

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 20, 2018 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>
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32
Ray Purington	Gill	1.11
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	25.77
Cindy Doty	Hatfield	2.38
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.91
Ruth Preston	Southwick	2.54
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	1.29
Megan Rhodes	Rider Community	<u>1.00</u>
	Total	54.32

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator, Molly Morin; FTM General Manager, and George Touloumtzis; FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Chairman.

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. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

**3. REVIEW AND VOTE TO ACCEPT MINUTES FROM MAY 17, 2018 MEETING:**

Jeff Singleton stated that comments he made at the May 17, 2018 meeting were not accurately captured in the minutes. There was discussion that Jeff Singleton should submit written comments to Michael Perreault to be included in the minutes. Discussion ended that meeting minutes for May 17, 2018 will be tabled until the next Advisory Board meeting.

#### **4. OLD BUSINESS:**

There was no old business.

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

Tina M. Cote stated that last year we applied for \$20 million through the federal bus and bus facilities grant program and earlier this year we were awarded \$6 million. After speaking with representatives from MassDOT there is no indication that we will be awarded any additional funds to construct a new maintenance facility. Now we are in the process of re-negotiating contracts with our Owner's Project Manager and Architect and Engineering team to reflect the reduction in scope from designing a \$20 million facility to now designing for a \$6 million facility. In the meantime, the sub-consultants for the A/E are finishing up testing on the site with reports soon to follow thereafter.

Robert J. Decker III asked what liabilities FRTA has if we need to cancel the contracts with the OPM and/or A/E team. Michael Perreault indicated that there is language in the current contracts with both the OPM and A/E that includes termination language. Jeff Singleton asked that FRTA follow up with Montague Town Planner, Walter Ramsey, with an update on the maintenance facility project. Michael Perreault stated that he would follow up with Walter Ramsey to make sure they are up to date with the project and any impact to the timeline to purchasing the property. Ray Purington asked about the average contract fees for services in relation to the construction costs for the project. Tina M. Cote stated that to the best of our knowledge, OPM fees are typically around 5% of the total construction costs and A/E fees are typically around 10% of the total construction costs. Tina M. Cote also mentioned that FRTA will be meeting with members from GMTA to discuss the lease of the current facility and give them an update on our construction project. If negotiations fail, FRTA may need to go back out to bid for consulting/designing services. This could set the project back an additional three months or so. It was clarified that FRTA has only paid for work completed to date.

#### **6. DISCUSSION ON FY19 STATE BUDGET:**

Tina M. Cote explained that in FY18 the state budget included \$80.4 million in State Contract Assistance for all of the RTAs. In FY19 the state budget increased to \$82 million in State Contract Assistance. This resulted in an increase of approximately \$19,000 for FRTA (see attached letter). Tina M. Cote continued that this increase only covers a part of the cost increases for this year's budget (for things such as wages, insurance, etc.) and that it is not 'extra' money that we are able to put into service. As of now there is no indication as to what funding levels to expect moving forward. Jeff Singleton asked about the additional funding in this year's budget for RTAs. Tina M. Cote stated that it would be discussed under the 'FY19 State Supplemental Budget' section of this meeting.

## **7. FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE ON FY18 AUDIT AND CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT WITH ADELSON & COMPANY:**

Lance Fritz stated that the Finance and Audit Committee met with the auditors at the end of August to discuss the draft FY18 audit. There were no findings from the audit. The final audit documents will be prepared and distributed to the Advisory Board at the November meeting. Robert J. Decker III added that there was discussion with the auditors looking for more detail on expenses for the operation of the JWO Transit Center to ensure funds from the FRCOG are appropriate. In addition, FRTA needs to make sure the bank being used are insured. The Finance and Audit Committee also discussed retaining the current auditor, Adelson & Company, for the FY19 audit. Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to retain and continue engagement with Adelson & Company for FY19. Eric Twarog seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

## **8. FY19 STATE SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET:**

Tina M. Cote explained that as part of the FY19 state RTA budget line item there was an additional two pools of money for the RTAs; \$2 million for transit authorities operating at a deficit; and \$4 million for RTAs that agree to an MOU established by a newly form Task Force. Tina M. Cote clarified that most of the \$2 million will go to PVTA and WRTA and that FRTA is not eligible because we are not operating in a deficit. The newly established Task Force is supposed to begin in September and report back to the legislature in November. The members have not yet been appointed to this Task Force and no meetings have taken place as of yet. There is no indication on when the money must be spent by or how much time RTAs will have to put projects together for this money. There continues to be a strong concern from RTAs on adding service from this funding and then having to take it away after FY19 if there is no continued/sustained funding tied to this project. Lastly, there is another question remaining as to whether or not the state is going to expect local matching funds for this additional funding.

