

Approved 11/21/19

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 September 19, 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>
Hayley Bolton	Bernardston	2.04
Peter Otten	Buckland	2.07
Donald Walker Jr	Conway	1.01
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32
Ray Purington	Gill	1.11
William Martin	Greenfield	25.77
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.91
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.67
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.54
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	1.29
Cynthia Dodge	Disabled Commuter	1.00
Jasper Lapienski	Rider Community	<u>1.00</u>
	Total	59.73

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator, Donna MacNicol, FRTA Counsel, Molly Morin; FTM General Manager, Jenna Howitt, FTM Assistant General Manager, and Steve Ellis, Montague Town Administrator.

Chairman Lance Fritz 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 16, 2019 MEETING:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from May 16, 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>
Hayley Bolton	Bernardston	2.04	Not Present
Peter Otten	Buckland	2.07	Yes
Donald Walker Jr	Conway	1.01	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32	Yes
Ray Purington	Gill	1.11	Yes
William Martin	Greenfield	25.77	Yes
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.91	Yes
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.67	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.54	Abstain
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	1.29	Yes
Cynthia Dodge	Disabled Commuter	1.00	Abstain
Jasper Lapienski	Rider Community	<u>1.00</u>	Yes
	Total	59.73	

Yes – 54.15
No – 0.00
Abstain – 3.54
Not Present – 2.04

The vote passed and the **motion** carried. Jasper Lapienski suggested that future meeting minutes should be printed double-sided and that the meeting minutes should include the individual’s name followed by the Town represented. Lance Fritz stated that he would take those suggestions under advisement.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments.

OLD BUSINESS:

4. MAINTENANCE FACILITY PROJECT UPDATE:

Tina M. Cote updated that the project architectural and engineering firm, STV, is continuing work on advancing the design of the facility and is currently performing some value-engineering exercises to look at possible ways to keep the cost of the construction within our budget. In addition, FRTA is still waiting for the final results from the Federal Transit Administration on the Categorical Exclusion document, which will then allow the purchase and sale of the property to move forward.

Peter Otten asked if the property has been purchased yet. Tina M. Cote stated that we are waiting for the results of the Categorical Exclusion document prior to the purchase of the property. Jeff Singleton asked what the rough timeline is for the project to be completed. Tina M. Cote stated that currently the project schedule shows substantial completion in mid-2021.

Cynthia Dodge asked if the new maintenance facility would be fully accessible. Lance Fritz stated that the building would have to meet accessibility standards.

5. DISCRETIONARY GRANT/MICROTRANSIT PILOT UPDATE:

Tina M. Cote gave an update on FRTA's microtransit pilot project. FRTA was awarded approximately \$150,000 at the end of FY19 in discretionary grant funds for piloting a microtransit project. The project will be to open up the availability of empty seats on our demand response vehicles to the general public. FRTA is working with its current scheduling software company to develop a smartphone application where riders from the general public can schedule trips a day in advance or schedule same-day trips. The pilot will initially operate in two zones; a Greenfield zone including Deerfield, Gill, Greenfield, Leyden, Montague, and Whately, and an Orange zone including New Salem, Orange, Wendell, and Warwick. The Greenfield zone will operate Monday through Friday from 7am-6pm and the Orange zone will operate Monday through Friday from 8am-5pm. All trips for this microtransit pilot project will be \$5.00 for each one-way trip and \$2.50 for each additional passenger. Testing is still under way, but the formal launch of this project is tentatively scheduled for October 1st and the funding will last through the end of FY20.

Cynthia Dodge asked if there were any leftover funds from this project and asked if the app works for people with disabilities. Tina M. Cote stated that all funds for this project are accounted for and that if the app doesn't work for them, they can call into the FRTA office. Jonathan von Ranson asked if the current policy for this project would allow the general public to call in to schedule rides. Tina M. Cote answered no, that this project's focus was for people to schedule their trips through the smartphone application. Jasper Lapienski noted that two candidates running for Mayor of Greenfield have expressed interest in public transit and asked if FRTA could project financial numbers for the Town of Greenfield to continue this project after the pilot period ends. Michael Perreault reiterated that FRTA will be compiling data on trips performed through this phone app as well as collecting data on those that cannot use program including people without access to smartphones, internet access, traveling in towns outside of the pilot project area, etc. Peter Otten suggested that having similar access through the computer could be useful for people as well.

