

Approved 9/21/23

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, Matthew Gorzkowicz, the meeting of the Advisory Board of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority was held on May 18, 2023 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>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.45
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	2.28
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.28
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	30.93
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.08
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.89
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.04
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.07
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.64
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.32
	Total	60.98

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Deputy Administrator, Wayne Waldron, FTM General Manager, Steven Pardoe, FTM Assistant General Manager, Catherine Connolly, FTM Safety and Training Manager, Elizabeth Quirk, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Chair, and George Touloumtzis, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee.

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

2. REVIEW AND VOTE TO ACCEPT MINUTES FROM MARCH 16, 2023 MEETING:

Paul McLatchy made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from March 16, 2023. Jeff Singleton seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.45	Yes
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	2.28	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.28	Yes

Eric Twarog	Greenfield	30.93	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.08	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.89	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.04	Abstain
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.07	Not Present
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.64	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	<u>2.32</u>	Yes
	Total	60.98	

Yes – 56.87
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 1.04
 Not Present – 3.07

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

OLD BUSINESS:

3. MAINTENANCE FACILITY PROJECT UPDATE:

Tina M. Cote provided a brief update on construction activities related to the new maintenance facility project. Paving is scheduled for the week of May 22nd, moving is expected to commence as of June 2nd, and we are anticipating to be fully operational in the new facility by mid-June. Tina M. Cote added that the grand opening of the new facility is scheduled for June 7th at 11am and all Advisory Board members should have received an invitation to attend via email.

4. DISCUSSION/UPDATE ON ACCESS PROGRAM AND WORKFORCE TRANSIT PROGRAM:

Tina M. Cote updated that FRTA continues to look for additional funding to continue expanding the Access program.

Tina M. Cote updated that the 2nd and 3rd shift workforce transportation program continues to operate, but ridership has fallen off over the last few months. FRTA also continues to look for additional partners for this project.

5. DISCUSSION/UPDATE ON COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL TRANSIT PLAN AND WEEKEND FIXED ROUTE SERVICE:

Michael Perreault updated that FRTA is looking forward to the FY 24 State budget to see what and how much funding from the MA Fair Share Amendment will be available to the RTAs. Those funds will have the potential to help FRTA launch weekend fixed route service, as we have been discussing over the previous meetings. Michael Perreault also updated that FRTA continues to work with the FRCOG on marketing. Over the last several months FRTA has been able to create a television commercial, re-stripe our fixed route buses, create a YouTube channel, and geo-fence UMass parking lots to send push notifications about available transit services.

Jeff Singleton asked if FRTM was continuing to have trouble hiring drivers and is concerned about the existing union contract impeding weekend fixed route service. Tina M. Cote stated that the first step is to get additional funding, then to create new bids, and finally fill the bids. Discussion concluded that the union contract ends in FY 24 so that will be a good time to review service hours, holiday operations, and incorporate new language for weekend operations.

6. REVIEW/DISCUSSION ON ADVISORY BOARD BY-LAWS:

Michael Perreault explained that this agenda item carried forward from the previous meeting. FRTA Legal Counsel couldn't attend today's meeting to help explain Advisory Board roles as defined in M.G.L. Ch. 161B. Eric Twarog suggested that this agenda item be tabled until the next meeting to finish the discussion. Tina M. Cote will reach out to be sure FRTA Legal Counsel will be available at the next meeting.

7. UPDATE ON FARE WORKING GROUP:

Michael Perreault updated that FRTA has established a small working group to discuss FRTA fare policy and do a deeper dive into FRTA fares. There's been some preliminary review of costs of collecting fares of fixed routes and review of the complex Demand Response fare structure. Next steps will be putting together surveys for Demand Response fares. It is anticipated that this group will have some information and recommendations for the Advisory Board to consider later this fall.

8. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON FREE FIXED ROUTE FARES OR REINSTATING FARE COLLECTIONS:

Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA has been fare free since the onset of COVID and continues to have access to federal pandemic funds through the next several fiscal years. Tina M. Cote asked the Advisory Board for serious consideration of extending free fixed route fares beyond the current fiscal year. Discussion continued that other MA RTAs such as WRTA and MVRTA are continuing to offer free fares on their fixed route services. MA legislative delegation is very interested in this topic. Positive outcomes from free fares include reducing complaints/incidents between drivers and passengers and increasing ridership back towards pre-pandemic levels. Jeff Singleton made a **motion** to extend free fixed route fares through June 30, 2024. Paul McLatchy seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.45	Yes
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	2.28	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.28	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	30.93	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.08	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.89	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.04	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.07	Not Present
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.64	Yes

Carol Smith	Southwick	<u>2.32</u>	Yes
		Total 60.98	

Yes – 57.91
 No – 0.00
 Not Present – 3.07

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

NEW BUSINESS:

9. UPDATE FROM FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Eric Twarog provided an update to the Advisory Board that the Finance and Audit Committee met two weeks ago to discuss the FY 24 budget. There were no issues or concerns, and all questions were answered satisfactorily. Robert J. Decker III added that the Finance and Audit Committee also recommended an increase to the Administrator’s salary of 3%, with other staff increases at the Administrator’s discretion.

10. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY 24 BUDGET:

Tina M. Cote provided a brief highlight of the proposed FY 24 budget including level funding State Contract Assistance, providing realistic assumptions for operating out of the new maintenance facility, and an additional grant-funded administrative staff. Tina M. Cote also suggested that the budget may need to be amended once the State’s FY 24 budget has been finalized. Jeff Singleton asked if FRTA could provide notes with the draft budget in the future for Advisory Board members when reviewing, particularly with differences between the current year’s approved budget, the current year’s actual revenues and expenses, and next year’s proposed budget.

Ed Gibson made a **motion** to approve the FY 24 budget as presented. Jeff Singleton seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.45	Yes
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	2.28	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.28	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	30.93	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.08	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.89	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.04	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.07	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.64	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	<u>2.32</u>	Yes
		Total 60.98	

Yes – 60.98
No – 0.00

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

11. REVIEW AND APPROVE ADMINISTRATOR’S SALARY:

Eric Twarog stated that the Finance and Audit Committee recommended a 3% increase to the Administrator’s salary. Andrew Baker asked what the Administrator’s current salary is. Tina M. Cote stated that her current salary is \$113,000 and a 3% increase would be roughly \$3,300.

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to approve an increase of 3% to the Administrator’s salary. Jeff Singleton seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.45	Yes
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	2.28	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.28	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	30.93	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.08	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.89	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.04	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.07	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.64	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.32	Yes
	Total	60.98	

Yes – 60.98
No – 0.00

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

12. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY 24 RESOLUTION:

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to approve the FY 24 Resolution. Jeff Singleton seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.45	Yes
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	2.28	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.28	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	30.93	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.08	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.89	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.04	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.07	Yes

Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.64	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	<u>2.32</u>	Yes
	Total	60.98	

Yes – 60.98
 No – 0.00

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

13. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FY 24-26:

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to elect Peter Otten as Vice-Chair for FY 24-26. Jeff Singleton seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.45	Yes
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	2.28	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.28	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	30.93	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.08	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.89	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.04	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.07	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.64	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	<u>2.32</u>	Yes
	Total	60.98	

Yes – 60.98
 No – 0.00

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

14. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FOR FY 24:

Tina M. Cote stated that the current Finance and Audit Committee members are Eric Twarog, Robert J. Decker III, and Peter Otten. Eric Twarog and Robert J. Decker III stated that they were happy to continue serving on the committee. Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to elect Eric Twarog, Robert J. Decker III, and Peter Otten to the Finance and Audit Committee for FY 24. Jeff Singleton seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.45	Yes
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	2.28	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.28	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	30.93	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.08	Yes

Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.89	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.04	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.07	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.64	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	<u>2.32</u>	Yes
	Total	60.98	

Yes – 60.98

No – 0.00

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

15. TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Elizabeth Quirk gave the following updates:

- A recent move of MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center from 1 Arch Place to the Corporate Center has revealed some transportation issues for some as there is limited bus service to that location, it is far removed from the downtown area, and has no sidewalk connectivity.

16. FRTA UPDATES:

Tina M. Cote gave the following updates:

- FRTA continues to re-stripe/re-brand buses with new blue and green striping with three more buses to go.
- Simme-seats are available to be installed at bus stops without shelters. Any Town that is interested in having those available please contact FRTA.
- The upcoming Bee Fest in Greenfield will include a commissioned sculpture at the transit center with a transit-themed bee. The unveiling at the transit center will be Saturday 5/20.
- Overall transit ridership continues to grow as we are coming out of ridership. Hopefully this trend continues through the next fiscal year.

George Touloumtzis added that the Simme-seats are a simple and important symbol for public transit in our region and it gives a sense of permanence for riders.

Robert J. Decker III asked if FRTA will resume in-person meetings, particularly the annual May meeting. Years ago, the FRTA used to hold their May meetings at a local restaurant to hold the meeting with dinner. Tina M. Cote stated that she will look into options.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on September 21, 2023.

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to adjourn. Andrew Baker seconded, and the meeting concluded at 5:00pm.