

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 26, 2022 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	1.60
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.44
Janice Gibeau	Chesterfield	1.24
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.09
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.12
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.31
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	31.56
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.81
Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.37
Patricia Lussier	Orange	5.71
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.29
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.56
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.21
Teri Anderson	Westhampton	1.02
	<u>Total</u>	<u>70.35</u>

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator, Ed Sanborn, FRTA Bookkeeper, Wayne Waldron, FTM General Manager, Steven Pardoe, FTM Assistant General Manager, Elizabeth Quirk, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Chair, Megan Rhodes, FRCOG Senior Transportation Planner and FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Vice-Chair, and Deb Wilson, 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 17, 2022 MEETING:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from March 17, 2022. Paula LeBlanc seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.60	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.44	Yes
Janice Gibeau	Chesterfield	1.24	Yes
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.09	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.12	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.31	Abstain
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	31.56	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.81	Yes
Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.37	Yes
Patricia Lussier	Orange	5.71	Abstain
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Abstain
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.29	Not Present
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.56	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.21	Yes
Teri Anderson	Westhampton	<u>1.02</u>	Yes
	Total	70.35	

Yes – 59.02
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 8.04
 Not Present – 3.29

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

OLD BUSINESS:

3. UPDATE ON HST AND LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE:

Information and meeting minutes on the HST Legislative Task Force was provided in the meeting packet. Tina M. Cote stated that public listening sessions were held last week and that information from the Task Force is that there will be a final report completed by December. Costs continue to be high(er) in rural areas and in Western MA compared to other areas around the State. Jeff Singleton stated he is a concerned with the State’s process and the information/listening sessions but would like to see a draft report and a public comment period on the draft report prior to a final report. Tina M. Cote encouraged everyone to attend Task Force meetings to make your voices heard. Elizabeth Quirk stated that Senator Comerford is getting involved in these discussions with the Task Force as well. Mary Bown asked if the State’s Executive Office of Health and Human Services department oversees Medicaid transportation. Michael Perreault confirmed that EOHHS oversees Medicaid transportation statewide and contracts with brokers (such as Montachusett Regional Transit Authority) to coordinate transportation services within their brokerage region. These transportation services are separate from those provided by individual Regional Transit Authorities.

4. MAINTENANCE FACILITY PROJECT UPDATE:

Michael Perreault provided a brief update on construction activities related to the new maintenance facility project. Those included: foundations, footings, and piers have been completed; pre-engineered building, bar joists, and decking have been delivered on site; pellet silo pad was poured the week of May 16th; by the end of May/beginning of June will start erecting building and road work on Sandy Lane. FRTA has a standing meeting with representatives from FTA and MassDOT on the third Tuesday of the month. Michael Perreault invited any board member interested in attending project meeting updates to contact him for details of the meeting login information. Substantial completion is still early January, although the General Contractor has recently put in a delay claim for the additional time it took to remove unsuitable soil and bring in construction fill. That claim has not yet been vetted to substantiate any formal delay in completing the project. FRTA is very mindful and continues to keep Greenfield and Montague in the loop with progress as this will impact our move date from our current leased facility. Tina M. Cote added that FRTA is on a month-to-month lease with GMTA until the project is completed. Jeff Singleton asked about the potential for environmental impacts or concerns with removal of unsuitable soils from the project site. Michael Perreault explained that the soils being removed are not contaminated; they are soils that are not compositionally sound enough to construct our facility on. Jeff Singleton asked if FRTA was aware that the Town of Montague is considering constructing a sludge composting site on Sandy Lane. Tina M. Cote stated that she had read an article in the local newspaper but no one from the Town had reached out to FRTA about it. Robert J. Decker III asked about any additional costs to the project and how they will be handled. Tina M. Cote stated that there is currently enough money programmed to complete the project and Michael Perreault added that there are no contingency funds included in this project. FRTA is in discussions with MassDOT to use federal COVID funds to flex over to cover any unexpected additional costs associated with the project in order to not impact any Towns' local assessments. Robert J. Decker III asked if test borings were completed on the site prior to construction. Michael Perreault explained that there were a number of test borings on the site completed prior to the start of construction. The A/E team and OPM team did confirm that the soil composition within close proximity of the test boring locations were accurate, but the soil composition changes drastically throughout the entire site. FRTA was already planning to remove unsuitable soils during the construction, but the actual amount that needed to be removed turned out to be much greater than anticipated.