6. ROUTE 23 EXPANDED SERVICE PILOT UPDATE:

Tina M. Cote gave an update on the expanded pilot service on the Route 23 from Greenfield to Sunderland. Two new runs were added in the middle of the day leaving the JWO Transit Center at 10:45am and 12:45pm beginning on January 22, 2019. While data continues to be collected, there were 1,153 one-way trips on those two new runs through the end of August 2019. Steve Ellis stated that the Montague Selectboard sends their appreciation to FRTA for this pilot project. Jasper Lapienski asked if there was any data to show the relationship between the existing ridership versus ridership from the pilot runs. Molly Morin stated that early indications show that ridership on the pilot runs fall in between the more popular runs in the morning and late afternoon and the last run of the day which typically has the lowest ridership compared to the others. Steve Ellis asked if there was any information collected on the ridership demographics. Molly Morin indicated there hasn't been any collected as of now, but that FRTA could run more

specific surveys to collect that information in the town of Montague was interested. Cynthia Dodge asked if there are any questions on disabilities included in the surveys. Molly stated that there were not. Jeff Singleton noted that he rides the Route 23 frequently and from his perspective ridership includes not just people riding the bus from one end of the line to the other, but a significant number of people getting on and off mid-route as well. Early consensus is that there are not many riders from Montague Center but there is a large group of students traveling from the Amherst area to GCC.

NEW BUSINESS:

7. DISCUSSION ON FY20 STATE BUDGET AND FRTA/MASSDOT MOU:

Tina M. Cote stated that the line item in FY20 State Budget for funding the RTAs increased from \$82 million to \$87 million and of that increased amount FRTA received approximately \$60,000. In addition, the State Budget this year includes an additional \$3.5 million in discretionary funds to be awarded to the RTAs through a competitive application process. The bulk of the additional state funds for FY20 will be going towards the covering ongoing operational costs including an anticipated increase in fuel costs, increase in labor costs, and additional costs related to the changes in the Paid Family Medical Leave Act (PFML). Hopefully more information about the discretionary funds will be available by the November meeting.

Cynthia Dodge asked if FRTA could request funds for fixing accessibility issues at the Transit Center. Tina M. Cote stated that capital funding falls under a different pot of money but suggested talking offline about accessibility issues to get them resolved. Steve Ellis suggested looking at grant funds from the MA Office of Disabilities which may be able to address any open accessibility issues. William Martin asked if FRTA was exempt from the PFML. Tina M. Cote explained that while the FRTA is exempt, its contractor, First Transit, and their sub-corporation, Franklin Transit Management, is not exempt and because the FRTA reimburses operating costs for Franklin Transit Management the PFML changes do impact FRTA's budget. Donna MacNicol clarified that PFML is part of the benefits which are reimbursed by FRTA through their contract with First Transit.

Tina M. Cote explained that as a condition of receiving an increase in State Contract Assistance funding in FY20, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between FRTA and MassDOT. Within the MOU included performance metrics and reporting requirements FRTA must meet. The performance metrics and reporting requirements are new, and this MOU is a new process that all RTAs are required to go through, but FRTA is confident the baselines and targets set within the MOU are attainable.

Jasper Lapienski asked if there were penalties for not meeting targets or if there are rewards for exceeding them. Tina M. Cote stated that there are no penalties for missing targets, but it remains to be seen if FRTA will see an increase in funding if targets are exceeded. Donna MacNicol clarified that while there are no financial penalties for missed targets, on page 7 of the MOU it does state that FRTA would need to create a Performance Improvement Plan. Jeff Singleton distributed a letter sent to the FRCOG with his comments regarding their 2020 Regional Transit Plan (see attached). Jeff Singleton explained that he is not happy with the

