

Approved 5/16/19

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 March 21, 2019 at the John W. Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301.

**1. INTRODUCTIONS:**

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

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.11
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	25.77
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.91
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.67
Ruth Preston	Southwick	2.54
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	1.29
Richard Tillberg	Whately	2.36
Cynthia Dodge	Disabled Commuter	1.00
Jasper Lapienski	Rider Community	<u>1.00</u>
	Total	56.97

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator, Molly Morin; FTM General Manager, Jenna Howitt, FTM Assistant General Manager, Donna MacNicol, FRTA Counsel, and George Touloumtzis, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Chairman.

Chairman Lance Fritz called the meeting to order at 4:00pm and it was noted that a quorum **was** present to hold a meeting.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

**3. OLD BUSINESS:**

There was no old business.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**4. REVIEW AND VOTE TO ACCEPT MINUTES FROM MAY 17, 2018 AND SEPTEMBER 20, 2018 MEETINGS & REVIEW RECORD OF EVENTS FROM NOVEMBER 15, 2018 MEETING:**

Jonathan von Ranson made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from May 17, 2018. Eric Twarog seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.11	Abstain
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	25.77	Yes
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.91	Yes
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.67	Yes
Ruth Preston	Southwick	2.54	Not Present
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	1.29	Yes
Richard Tillberg	Whately	2.36	Yes
Cynthia Dodge	Disabled Commuter	1.00	Abstain
Jasper Lapienski	Rider Community	1.00	Abstain
		<u>1.00</u>	
		Total 56.97	

Yes – 51.32

No – 0.00

Abstain – 3.11

Not Present – 2.54

The vote passed and the **motion** carried.

Jonathan von Ranson made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from September 20, 2018. Tracy Rogers seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.11	Abstain
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	25.77	Yes
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.91	Yes
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.67	Abstain
Ruth Preston	Southwick	2.54	Not Present
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	1.29	Yes
Richard Tillberg	Whately	2.36	Abstain
Cynthia Dodge	Disabled Commuter	1.00	Abstain
Jasper Lapienski	Rider Community	1.00	Abstain
		<u>1.00</u>	
		Total 56.97	

Yes – 47.29  
No – 0.00  
Abstain – 7.14  
Not Present – 2.54

The vote passed and the **motion** carried.

There was no discussion on the record of events from November 15, 2018.

## **5. REVIEW UPDATE OF PERSONNEL POLICY:**

Tracy Rogers made a **motion** to accept the updated Personnel Policy. Eric Twarog seconded, and discussion followed. Tina M. Cote explained that there have been some minor changes with laws regarding CORI policy and parental leave that have been reflected in the updated policy. Jasper Lapienski asked how many employees the FRTA has. Tina M. Cote responded that there are currently eleven employees. Randy Crochier stated that under the Family and Medical Leaves section, the policy is referring to the “Town” where it should be changed to “FRTA”. Tina M. Cote stated that she found those typographical errors referring to the “Town” after sending out this information to the Advisory Board and she has since corrected those to “FRTA”.

Jeff Singleton made a **motion** to amend the Section II; Standards of Conduct; to include language that FRTA employees will treat the general public with respect. Jasper Lapienski seconded, and discussion followed. Cynthia Dodge stated that employees need to be aware of, and sensitive to, people with Tourette’s syndrome or other disabilities. Tina M. Cote explained that all employees attend a diversity training. Tracy Rogers stated that she would like to see language protecting FRTA employees added as well. Lance Fritz suggested handling that as a separate motion. The vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

Tracy Rogers made a **motion** to amend the policy and add language to protect FRTA employees against abusive behavior. Eric Twarog seconded, and discussion continued. Jeff Singleton stated that he is in favor of additional language but would like to review the policy again after the changes are made. The vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

Jeff Singleton suggested that there should be consistency between FRTA and FTM policies. Molly Morin stated that even though this discussion is not regarding FTM’s policy, theirs does have similar language with regard to customer service standards.

Tina M. Cote stated that she would amend the Personnel Policy based upon the motions from the Advisory Board, have Donna MacNicol review, and then can share final document with the Advisory Board. The vote to accept the updated Personnel Policy was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

## **6. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON SEATBELT POLICY:**

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to approve the proposed language for FRTA’s seatbelt policy. Jeff Singleton seconded, and discussion continued. Tina M. Cote explained that FRTA

does not currently have a policy regarding passengers wearing seatbelts or have language within applications for service or brochures. FRTA experienced a recent incident with a demand response passenger that was not wearing a seatbelt with a driver that made a hard-braking maneuver and the passenger was injured. Tina M. Cote presented policy language and language to insert into brochures and other materials. Lance Fritz asked why FRTA wouldn't instruct the drivers not to move the vehicle unless all passengers were wearing seatbelts. Michael Perreault stated that transit authorities are exempt from state laws requiring passengers to wear seatbelts. With this policy, any passenger refusing to wear a seatbelt would be documented as such. Tina M. Cote also added that exceptions would also be made for passengers with a documented medical condition that would prohibit them from wearing a seatbelt. Richard Tillberg asked if there would be signage on the bus drivers could refer passengers to. Tina M. Cote confirmed that FRTA plans to install signage on the buses in addition to updated brochures and other materials. Jeff Singleton asked why this is being put forward by FRTA and not FTM. Tina M. Cote explained that the vehicles are owned and insured by FRTA, so it is FRTA that has liability. Michael Perreault added that this is a systemwide policy that would be adopted by all FRTA's vendors, including FTM. Cynthia Dodge suggested FRTA could make ID cards for individuals that have a documented medical exception. Jasper Lapienski suggested to change the word "consumer" to the word "passenger". The vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

