

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 May 16, 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>
Peter Otten	Buckland	2.07
Donald Walker Jr	Conway	1.01
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32
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
Jasper Lapienski	Rider Community	<u>1.00</u>
	Total	57.94

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator, Ed Sanborn, FRTA Bookkeeper, Molly Morin; FTM General Manager, Jenna Howitt, FTM Assistant General Manager, 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. Lance Fritz asked if anyone objected to moving agenda items 6, 7, and 8 ahead of agenda item 3. Without objection agenda items 6, 7, and 8 were moved up on the agenda.

## 2. REVIEW AND VOTE TO ACCEPT MINUTES FROM MARCH 21, 2019 MEETING:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from March 21, 2019. Robert J. Decker III seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	2.07	Abstain
Donald Walker Jr	Conway	1.01	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32	Yes
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	Yes
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	1.29	Yes
Richard Tillberg	Whately	2.36	Not Present
Jasper Lapienski	Rider Community	<u>1.00</u>	Yes
	Total	57.94	

Yes – 53.51

No – 0.00

Abstain – 2.07

Not Present – 2.36

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

## 3. UPDATE FROM FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Peter Otten stated that the Finance and Audit Committee reviewed the draft FY20 budget and that some of the revenue line items were ‘best guesses’ as final funding figures won’t be known until that state budget is finalized. Other highlights from the FY20 draft budget include 3% average salary increases for FRTA staff and the recommendation to increase the Administrator’s salary to \$103,500; which represents a little less than a 3% increase. Some highlights from the current FY19 budget include line items 411199 – RTA Capital, part of 503031 – Legal, and part of 509065 – Equipment Expense; which are all related to one-time capital projects that were of dollar values not large enough to depreciate so instead they are being expensed within this year’s budget.

## 4. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY20 BUDGET:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to approve the FY20 budget as presented. Robert J. Decker III seconded and discussion followed. Jasper Lapienski asked about the reason behind increasing the Administrator’s salary for FY20 but did not increase the Administrator’s salary in FY19. Peter Otten stated that it was discussed that cost of living continues to go up and that it is the fair thing to do to retain the current Administrator and there was enough wiggle room in the budget to allow for it. Ruth Preston asked about the maintenance facility project and if those revenues

and expenses were included in the FY20 budget. Tina M. Cote explained that capital projects are generally not included within this budget and are tracked separately. The discussion concluded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

Peter Otten made a **motion** to set the Administrator's salary for FY20 at \$103,500. Robert J. Decker III seconded and discussion followed. Richard Tillberg asked where on the spectrum does the Administrator's salary sit. Peter Otten stated that the Administrator's salary currently sits on the lower end when compared to other of the MA RTAs Administrators salaries. Discussion continued that all MA RTA Administrators all have similar responsibilities regardless of the size of operations. Jasper Lapienski stated that while the FRTA Administrator's salary may be on the low end of the spectrum, it is on the higher end of salaries for Franklin County. Jeff Singleton stated that the FRTA Administrator's salary is in line with other similar executive positions in Franklin County, such as a regional school superintendent. The discussion concluded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

## **5. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY20 RESOLUTION:**

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to approve the FY20 Resolution. Jeff Singleton seconded and discussion followed. Jonathan von Ranson asked if there were any changes to the Resolution from the current year. Lance Fritz indicated that there were no changes. Jasper Lapienski made a **motion** to amend the language in the Resolution replacing the words "Chairman" and "Vice-Chairman" to "Chair" or "Vice-Chair" to make the terms gender neutral. Robert J. Decker III asked if there any statutory requirements against changing those titles. Discussion concluded that there were no known statutory requirements with regard to those titles. Jonathan von Ranson seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** to amend carried. Discussion ended, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried. Michael Perreault will correct the FY20 Resolution for the Clerk to sign.

## **6. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

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

Tina M. Cote stated that the contract with our architect/engineer, STV Inc., was successfully renegotiated. We will be meeting with legal counsel next week to discuss proceeding with the purchase and sale of the property. Design of the facility continues to advance. MassDOT has agreed to fund an additional \$2.5 million towards the construction of the facility. Michael Perreault added that it is still planned to purchase the property by the end of June.

Separate from the construction of the new maintenance facility, Tina M. Cote explained that the lease agreement for the current facility had expired at the end of February. FRTA is working to re-negotiate a new lease agreement to continue to use the existing GMTA facility until our project is completed. Currently the lease figures for the new contract came back approximately

\$650 more per month and only extend until November, due to the Town's library project which will end up relocating the Fire Department. We continue to negotiate the lease terms but unfortunately there is no good alternative facility location, so FRTA remains hopeful to settle on a fair lease price that it can afford and a contract term that will see us through to the end of our construction project sometime in mid- 2021. Having to relocate prior to the conclusion of our construction project would more than likely have a large impact on our operations and staffing at FTM, which could impact service.