5. REVIEW ADVISORY BOARD BY-LAWS:

Michael Perreault explained that this agenda item carried forward from the previous meeting. Jeff Singleton had submitted some comments last week to Michael Perreault, who forwarded them to FRTA legal counsel for review. Michael Perreault stated that a discussion with legal counsel was not able to be scheduled prior to the Advisory Board meeting and because it was too close to the date of the meeting, those comments have not yet been forwarded to everyone for consideration. FRTA is looking to schedule a meeting with legal counsel and Jeff Singleton to review and discuss the by-laws and Mass General Law and then give adequate time for the Advisory Board to review prior to the next meeting in September. Jeff Singleton stated that he just wanted to get his thoughts to the Advisory Board for review and consideration. This agenda item will be continued at the next Advisory Board meeting.

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

Tina M. Cote explained that FRTA has been meeting with a group to discuss a pilot project for weekend fixed route service in addition to the Access program. Michael Perreault added that we are currently working on a plan focused on Saturday only service, taking into consideration current Access service along with connections with UMass Transit, PVTA, and MART fixed routes. The group is looking to reconvene again soon to continue these discussions prior to bringing the final plan to the full Advisory Board. Mary Bowen asked about the status on fare collections. Tina M. Cote explained that currently, fare collections remain suspended through June 30, 2022. Jeff Singleton suggested that weekend fixed route pilot project should be ready to start for the beginning of September. Teri Anderson asked if the pilot would include all fixed routes. Michael Perreault stated that the current consideration for a project would include all current fixed routes. There is still more work to be done planning for this project and may include an Advisory Board meeting sometime in the summer. Joe Kurland asked about the level of service and questioned if Saturday-only fixed route service would provide the access needed.

7. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF RIDER SURVEYS AND FRCOG REPORT:

Megan Rhodes discussed that FRTA and FRCOG worked over the last two months to do public outreach on the Access program, Workforce Transportation program, and fixed route fares. In light of ongoing COVID concerns, efforts were focused on online and paper surveys with surveys provided in both English and Spanish. Outreach was conducted through a targeted email push, social media, flyers on the buses and at the Transit Center, and through an FTM staff member at the Transit Center with 68 total survey responses received. Some highlights from the report include 34% of respondents said that they would have to reduce or eliminate their trip usage on the fixed route. It was noted that it was a small sample size but that most had some concerns about the \$1.50 fare. The Access program received a lot of positive feedback including reasons given including filling transit gaps and providing access to jobs, medical appointments, etc. The main reason given for why people had not used the Access program was that respondents didn't know about it. Workforce Transportation program also received mostly positive feedback. It was noted that some negative feedback included issues with reliability that need to be resolved to make the program more successful for riders. The survey did also include some general questions about weekend service and 76% of responses would use the bus for both Saturday and Sunday fixed routes, 11% responded that they would only use it on Saturdays, and 10% responded that they would not use it at all on the weekends.

Jeff Singleton stated that the report provided some good feedback. Teri Anderson stated she was impressed to hear positive results from those using the Access and Workforce Transportation programs but asked if there was a plan in place to address some of the concerns regarding the Workforce Transportation program. Tina M. Cote explained that FRTA will be looking at making some programmatic changes for both the transportation providers and riders to improve the program, communications, and overall rider experience.

8. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON MAKING PERMANENT THE ACCESS PROGRAM:

Tina M. Cote reiterated the great successes we’ve had with the Access program over the last couple years and that this is a good model for expanding transportation options in other FRTA towns. In addition, the FRCOG has recently put some funds towards the Access program through a grant from Senator Comerford for local community partners to have additional transportation options for their clients. Tina M. Cote explained that FRTA has begun working with the Town of Southwick to bring them on board with using our automated scheduling software for their demand response transportation program, which is the first step towards then adding the Access program. Michael Perreault added that information about the Access program as well as local assessment estimates were included in the meeting packet. Teri Anderson asked about adding the Access program into other Towns, such as Westhampton. Tina M. Cote stated that we would be able to work with other Towns on a plan to bring in the Access program. Jeff Singleton stated that he didn’t realize this information was contained within the meeting documents and is unsure if he can vote on this topic. Teri Anderson asked if Towns would be able to opt out of the Access program if they were not interested. Tina M. Cote explained that FRTA would work with Towns if they are currently receiving Access services but would like to opt out. Teri Anderson asked if there was communication to Towns about consideration of this program for permanent service. Michael Perreault stated that FRTA has only sent this information to Advisory Board members. Robert J. Decker III stated that the Advisory Board could come back at a later meeting for reconsideration on this program. Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to make the Access program permanent. Teri Anderson seconded, and discussion continued. Teri Anderson suggested that FRTA send information to Selectboards and Finance Committees, so they are aware of future impacts to local assessments. Janice Gibeau stated that it is good to send communication to each Town’s Selectboard, but it sounds like this program is headed in the right direction. Andrew Baker stated that board members need to be cognizant that a vote to making the Access program permanent will result in added costs to Towns for this service. Teri Anderson suggested that the FRTA work with local legislative delegation for additional grant funds during this transition, but that this appears to be a valuable program. Discussion concluded and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.60	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.44	Yes
Janice Gibeau	Chesterfield	1.24	Yes
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.09	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.12	Yes
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.31	Not Present
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	31.56	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.81	Yes
Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.37	Yes
Patricia Lussier	Orange	5.71	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.29	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.56	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.21	Yes

