

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 20, 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>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.48
Ellie VanInderstine	Charlemont	2.32
Bob Daley	Chester	1.03
Don Walker	Conway	1.01
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.96
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.18
Dawn Scaparotti	Goshen	1.12
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.58
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.98
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.28
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.01
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.50
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.55
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.27
	<u>Total</u>	<u>66.27</u>

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator, Molly Chambers; FTM General Manager, Wayne Waldron, FTM Assistant General Manager, Catherine Connolly, FTM Safety and Training Manager, Elizabeth Quirk, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Vice-Chair, and Donna MacNicol, FRTA Counsel.

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 18, 2021 MEETING:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from March 18, 2021. Paul McLatchy seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.48	Yes
Ellie VanInderstine	Charlemont	2.32	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.03	Yes
Don Walker	Conway	1.01	Not Present
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.96	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.18	Yes
Dawn Scaparotti	Goshen	1.12	Not Present
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.58	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.98	Yes
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.28	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.01	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.50	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.55	Not Present
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	<u>2.27</u>	Yes
	Total	66.27	

Yes – 62.59
No – 0.00
Not Present – 3.68
Abstain – 0.00

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

OLD BUSINESS:

3. COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL TRANSIT PLAN PUBLIC REVIEW/COMMENT:

The Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan is currently out for 30-day public review/comment. All comments are due back by June 4, 2021. FRTA will collect all comments and feedback and include them in the final plan. There was discussion about creating an ad-hoc committee to provide collective comments from the Advisory Board to submit into the plan. Jeff Singleton stated that he would be willing to be on a committee. Eric Twarog also volunteered to be on a committee. If any other board member is interested, please contact Michael Perreault.

4. MAINTENANCE FACILITY PROJECT UPDATE:

Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA is in the process of completing the Purchase & Sale of the property by June 30th, should be meeting with the Planning Board for Site Plan review in June, looking to spend down some capital funds on the project prior to the end of the fiscal year, and working to finalize design plans with the architect in the coming weeks. Michael Perreault added that FRTA will be going out to bid next week on pre-engineered building materials and fuel island equipment and using state capital funds that are due to expire at the end of the fiscal year. Robert J. Decker III asked if those items would be installed prior to the purchase of the property. Tina M. Cote explained that we are purchasing those items in advance of the purchase of the property but will not be installed until after the property is purchased, building permits are

issued, and we are under construction. Donna MacNicol also added that the title search on the property has been completed and we are waiting for the architect to finalize the estimate for the upgrade of Sandy Lane as part of the project and be included in the Purchase & Sale document. Robert J. Decker III asked how much funds are at risk if FRTA does not purchase the property. Donna MacNicol stated that no deposits have been made on the property and no contracts to give funds to Montague for the property have been signed but what is at risk are funds expended for the OPM and Architect in relation to the design of the project to date. Jeff Singleton asked when the Purchase & Sale is expected to be completed. Tina M. Cote stated that it is expected that we will go before the Montague Planning Board for Site Plan Review on June 22nd. Donna MacNicol added that that the Purchase & Sale agreement can be executed prior to the Planning Board meeting but will be conditioned on Site Plan approval. Robert J. Decker III asked if the Advisory Board needs to authorize the purchase of the property. Donna MacNicol stated that the board had previously been authorized, but certainly would not hurt for the board to do another vote. Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to authorize the Administrator to purchase approximately 5.051 acres of unimproved land off Sandy Lane with a 40' easement from Sandy Lane to the parcel. Jeff Singleton seconded, discussion concluded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.48	Yes
Ellie VanInderstine	Charlemont	2.32	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.03	Yes
Don Walker	Conway	1.01	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.96	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.18	Yes
Dawn Scaparotti	Goshen	1.12	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.58	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.98	Yes
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.28	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.01	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.50	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.55	Not Present
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	<u>2.27</u>	Yes
	Total	66.27	

Yes – 64.72
 No – 0.00
 Not Present – 1.55
 Abstain – 0.00

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

5. DISCRETIONARY GRANT AND WORKFORCE TRANSPORTATION GRANT UPDATE:

Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA was awarded another Discretionary grant from MassDOT to continue our FRTA Access microtransit project. In addition, Michael Perreault stated FRTA has

executed contracts with four local taxi and livery providers for the Workforce Development Transportation grant. Now that transportation providers are on board the hope is to soon start scheduling transportation and begin utilizing the service. FRTA has been working with MassHire to spread the word to local employers and potential employees about this project. Grant funds are available through the end of December 2021.

