussions on funding for climate change mitigation and asked about the time frame and amount that might trickle down to FRTA. Thomas Schiavone stated that he can only speak for state funding, but if there are federal funds available MassDOT encourages, and will partner with, RTAs to apply for grant funds and assist to provide any match required.

Eric Twarog asked who has the authority to change the state funding formula for RTAs. Thomas Schiavone explained that only the RTAs, as a group, are able to change the state funding formula. MassDOT does not have the authority to change the formula and encourages the RTAs to work collaboratively on the agreed up on formula. Tina M. Cote would need to work with the RTAs to change the formula. Jeff Singleton asked how often the RTAs review and/or update the formula for dividing up state funds. Tina M. Cote stated that generally the formula gets discussed during the budget season. Discussion continued that FRTA's percentage of the total formula is very small so any total increases, or decreases, in state operating funds impact FRTA only slightly. Jeff Singleton stated that it would be beneficial to see the formula to get a better understanding on how funds are distributed.

The meeting concluded at 10:45am.