

Approved 3/16/23

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, Michael Heffernan, the meeting of the Advisory Board of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority was held on November 17, 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	1.45
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	2.28
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.16
Erica Goleman	Conway	1.04
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.16
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	30.93
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.08
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.89
Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.30
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.04
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.07
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.64
Karl Stinehart	Southwick	2.32
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.03
	<u>Total</u>	<u>61.39</u>

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator, Ed Sanborn, FRTA Bookkeeper, Donna MacNicol, FRTA Legal Counsel, Wayne Waldron, FTM General Manager, Catherine Connolly, FTM Safety and Training Manager, Elizabeth Quirk, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Chair, Megan Rhodes, FRCOG Senior Transportation Planner and FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Vice-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 MAY 26, 2022 MEETING:

Ed Gibson made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from May 26, 2022. 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
Joe Kurland	Colrain	1.16	Yes
Erica Goleman	Conway	1.04	No Response
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.16	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	30.93	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.08	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.89	Yes
Mary Bowen	Northfield	1.30	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.04	Yes
Andrew Baker	Shelburne	3.07	Yes
Ed Gibson	Southampton	1.64	Yes
Karl Stinehart	Southwick	2.32	Abstain
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.03	Abstain
		<u>Total</u>	
		61.39	

Yes – 57.00

No – 0.00

Abstain – 3.35

No Response – 1.04

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 from the previous Task Force meetings held over the past several months, a set of corrective actions is expected to be presented at the next meeting and a final report is due to the Legislature by the end of the calendar year.

Joe Kurland asked if the online portal is accessible for people with older computers. Tina M. Cote will make note of this and bring it to the Task Force, but that consumers can always call in to schedule medical trips. Joe Kurland also stated that EOHHS created a “single source of truth” page on their website and commented that they should come up with better language for describing the information contained on that site.

Jeff Singleton asked what the goals of the Task Force are and are they being achieved. Tina M. Cote explained that FRTA is not a member of the Task Force and is just sharing public

information available with the Advisory Board as some members remain very interested in HST transportation the process and progress of the Task Force.

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

Tina M. Cote provided a brief update on construction activities related to the new maintenance facility project. Substantial completion is still scheduled for February 2023. Representatives from MassDOT recently came down and toured the project site and see the construction progress. The base coat of paving for Sandy Lane is expected to start before Thanksgiving. There is also preliminary planning for moving furniture and equipment from the current facility into the new facility.

Jeff Singleton stated there have been notices posted on the Town of Montague's website that Sandy Lane would be closed for paving starting today through next week. Michael Perreault stated that at the most recent job meeting the General Contractor was going to email a more definitive timeline on the paving schedule for Sandy Lane so the FRTA could share with Montague officials, but we have not yet received that information to share.

#### **5. DISCUSSION/UPDATE ON ACCESS PROGRAM AND WORKFORCE TRANSIT PROGRAM:**

Tina M. Cote announced that FRTA was recently notified that our grant submission to continue our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift workforce transportation program will be awarded. FRTA has been continuing to support this project over the last several months in hopes of getting another grant award. FRTA continues to review this project and processes to ensure we can continue to operate this successfully over the long-term.

Tina M. Cote updated that the Access program is going very well, but we are now experiencing a lot of challenges with capacity issues. Michael Perreault shared some data relative to the success of the Access program. Since its inception in 2019, we've completed over 18,000 Access trips with more than 1,100 app downloads. During the first month of service with the Access program, in October 2019, there were a total of 28 one-way trips with 9 unduplicated riders. Flash forward three years later; for the month of September 2022 there were a total of 1,452 one-way trips with 158 unduplicated riders. This program operates in 14 towns in Franklin County covering about 300 square miles.

Mary Bowen asked about the difference between the Access program and the workforce transportation program. Tina M. Cote explained that the Access program is open to the general public and the workforce program is specifically for transporting people to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift jobs. Jeff Singleton added that the Access program is operated by FTM, while the workforce transportation program is operated by a separate livery provider. Tina M. Cote also added that the Access program utilizes the same automated scheduling software that FTM has been using with Demand Response and ADA trips. Earlier this year we've started using that same software for Southwick Demand Response trips and we'll continue working with other COAs to roll this technology out throughout all FRTA towns. Carrie Florek asked if the COAs would be operating the Access program. Tina M. Cote explained that initially the software would be used in

scheduling, delivering, and reporting for Demand Response transportation, but the same approach could be used in the future to expand the Access program into those COAs and help fill empty seats.