Teri Anderson	Westhampton	<u>1.02</u>	Yes
		Total 70.35	

Yes – 69.04
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00
 Not Present – 1.31

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

9. DISCUSS FUNDING/POSSIBLE VOTE ON WORKFORCE TRANSIT PROGRAM:

Tina M. Cote stated that in addition to the Access program FRTA is looking for direction from the board on continuing the 2nd/3rd shift workforce transportation program. Information about the program along with some estimates on local assessment impacts were also included in the meeting packet. There were three options to calculate local assessments for the workforce transportation program: costs based on Towns where the employee resides; costs based on Towns where the business resides; and costs based 50% on Towns where employee resides and 50% on Towns where the business resides. As will be discussed in agenda item #12, revenues and expenses for this project were not included in the FY23 budget; however, FRTA is looking at potential grant funds to continue into FY23. Teri Anderson stated that while Westhampton is not a part of this pilot project, it does seem to be valuable and would like to see the program continue while looking for long-term financial sustainability. Jeff Singleton asked about the choice between the calculating local assessments based on the riders’ home locations or the employers’ locations. Michael Perreault stated that it was just to give board members a different way to look at things. Tina M. Cote asked what the timeline for the next grant opportunity. Michael Perreault stated that a new grant through MassDevelopment is due on July 8th, but it is unclear the timing of award. Mary Bowen stated that this sounds like an important service and FRTA should work to renew grants for this project, if possible. Andrew Baker commented that calculating local assessments based on Towns where the employee resides could be complicated because we only know where current employees reside, but not where future employees will reside. Michael Perreault agreed and stated that there needs to be communication between FRTA and its member Towns on the limits of this program, including which Towns would like to opt in and which would like to opt out. Teri Anderson stated that she supports the continuation of the program and made a **motion** that FRTA continue 2nd/3rd shift workforce transportation program using short-term grant funds while working towards long-term planning and sustainable funding. Jan Gibeau seconded, and discussion continued. Janice Gibeau stated that she supports the principal and policy of this program but pending availability of funding. Andrew Baker suggested increasing client fares as part of the solution and offered to assist FRTA in seeking bridge funding from local businesses. Patricia Lussier asked about the local assessment calculations. Teri Anderson clarified that this motion does not include an increase in local assessments at this point. Michael Perreault added that the estimates were for information purposes only, but to give board members an idea of anticipated costs if this program does become permanent down the road. Discussion concluded and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.60	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.44	Yes
Janice Gibeau	Chesterfield	1.24	Yes
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.09	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.12	Not Present
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.31	Not Present
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	31.56	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.81	Yes
Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.37	Yes
Patricia Lussier	Orange	5.71	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.29	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.56	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.21	Yes
Teri Anderson	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
		<u>Total</u>	70.35

Yes – 63.92
No – 0.00
Abstain – 0.00
Not Present – 6.43

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

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

Tina M. Cote explained that since the start of the COVID pandemic FRTA had suspended fare collections and have been utilizing federal COVID funds to cover lost fare revenue. Teri Anderson asked if it were possible to reinstate partial fares and divert a portion of the COVID funds to be used to help support the workforce transportation project. Michael Perreault stated that doing anything other than continuing to suspend fare collections or reinstating fare collections would require additional public outreach for alternative fare structure. Jeff Singleton made a **motion** to continue suspension of fare collections for one year through June 30, 2023. Peter Otten seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.60	Not Present
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.44	Yes
Janice Gibeau	Chesterfield	1.24	Yes
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.09	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.12	Not Present
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.31	Not Present
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	31.56	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.81	Yes

Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.37	Yes
Patricia Lussier	Orange	5.71	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.29	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.56	Not Present
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.21	Yes
Teri Anderson	Westhampton	<u>1.02</u>	Yes
	Total	70.35	

Yes – 60.76
No – 0.00
Abstain – 0.00
Not Present – 9.59

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

NEW BUSINESS:

11. UPDATE FROM FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Peter Otten stated that the Finance and Audit Committee met at the end of April to discuss the draft budget proposal for FY23. The budget was put together using an educated guess based on current information. The Finance and Audit Committee voted to recommend the budget as presented to the full Advisory Board for approval.

12. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY 23 BUDGET:

Jeff Singleton made a **motion** to approve the FY23 budget. Paula LeBlanc seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.60	Not Present
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.44	Yes
Janice Gibeau	Chesterfield	1.24	Not Present
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.09	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.12	Not Present
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.31	Not Present
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	31.56	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.81	Yes
Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.37	Yes
Patricia Lussier	Orange	5.71	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.29	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.56	Not Present
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.21	Yes
Teri Anderson	Westhampton	<u>1.02</u>	Yes

Total 70.35

Yes – 59.52
No – 0.00
Abstain – 0.00
Not Present – 10.83

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

13. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY 23 RESOLUTION:

Michael Perreault stated that the FY23 Resolution remains the same as the current year. Teri Anderson made a **motion** to approve the FY23 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	1.60	Not Present
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.44	Yes
Janice Gibeau	Chesterfield	1.24	Yes
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.09	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.12	Not Present
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.31	Not Present
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	31.56	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.81	Yes
Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.37	Yes
Patricia Lussier	Orange	5.71	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.29	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.56	Not Present
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.21	Yes
Teri Anderson	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
		<u>Total</u>	70.35

Yes – 60.76
No – 0.00
Abstain – 0.00
Not Present – 9.59

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

14. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FY 23, CLERK FY 23-24, AND CHAIR FY 23-25:

Michael Perreault explained that since the start of COVID the Advisory Board was not re-electing officers in staggered terms, as per the by-laws. To get back into staggered-term officer positions FRTA suggested to elect the Vice-Chair for FY 23, Clerk for FY 23-24, and Chair for

FY 23-25. Both Peter Otten and Eric Twarog stated that they would be happy to continue their positions on the board. Michael Perreault indicated that Randy Crochier sent a message that he would be happy to continue as the Clerk. Teri Anderson made a **motion** to elect Peter Otten for Vice-Chair for FY 23, Randy Crochier for Clerk for FY 23-24, and Eric Twarog for Chair for FY 23-25. Mary Bowen seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.60	Not Present
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.44	Yes
Janice Gibeau	Chesterfield	1.24	Yes
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.09	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.12	Not Present
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.31	Not Present
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	31.56	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.81	Yes
Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.37	Yes
Patricia Lussier	Orange	5.71	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.29	Not Present
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.56	Not Present
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.21	Yes
Teri Anderson	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
		Total	70.35

Yes – 57.47
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00
 Not Present – 12.88

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

15. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FY 23:

Teri Anderson made a motion to elect Peter Otten, Eric Twarog, and Robert J. Decker III to the Finance and Audit Committee for FY 23. Mary Bowen seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.60	Not Present
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.44	Yes
Janice Gibeau	Chesterfield	1.24	Yes
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.09	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.12	Not Present
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.31	Not Present
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	31.56	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	10.81	Yes
Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.37	Yes

Patricia Lussier	Orange	5.71	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.29	Not Present
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.56	Not Present
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.21	Yes
Teri Anderson	Westhampton	<u>1.02</u>	Yes
	Total	70.35	

Yes – 57.47
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00
 Not Present – 12.88

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

16. TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Elizabeth Quirk gave the following updates:

- Discussions continue about ways to reduce stigma of riding public transportation. There is some grant funding available to work with artists from the Art Garden, but this is still in the preliminary stages.

17. FRTA UPDATES:

Tina M. Cote gave the following updates:

- FRTA is looking to hire for a new grant-fund position, Travel Trainer/Transit Ambassador. This position is posted on the FRTA website, on FRTA Facebook page, and on Indeed website.
- FRTA received delivery two new Gillig buses and three new Chevy minibuses. Those buses are expected to go into service over the coming weeks.
- Starting on June 1st the JWO Transit Center will be back open from 7am-7pm.

Michael Perreault added that at a recent Franklin County Transportation Planning Organization meeting where an amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program was authorized to move \$800,000 of funds to FRTA for construction of a solar project at the new maintenance facility.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on September 15, 2022.

Peter Otten made a motion to adjourn. Jeff Singleton seconded, and the meeting concluded at 6:00pm.