Robert J. Decker III stated that if the Town vote for the library doesn't pass FRTA doesn't have to worry about the library project impacting the lease. Robert J. Decker III also suggested that FRTA could contact the National Guard to have them erect Quonset hut-type structure for us. Jeff Singleton stated that he is still confused by the governance structure of the GMTA. Jasper Lapienski suggested that erecting a modular structure on the new property while under construction. Tina M. Cote stated that biggest hurdle with any temporary solution would be continuing fleet maintenance.

## **8. DISCRETIONARY GRANT AWARD UPDATE:**

Tina M. Cote stated that with the discretionary grant award FRTA will be introducing a microtransit pilot project using our existing Ecolane demand response scheduling software. FRTA has been in discussions with Ecolane on developing a phone application for the general public. This pilot project is intended to fill empty seats on demand response vehicles. FRTA is trying to allow the phone application to schedule next-day and same-day trips with the software using two current zones that FTM operates; one zone for Greenfield, Montague, Gill, Deerfield, and Whately, and one zone for Orange, Wendell, Warwick, and New Salem. We are trying to establish pricing for those trips at \$4 for next-day trips and \$5 for same-day trips. We are still trying for a July 1<sup>st</sup> launch date for this new program. This grant is a reimbursable contract with funds available through June 2020. The hope is that this pilot project will be sustainable by the end of the grant period.

Jasper Lapienski stated that this pilot project sounds like the model used with rideshare companies such as Uber and Lyft which requires a smart phone. Tina M. Cote stated that while the main basis of this pilot project is for people to access the scheduling through a smart phone application, those without a smart phone may call into the office to schedule transportation. Jasper Lapienski asked if there was a risk this pilot project would reduce ridership on the fixed routes. Tina M. Cote stated that while it is a possibility but we're hoping that the software can integrate with our fixed route information to be able to inform riders when fixed route transportation is available for the trip they're looking to schedule. Robert J. Decker III asked if there is an anticipated cash flow issues with this pilot project. Tina M. Cote stated that we don't anticipate any cash flow issues with this project. George Touloumtzis stated that this will be a great opportunity for people to access transportation that don't currently qualify for demand response. Donald Walker Jr asked how this differs from a taxi service. Tina M. Cote explained that this program is very similar to a taxi service, however this will hopefully be more of a rideshare with other people on the buses versus a typical one-on-one with a taxicab. Jonathan von Ranson asked for clarification on the sustainability of the project at the end of the grant period. Tina M. Cote stated the intention would be to find additional funding service in addition

to the higher fares to cover the added operating costs. Jasper Lapienski asked if there is another way to add other zones and if there is a way to log demand through the phone application. Tina M. Cote stated she would bring this question to Ecolane. Robert J. Decker III asked if the trip pricing was round trip. Tina M. Cote explained that next-day trips would be \$4 each way and same-day trips would be \$5 each way. Jonanthan von Ranson asked what the current demand response trip prices are. Tina M. Cote explained that current demand response fares are \$1.50 to \$3.50 each way. Jasper Lapienski asked how much time drivers idle during the day. Molly Morin stated that it varies but the hope is this program will help not only fill empty seats, but fill in those time gaps in drivers schedules.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **9. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FOR FY20:**

Lance Fritz stated that currently himself, Peter Otten, and Robert J. Decker III are on the Finance and Audit Committee. Tracy Rogers made a **motion** to nominate Robert J. Decker III, Peter Otten, and Lance Fritz to the Finance and Audit Committee for FY20. Jasper Lapienski seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

### **10. REVIEW AND VOTE TO ACCEPT DRAFT TITLE VI PLAN:**

Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA's Title VI Plan must be updated every three years. FRTA needs the Advisory Board to approve the draft of this plan prior to submission into FTA by June 1<sup>st</sup> for approval. Peter Otten made a **motion** to accept the draft Title VI Plan as presented. Robert J. Decker III seconded and discussion followed. Tracy Rogers asked if there were any significant changes to the plan from the last one. Tina M. Cote stated that some of the demographic and population information is updated, but there were no other significant changes. Ruth Preston stated that there is a section in the document for complaints and asked if FRTA receives a lot of complaints. Tina M. Cote explained that this is specific to Title VI complaints and that FRTA has not received any since the beginning of her employment. Discussion concluded that there is a specific process for submitting, investigating, and responding to Title VI complaints. The vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

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

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

- The final RTA Task Force Report was recently released. One of the main highlights from the report was that it calls for innovative transit options, which falls in line with FRTA's new pilot project.
- The FRCOG is expecting its draft Regional Transportation Plan to be released in June for public comments. Input on the plan this year has included a big emphasis on public transit within the plan.