Megan Rhodes asked if the Task Force is, or will be made, aware of the Comprehensive Service Assessments the RTAs recently completed. For FRTA this shows the need for evening and weekend service. Tina M. Cote stated that she recently spoke with one of the consultants for MassDOT on this Task Force project discussing the need for evening and weekend service, also noted recent discussions with Montague advocating for more service on Route 23, and the loss of intercity bus service with Max Bus and, even more recently, Peter Pan soon to be no longer running bus service in Franklin County.

Ruth Preston suggested that FRTA could add service between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Jeff Singleton stated that FRTA should advocate for limited weekend service, particularly if there is concern for long-term sustainable funding. Ray Purington asked if the funding could be extended beyond June 30<sup>th</sup>. Tina M. Cote stated she was not sure. Jonathan von Ranson spoke about the outlying towns without fixed route service and suggested that FRTA should look for pilot projects that help residents age in place.

## **9. UPDATE FROM TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

George Touloumtzis provided the following updates from the Transit Advisory Committee:

- Recent changes to the by-laws to move meetings to the same months as the Advisory Board and move the meeting start times from 1:00pm to 3:00pm.
- There has been renewed interest and ongoing discussion on advocacy for FRTA and more recently about the newly established Task Force. At the last TAC meeting there was a vote to recommend to the Task Force they make a priority for all regional transit authorities to have weekend fixed route service.

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

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

- FRTA continues to work with the Town of Greenfield with some road, sidewalk, and intersection improvements near the Transit Center in conjunction with the construction of the new parking garage. The total for the projects will be about \$165,000 and FRTA will be utilizing unused capital funds from the construction of the Transit Center.
- FRTA is in the process of renewing its contract with Lifepath for demand response transportation services for their clients. The new contract date is expected to be October 1<sup>st</sup> and it is expected to be a three-year contract.
- Earlier this year FRTA ended its pilot shuttle as it was not performing well. FRTA is now working with the Franklin County Sheriff's Office on a similar program. FRTA has Federal New Freedoms funding for this project through June 30, 2019. The funding for this project is to assist people with substance abuse disorders and providing transportation access to recovery services. Megan Rhodes asked if the van will remain owned by FRTA. Tina M. Cote explained that FRTA will continue to own the van and the Sheriff's Office will be the operator.
- As discussed earlier, Peter Pan Bus Lines will no longer be servicing Greenfield after September 30<sup>th</sup>. Eric Twarog asked why Peter Pan was cancelling the service. Tina M. Cote stated that Peter Pan did not give a reason for cancelling the service, but presumably due to low ridership. Robert J. Decker III suggested FRTA write a letter to the Department of Public Utilities making them aware of this loss of service. Cindy Doty suggested that if FRTA does send a letter to the DPU, perhaps you should also copy MGM regarding the loss. Tina M. Cote concluded that Greyhound Lines still services the Transit Center with one trip per day north and south, and that passengers can still use FRTA Route 31 to get into downtown Northampton to catch Peter Pan.
- The fixed route schedule changes launched in the beginning of September have been a seamless transition with little disruption to passengers. Jeff Singleton had a concern that the Route 23 bus in the afternoon now had a different path of travel that may displace riders. Molly Morin explained that the travel pattern remains the same, but she will speak with Jeff Singleton offline to get more specifics.
- The Administrative Assistant position at FTM is currently vacant and but is in the process of hiring a replacement.
- FTM's Assistant General Manager, Rauley Caine, has given his notice of resignation and First Transit is in the process of conducting a search for his replacement.

- FRTA earlier this year completed a state Drug and Alcohol audit and a State Auditor's Office audit. There were no findings with the Drug and Alcohol audit. For the State Auditor's Office audit there were two findings; not having a non-revenue vehicle policy; and not posting FRTA's audit information on the Comptroller's website. Those two findings were similar to most other RTAs. FRTA is working to create a policy for non-revenue vehicles. Prior to the audit FRTA was posting audit information on its own website and since the audit FRTA has provided a link to its information on the Comptroller's website.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to adjourn; Jonathan von Ranson seconded, and the meeting concluded at 5:00pm.