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

Michael Perreault 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, but there hasn't been a lot of movement on this since the last Advisory Board meeting. Much of our time has been focused on finding funds for the workforce transportation program, which was discussed earlier in the meeting. Hopefully now that grant funds have been secured, we can re-focus on advancing plans for a pilot project for weekend fixed route service.

Michael Perreault discussed that as part of the Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan there were recommendations on increasing ridership and expanding the ridership base by marketing to non-transit users. Recently the FRCOG had received grant funding to work with FRTA and bring in a marketing consultant, Allen Roche Group. The FRCOG has pulled together a small working group to work with the consultant reviewing FRTA and developing a small marketing campaign.

Jeff Singleton stated that he would like to attend one of the meetings with the consultant. Montague Center has ads out for apartment rentals but there's no mention of public transportation. As a bedroom community for UMass, it might seem important to inform potential renters of this, but some landlords don't even know about existing public transit services. Megan Rhodes explained that the focus of the project is come up with strategies to reach new riders and then initially execute some of those strategies depending on costs that can be paid for with these grant funds. Some of the strategies include coming up with new taglines and visuals, using social media posts with geofencing, advertising through local news spots, and updates to the FRTA website. Much of the focus is on utilizing new ways to get the word out about FRTA services.

## **7. REVIEW/DISCUSSION ON ADVISORY BOARD BY-LAWS:**

Michael Perreault explained that this agenda item carried forward from the previous meeting. Jeff Singleton stated that the current By-laws don't give the Advisory Board enough power and its not clear why. FRTA Legal Counsel was invited to this meeting to help explain Advisory Board roles as defined in M.G.L. Ch. 161B, but there were either technical difficulties or she needed to drop out of the meeting prior to this agenda item. Eric Twarog suggested that all board members should review the By-laws and bring any comments or suggestions for revisions to the next meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **8. REVIEW FY22 AUDIT AND UPDATED WEIGHTED VOTE:**

Eric Twarog explained that the Finance and Audit Committee met with the auditor on September 23<sup>rd</sup> to review and discuss the draft FY22 financial audit. There were no findings or questioned costs during the audit period. Included within the meeting packet were the final FY22 financial audit documents submitted to the State. Tina M. Cote added that a copy of the updated local assessments and weighted vote was included as well.

### **9. TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATES:**

Elizabeth Quirk gave the following updates:

- Additional information about the Access program – riders can schedule trips up to a week in advance.
- At the last Transit Advisory Committee meeting there were some new attendees and great community engagement.

### **10. FRTA UPDATES:**

Tina M. Cote gave the following updates:

- We recently worked with TSA on an unattended bag check exercise which resulted in 100% check rate by the drivers.
- We continue to progress with the installation of bus stop signs and simme-seats along our fixed routes. Wayne Waldron added that FTM is currently working with MassDOT on sign installations along Route 2 west into Charlemont and Routes 5/10 south into Northampton.
- Supply chain issues continue to impact vehicle deliveries.
- MA State Auditor's Office is currently performing an audit of our paratransit services.
- Recently all MA RTAs received joint discretionary funds to provide free Fixed Route and ADA services statewide from Thanksgiving through the end of December.
- We will be transporting local high school students to the upcoming Monte's March.

Jeff Singleton stated that he recently rode on the Route 23 bus that connects in Sunderland to UMass/Amherst and it was nice to see the operation with smooth connections and friendly drivers. A good experience all the way around.

Mary Bowen asked if all bus stops have shelters. Tina M. Cote stated not all bus stops have shelters and explained that FRTA only tries to place shelters at stops where it makes sense. FRTA is always looking for feedback from Towns, residents, and riders on suggestions for shelter locations.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on March 16, 2023.

Ed Gibson made a motion to adjourn. Karl Stinehart seconded, and the meeting concluded at 5:00pm.