## **7. MAINTENANCE FACILITY PROJECT UPDATE:**

Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA has successfully renegotiated and amending the contract agreement with the Architect/Engineer (STV) and is now awaiting approval from MassDOT on the terms of the contract and to proceed with our maintenance facility project. Prior to purchase of the property, FRTA also needs to complete a Categorical Exclusion document to be approved by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). If FRTA does get approval from MassDOT by April 15<sup>th</sup> we still expect to purchase the property by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Jasper Lapienski asked where in Turners the new facility will be built. Tina M. Cote stated that the location is on Sandy Lane. There was some discussion as to the need for the contract change with the STV. Tina M. Cote explained that, originally, FRTA requested \$20 million for construction but was only awarded \$6 million from FTA. Due to the reduction in construction funds, FRTA needed to renegotiate its contract with the STV to design a facility that would fit within the amount of the actual award. Michael Perreault added that FRTA has also been working with the consultant to come up with a construction estimate for a bare-bones, no-frills, facility and work with MassDOT to come up with additional construction funding for the project. Currently, the project estimate for construction is approximately \$8.4 million and does not include covered storage for the buses. MassDOT will not authorize FRTA to move forward with the amended contract with the STV or move forward with the project until they can secure additional funding needed for construction. FRTA should have more information on this by the May Advisory Board meeting.

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** for Chairman Lance Fritz, on behalf of the Advisory Board, to send a letter to Congressmen McGovern and Neal for additional federal funding for the maintenance facility project. Ruth Preston seconded, and discussion continued. Any additional funding could go to adding back onto the project any items that have been cut from the original

proposal, such as providing covered storage for fleet vehicles. The vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried. Michael Perreault will work with Lance Fritz to draft a letter.

## **8. RTA TASK FORCE AND DISCRETIONARY GRANT AWARD UPDATE:**

Tina M. Cote stated that the RTA Task Force will be hosting a public hearing in Amherst tomorrow evening from 4-6:00pm to review and seek public comment on their report. They will be taking public comments until 5:00pm on March 29<sup>th</sup>. FRTA still continues to advocate for weekend service and later evening service.

Tina M. Cote updated that FRTA was awarded a discretionary grant to fund a pilot micro-transit service. This will be for the general public to access demand response transportation services for booking next day or same day transportation requests either online, through a smart phone application, or over the phone. The pilot area will include Greenfield, Montague, Gill, Orange, Wendell, Warwick, and New Salem. The costs for the service will be more than current demand response fares but haven't been finalized yet. Exact project details have not yet been finalized. FRTA is waiting for MassDOT to send formal MOU to include project funding details. Jonathan von Ranson asked what the proposed fares for this pilot project would be. Tina M. Cote suggested that fares would start around \$5 for a one-way trip. This project would also look to expand the current demand response hours of operation from 7am to 7pm. The intention of this pilot project will be successful and sustainable and allow FRTA to expand into other towns operated currently by COAs.

Cynthia Dodge asked if there are any near-future plans for weekend service, even if only one day. Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA has been in discussions with Representative Mark to fund a pilot for weekend service. Jeff Singleton stated that he reviewed the RTA Task Force report and he plans to attend the public hearing in Amherst and provide public comment on the report. Robert J. Decker III asked if either Tina M. Cote or Lance Fritz would be submitting written comments by the March 29<sup>th</sup> deadline. Tina M. Cote stated that she would be attending the public hearing tomorrow and that she also intends to submit written comments.

## **9. UPDATE FROM TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

George Touloumtzis provided the following updates from the Transit Advisory Committee:

- There have been two new members to join the committee recently.
- The FRCOG is updating its Regional Transportation Plan. The plan is scheduled to be released in June for public comments and feedback. This year there is a big emphasis on public transit in the plan.
- MassRIDES is coming to an end in June. Michael Perreault is trying to reach out to the current MassRIDES contact to find out what, if anything, will take its place.
- FRTA will be putting on its 3<sup>rd</sup> Human Service Orientation on April 10<sup>th</sup>.
- MassDOT will be hosting its annual Transportation Innovation Conference on April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> in Worcester.

## 10. OTHER FRTA UPDATES:

Tina M. Cote gave some brief updates on the following FRTA projects:

- New Freedoms grant has been extended through December 31, 2019. This grant includes funding for bus passes as well as the van program operated by the Franklin County Sheriff's Kimball House.
- Construction to extend the current rail platform is underway and is anticipated to be completed in early summer.
- Town of Greenfield Olive Street road improvements are scheduled to start this spring.
- Initial ridership figures on the Route 23 since the start of the two additional runs show an increase in ridership by about 8 passengers per day. We will continue to monitor.
- Clinical Support Options has decided to close the café after June 30<sup>th</sup>. FRTA is in conversations with GAAMHA, another human services organization, with taking over operating the café. More to come on this.
- Fixed Route farebox collections continue to increase as well as increases in purchase orders for bus passes from human services and social services agencies.
- We recently hired another full-time call center staff.

Jasper Lapienski suggested the meeting minutes be modified to indicate the Town represented in parenthesis after everyone's name. Jasper Lapienski asked to include dropping riders off at the garage as an agenda item at the next meeting.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to adjourn. Eric Twarog seconded, and the meeting concluded at 5:05pm.