MOU with his main concern being the metrics for ridership. Small changes in ridership could make a big impact in the metrics. Jeff Singleton explained that he is very concerned that the Advisory Board did not see this document prior to its signoff and believes that the Advisory Board should have been involved in the process of drafting the MOU. Jeff Singleton suggested that FRTA and the Advisory Board should meet with MassDOT to discuss the goals for the FRTA and performance measures. Jasper Lapienski made a **motion** to instruct the Administrator to request MassDOT to attend an Advisory Board meeting to discuss the goals of FRTA and discuss the content of the MOU as soon as feasible. Jeff Singleton seconded and discussion followed. Tracy Rogers asked what the goal of meeting with MassDOT is. Jeff Singleton stated that he is looking to seek MassDOT's rationale behind the MOU. Donna MacNicol suggested discussing the MOU internally with the Advisory Board before meeting with MassDOT. Tracy Rogers made a **motion** to table the previous motion made by Jasper Lapienski. Lance Fritz clarified that the motion to table is superior to the original motion. Robert J. Decker III seconded and discussion continued. Jeff Singleton stated there is nothing wrong with discussing this internally, but that the discussion shouldn't delay the request for MassDOT to attend an Advisory Board meeting. Robert J. Decker III suggested FRTA could further explain metrics at the next Advisory Board meeting. The vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Hayley Bolton	Bernardston	2.04	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	2.07	Yes
Donald Walker Jr	Conway	1.01	No
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32	Yes
Ray Purington	Gill	1.11	Yes
William Martin	Greenfield	25.77	Yes
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.91	No
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.67	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.54	Yes
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	1.29	Yes
Cynthia Dodge	Disabled Commuter	1.00	No
Jasper Lapienski	Rider Community	<u>1.00</u>	No
		Total	59.73

Yes – 43.81
 No – 15.92

The vote passed and the **motion** to table carried. Lance Fritz suggested having FRTA bring a proposal for the MOU to the Advisory Board for discussion before signing the next MOU.

8. DEMAND RESPONSE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONTRACT:

Tina M. Cote announced that FRTA was awarded \$50,000 in technical assistance funds from MassDOT to perform a review of our demand response program, similar to the comprehensive service analysis on the fixed route system from 2014/2015. FRTA is interested in doing a review of overall operations from all demand response contract providers and investigate ways to

improve efficiencies and increase ridership. The expectation is to have a report completed in the spring of FY20 and to be in a position to begin implementing any changes suggested in the report at the start of FY21.

Steve Ellis stated that the Montague Senior Center is looking to start up their own rideshare program because the current demand response program doesn't seem to work for them as there has been complaints that there can sometimes an hour window to wait for a pickup. Molly Morin stated that there are 30-minute windows for trip pickups to allow flexibility for the scheduling software to maximize driver time to ensure trips are delivered on time. Steve Ellis asked that FRTA communicate with the senior centers and councils on aging ensure they have a better understanding of the demand response programs and fix any misconceptions out there. Lance Fritz suggested adding a demand response agenda item onto future Advisory Board meetings. Ray Purington suggested the consultant look at projected usage of transportation from each town. Cynthia Dodge asked about the fare costs for demand response. Tina M. Cote stated that fares vary by community but range from \$1.50 each way up to \$2.75 each way.

9. DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE COORDINATION WITH VALLEY FLYER SCHEDULE:

Lance Fritz discussed the new Valley Flyer train service that started on August 30, 2019 and asked the Advisory Board if it was a worthwhile effort for FRTA to try and better coordinate bus connections with train arrival/departure times. Peter Otten suggested there is a need to get ridership information from train passengers in order to better understand the potential for coordination. Jasper Lapienski suggested that FRTA should at least investigate it. Tracy Rogers asked about the funding for the Valley Flyer service. Michael Perreault indicated that the FRCOG and PVPC are working together to do surveying of the pilot project and perhaps they would share the outcomes with FRTA. William Martin stated that the Valley Flyer is a two-year pilot project and is projecting 25,000 trips over the course of that period.