Jeff Singleton is not convinced there is a clear relationship between the FRTA Access pilot project on the weekends and getting to fixed route service on the weekends. In addition, Jeff Singleton stated that while he thinks the pilot project for transportation to 2nd and 3rd shift jobs is important, he also believes transportation to 1st shift jobs is equally important, which could potentially be covered by microtransit service. Lastly, Jeff Singleton believes that the Discretionary grants are a good thing for FRTA, but if the upcoming budget rolls those funds into the RTA funding distribution there is concern about future funding for FRTA. Tina M. Cote explained that the Discretionary funds are a competitive grant process, which has fared well for FRTA with our Access microtransit pilot project. There is some concern with the funding distribution for RTAs and how to develop a project for weekend fixed route service.

6. DISCUSSION AND VOTE TO RESUME FARE COLLECTION/ENFORCEMENT OR USE CARES ACT FUNDS:

Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA continues to suspend fare collections on all fixed routes and has been using the federal CARES Act funds throughout the pandemic. At the last Advisory Board meeting the board voted to continue suspending fare collections through June 1st. It was suggested that FRTA could continue to suspend fares through the end of the year. Peter Otten made a **motion** for FRTA to continue to suspend fare collection/enforcement on fixed route service through December 31, 2021. Robert J. Decker III seconded, and discussion continued. Tina M. Cote stated that overall ridership remains lower than pre-pandemic levels, but we are starting to see ridership slowly increasing. Jeff Singleton stated that as part of the 2020 Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan the FRTA is supposed to evaluate going to a free fare system. Randy Crochier asked how this vote would impact the re-opening of the transit center to the public. Eric Twarog stated that the intent is to open by August 1st. Tina M. Cote added that with the most recent updates and lifting of restrictions from the Governor, we may be able to open the transit center as early as June 2nd. We are still in the process of hiring some additional janitorial and customer service staff as part of this process. Masks will still be required on buses and inside of the transit center as per federal requirements. The discussion concluded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.48	Yes
Ellie VanInderstine	Charlemont	2.32	Not Present
Bob Daley	Chester	1.03	Yes
Don Walker	Conway	1.01	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.96	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.18	Yes
Dawn Scaparotti	Goshen	1.12	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.58	Yes

Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.98	Yes
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.28	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.01	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.50	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.55	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	<u>2.27</u>	Yes
	Total	66.27	

Yes – 63.95
 No – 0.00
 Not Present – 2.32
 Abstain – 0.00

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

NEW BUSINESS:

7. UPDATE FROM FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Peter Otten stated that the Finance and Audit Committee held a meeting on April 27th to discuss the draft budget proposal for FY22. The budget was put together using an educated guess based on current information. There remain questions on the direction the State is going with the HST contract, so there are two versions of the budget: one with and one without HST. It is imperative that FRTA keep a watchful eye on the budget either way. Tina M. Cote added that there is a need to hire additional staff and a need to look at long term staffing beyond the HST contract decision. Peter Otten added that the Finance and Audit Committee also agreed that the Administrator salary would get an increase based on the average increase as the staff. The Finance and Audit Committee voted to recommend the budget as presented to the full Advisory Board for approval.

8. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY22 BUDGET:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to approve both versions of the FY22 budget as presented pending HST’s final contract decision. Robert J. Decker III seconded, there was no further discussion, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.48	Yes
Ellie VanInderstine	Charlemont	2.32	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.03	Yes
Don Walker	Conway	1.01	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.96	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.18	Yes
Dawn Scaparotti	Goshen	1.12	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.58	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.98	Yes

Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.28	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.01	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.50	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.55	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	<u>2.27</u>	Yes
	Total	66.27	

Yes – 66.27
 No – 0.00
 Not Present – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00

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

9. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY22 RESOLUTION:

Michael Perreault indicated that there are no changes to the FY22 Resolution from the FY21 Resolution. Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to approve the FY22 Resolution as presented. Jeff Singleton seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.48	Yes
Ellie VanInderstine	Charlemont	2.32	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.03	Yes
Don Walker	Conway	1.01	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.96	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.18	Yes
Dawn Scaparotti	Goshen	1.12	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.58	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.98	Yes
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.28	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.01	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.50	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.55	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	<u>2.27</u>	Yes
	Total	66.27	

Yes – 66.27
 No – 0.00
 Not Present – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00

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

10. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FOR FY22:

Current Finance and Audit Committee members are Eric Twarog, Peter Otten, and Robert J. Decker III. Paul McLatchy made a **motion** to elect Eric Twarog, Peter Otten, and Robert J. Decker III to the Finance and Audit Committee for FY22. Paula LeBlanc seconded, there were no additional nominations, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.48	Yes
Ellie VanInderstine	Charlemont	2.32	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.03	Yes
Don Walker	Conway	1.01	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.96	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.18	Yes
Dawn Scaparotti	Goshen	1.12	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.58	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.98	Yes
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.28	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.01	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.50	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.55	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	<u>2.27</u>	Yes
	Total	66.27	

Yes – 66.27

No – 0.00

Not Present – 0.00

Abstain – 0.00

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

11. REVIEW MASSDOT STATE AUDIT REPORT:

This audit was presented to the Finance and Audit Committee at the previous meeting where it was suggested to share this final report with the Advisory Board. The audit was concluded in February 2021 and covered fiscal years 2019 and 2020. There was no further discussion.

12. REVIEW MASSDOT'S LETTER TO MEET WITH FRTA:

MassDOT responded to FRTA's request, and a meeting is scheduled with MassDOT and Advisory Board on Thursday June 3, 2021 at 10:00am. This meeting will be specifically to discuss funding and weekend fixed route service. Michael Perreault will be sending out an invite to all board members. FRTA remains the only RTA in MA that does not operate weekend fixed route service and this meeting will give an opportunity to have a discussion with MassDOT on funding for weekend fixed route service.

13. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION ON FY22-23 MASSDOT MOU:

Michael Perreault stated the FY22-23 MassDOT MOU includes performance metrics to be reported to MassDOT over those two fiscal years and is a requirement contingent upon receive State operating funds (State Contract Assistance). Discussion from the board on the previous MOU there were some concerns and FRTA wanted to make sure that the Advisory Board had an opportunity to review the draft document prior to signing. Tina M. Cote stated that the information contained within this document is on things that we are currently providing to MassDOT. Jeff Singleton asked if there were any concerns from FRTA on this MOU. Tina M. Cote stated that there are none. Jeff Singleton stated that his issue with the last MOU was that the Advisory Board did not vote on it prior to the FRTA signing it. Tina M. Cote explained that while the Advisory Board is not required to vote on the MOU, it does not mean that it cannot. Jeff Singleton made a **motion** to endorse the MOU with the caveat that FRTA work on a plan to achieve the goals set within. Robert J. Decker III seconded and discussion continued. Tina M. Cote added that FRTA is working on a grant from National RTAP to assist FRTA with developing a marketing strategy to increase ridership and help us achieve goals set within the MOU. Michael Perreault asked if the intention was to create a subcommittee after the MOU is completed. Jeff Singleton agreed that would be the intention. This subcommittee could also tie into the 2020 Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan and weekend fixed route service discussion. Discussion concluded and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.48	Yes
Ellie VanInderstine	Charlemont	2.32	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.03	Not Present
Don Walker	Conway	1.01	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.96	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.18	Yes
Dawn Scaparotti	Goshen	1.12	Not Present
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.58	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.98	Yes
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.28	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.01	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.50	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.55	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	<u>2.27</u>	Yes
	Total	66.27	

Yes – 64.12
 No – 0.00
 Not Present – 2.15
 Abstain – 0.00

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

14. TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Elizabeth Quirk gave the following updates:

- The Committee continues looking for new members. Flyers are posted on buses to attract current riders.
- The Access program is off to a great success. The combination of microtransit and weekend service allows opportunities for accessing farmer's market, employment opportunities, etc.
- FRTA in partnership with FRCOG and City of Greenfield on Elm St bus stop improvements. It is anticipated that completion of final design work will happen over the summer for survey and engineering work and construction on the improvements will be completed by the end of the construction season.

15. FRTA UPDATES:

Tina M. Cote gave the following updates:

- We are continuing installation of bus stops in Greenfield along with the installation of Simme Seats.
- It is anticipated that the final HST contract decision should be made by the end of the week. The State Senate is looking to put together a committee to review and recommend improvements in the MassHealth system.
- Transit Center is looking to re-open by June 2nd, if possible. Still looking for hire for open janitorial and customer service positions, but the hiring environment is tough right now. We have been very fortunate that most staff have remained on throughout the pandemic.

Molly Chambers updated that the Union contract has been settled. The new contract is for 3 years, and this has been the best negotiations in a long time.

Michael Perreault added that FRTA and FTM staff recently participated in a tabletop exercise with the Transportation Security Administration. This was a great opportunity to allow staff to interact and discuss through two different exercises on transit safety and security. This tabletop exercise gave us an opportunity to think about our current policies and procedures and how we can strengthen them.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on September 16, 2021.

Robert J. Decker III made a motion to adjourn. Peter Otten seconded, and the meeting concluded at 5:30pm.