### **12. OTHER UPDATES:**

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

- Café lease is ending June 30<sup>th</sup> and the current lessor, CSO, is no longer interested in operating. We will be looking to put out another request for proposals to operate the café space. Lance Fritz suggested reaching out to the Franklin County Technical School's Culinary Arts Department. Jasper Lapienski suggested opening the café bid to allow a successful bidder to install elements to make the space a full working kitchen.
- Town of Greenfield Olive Street road improvements bids came back higher than project estimates. The project may have to reduce the scope and put back out to bid. It is still anticipated that the project will be completed by the fall.
- Dump the Pump day will be June 20<sup>th</sup>. FRTA will again offer free fixed route transportation on this day. In addition, there has been some initial discussions with Representative Natalie Blais about doing a 'Ride with your Rep' event, similar to the 'Ride with the Mayor' in 2016. She is very receptive to the idea and we will continue to advance this discussion.
- FRTA has put in a request for \$50,000 to MassDOT to be used for technical assistance to hire a consultant to review our demand response programs. We are looking at ways to streamline and ensure consistencies between programs/providers and looking for ways to create more efficiencies systemwide. The intention is to have a review completed in FY20 for us to start rolling out any changes, efficiencies, etc. by the start of FY21.
- There is a chance that the state FY20 budget may finalize a higher figure for State Contract Assistance than what is planned for in the FRTA FY20 budget. If there are additional funds, we will look for expanding evening service on all of our routes. Once we know the final state budget funding figures, we can put together a more formal draft plan to review and discuss.

**13. DISCUSSION OF ANY SUBJECT NOT ANTICIPATED PRIOR TO THE NOTICE BEING SENT TO THE ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS PURSUANT TO ARTICLE II, SECTION 4 OF THE BY-LAWS OR ANTICIPATED 48 HOURS PRIOR TO THE MEETING PURSUANT TO THE OPEN MEETING LAW OR A SUBJECT WHICH CANNOT BE DELAYED UNTIL THE NEXT ADVISORY BOARD MEETING, INCLUDING THE NEED FOR AN EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Tina M. Cote explained that she recently was speaking with the Administrator for PVTA and was told that they are running a pilot project to encourage seniors to try fixed route transportation instead of demand response transportation. The PVTA is running a two-year pilot offering free fares to seniors on Tuesdays only on fixed routes. Tina M. Cote asked if the Advisory Board would consider something similar for FRTA. Jasper Lapienski asked about the amount of project lost revenue. Tina M. Cote stated that we don't have any projected figures for lost revenue but that currently seniors pay \$0.75 for fixed route. George Touloumtzis asked when the PVTA was starting their pilot project. Tina M. Cote believes they're starting their pilot project on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Robert J. Decker III suggested that FRTA try a similar pilot project through September and then report back to the Advisory Board. Michael Perreault stated that the fareboxes could be programed to specifically track this pilot project. Peter Otten made a **motion** for FRTA to pilot Tuesday free fixed route transportation for seniors from July 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup> and provide an initial report to the Advisory Board by the November meeting. Robert J. Decker III seconded and discussion followed. Jeff Singleton stated that more research and discussion should take place on FRTA's mission and goals with a need for a market analysis

to be done. Jonathan von Ranson stated that moving seniors from demand response onto the fixed route would also allow for more open seat availability for FRTA’s microtransit pilot project. Jasper Lapienski suggested that instead of targeting seniors FRTA should offer people disembarking from Amtrak in Greenfield a free ride on the next fixed route bus. Ruth Preston asked if this proposal could also be applied to seniors in Southwick. Tina M. Cote explained that it could not, because there is not fixed route service in Southwick. Discussion concluded and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	2.07	Yes
Donald Walker Jr	Conway	1.01	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32	Yes
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	Yes
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	1.29	Yes
Richard Tillberg	Whately	2.36	Yes
Jasper Lapienski	Rider Community	1.00	No
		<u>Total</u>	
		57.94	

Yes – 56.94  
 No – 1.00

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

Jeff Singleton asked if weekend service is still being looked at in the state legislature. Tina M. Cote stated not at this time. With the overall ask for increase in RTA State Contract Assistance it did not seem prudent to ask for weekend service in addition. FRTA will continue to work to change the distribution formula for the RTAs in hopes that FRTA would thereby get a larger percentage of the State Contract Assistance and would then be in a good position to launch weekend service.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on September 19<sup>th</sup>.

Lance Fritz made a **motion** to adjourn. Peter Otten seconded, and the meeting concluded at 5:15pm.