10. DISCUSSION ON GMTA LEASE:

Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA has been negotiating the lease of the maintenance facility since May. The new lease terms are through FY20 with an additional 6-month extension. Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** for FRTA to sign the lease with the GMTA for continued use of the maintenance facility. Jonathan von Ranson seconded, and discussion continued. If the proposed lease is not extended, then rental of the facility becomes month-to-month and terminable with 120 days' notice. Steve Ellis stated that the Montague Selectboard will be considering the proposed lease at the next Selectboard meeting. Discussion continued that there is some concern for exposure to capital costs to keep the facility in habitable condition as well as the timeframe for FRTA completing construction of a new maintenance facility. Donna MacNicol stated that if the Montague Selectboard is taking up discussion of the proposed lease there should be some consideration for a longer-term lease agreement for FRTA to be in a better position to contribute to any capital improvements. William Martin stated that the Town of Greenfield has a \$9.3 million grant for construction of a new town library and that project will then displace the Greenfield Fire Department which will cause them to relocate to the current maintenance facility. Donna MacNicol stated that GMTA needs to notify FRTA in writing that they are intending to

lease the maintenance facility to the Town of Greenfield on behalf of the Fire Department so FRTA knows the facility will be unavailable to them. William Martin stated that FRTA was given notice for an increase in rent to \$6,200 per month beginning in June but have been continuing to pay the previous monthly amount. Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA has continued to pay the previous amount to GMTA since the lease expired and intends to pay the increased new amount once the lease is signed. Jasper Lapienski asked what the structure of the GMTA is between Greenfield and Montague. Steve Ellis stated that Greenfield and Montague have an equal say on the GMTA board and additionally stated that the Town of Montague has an excellent relationship with the Town of Greenfield and the FRTA and are looking to set reasonable terms with a reasonable contract length for the lease of the maintenance facility. William Martin stated that the lease contained in the Advisory Board meeting agenda is not the most current version of the proposed lease agreement. Lance Fritz clarified that the motion is not to sign the lease contained within the meeting packet but to authorize the Administrator to sign a lease with the GMTA for continued use of the maintenance facility. Final lease negotiations, and any further changes to the lease document, are to be completed between the Administrator and GMTA. Peter Otten commented that while it is always good to have healthy discussions, the Advisory Board should not be micromanaging the Administrator. Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to call the question. Peter Otten seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried. The vote on the main **motion** was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

11. UPDATE FROM TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Michael Perreault provided the following updates from the Transit Advisory Committee:

- There was discussion on the FY20 state budget and FRTA/MassDOT MOU similar to today's discussion.
- FRTA had met recently with Greenfield Community College and are working with them on creating a work-study program. One idea is to have a student work on creating a marketing campaign to address stigma of using public transportation.

12. OTHER FRTA UPDATES:

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

- FRTA will be holding another systemwide orientation on September 26th.
- Town of Greenfield Olive Street road, intersection, and sidewalk improvements projects have been completed.
- Senior 'Free Tuesdays' have yielded 497 free fixed route one-way rides from July and August. There were 9 Tuesdays since the start of the fiscal year averaging 55 free senior trips each Tuesday.
- FRTA had submitted an application for the MassDOT Community Transit Grant Program to run a shuttle from Greenfield into Sunderland via Routes 5/10 and are awaiting award announcements.
- MassDOT has released a Workforce Transportation Grant which is due on October 11th. FRTA is looking at ideas to provide transportation access for employees seeking 2nd and 3rd shift work. One of the requirements for this grant is to have a 20% local match.
- The café space remains unoccupied. If anyone has any ideas for use of the space, whether for use as a café or otherwise, please contact Tina M. Cote.

Lance Fritz announced that long-time Southwick (designee) representative and Advisory Board Clerk, Ruth Preston, has resigned from the Advisory Board since the last meeting. Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** for the Advisory Board Chairman Lance Fritz to send a letter to Ruth Preston thanking her for her years of service on the Advisory Board. Peter Otten seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried. It was discussed that the vacancy of the Clerk will be put on the agenda for the November meeting.

Japser Lapienski stated that he has researched a way to travel via public transportation from Franklin County to Boston and would like to present that information at the next Advisory Board meeting.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on November 21st.

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to adjourn. Peter Otten seconded, and the meeting concluded at 5:45pm.