NOTES

Pursuant to written notice sent to Committee Members and pursuant to notice posted at least forty-eight hours prior to the meeting, copies of said notice having been sent to the FRTA’s 41-member towns, the meeting of the Transit Advisory Committee of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority was held on July 14, 2016 at the John W. Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

Present were the following TAC Members:

Vice-Chairman George Touloumtzis, Suzie Hale, Jasper Lapienski, and Josh McElhone.

Also present were:

Carol Letson, Megan Rhodes, Luisa Plump, Rachel Fichtenbaum, Taylor Rock, Lisa Paquette, FTM Assistant General Manager, and Michael Perreault, FRTA Assistant Administrator.

Vice-Chairman George Touloumtzis called the meeting to order at 1:00pm and it was noted that a quorum was not present to hold a meeting.

2. REVIEW MEETING MINUTES FROM MAY 12, 2016:

This item was tabled until the next meeting.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR:

This item was tabled until the next meeting. There was discussion that as per the by-laws we would need to elect both the Chair and Vice-Chair at the next meeting.

4. COMMITTEE VACANCIES/RECRUITMENT:

Michael Perreault stated that committee member Gary Daniele has resigned from the committee and committee member Teri Rutherford has resigned effective at the end of this month. Both members have taken new employment which has taken them out of Franklin County. George Touloumtzis urged committee members to reach out to any individuals that might be interested in joining the committee to fill the vacancies. Michael Perreault stated that anyone interested could contact him by email (Michael@frta.org) with a letter of interest. That letter would be forwarded for approval
to the FRTA Administrator and then members would be appointed for two years. Michael Perreault suggested the possibility of posting committee vacancies onto the FRTA website. Suzie Hale suggested looking for people that use FRTA’s services and local employers. There was some discussion as to whether changing the day/time of meeting would help with attendance. Michael Perreault stated that over the past few years, July seems to be the most difficult month to get a quorum as more people are on vacations during the summer months. George Touloumtzis asked Michael Perreault to re-send the by-laws out to the committee members and to add this topic to the agenda at the next meeting.

5. AUGUST 1ST FIXED ROUTE CHANGES:

Michael Perreault stated that the FRTA Advisory Board meeting in May had voted to approve fixed route changes, which will be effective August 1st. At the last TAC meeting Michael Perreault discussed there would be a need to eliminate the later evening runs that were originally proposed, but in the week between the TAC meeting and the FRTA Advisory Board meeting, FRTA learned some additional details regarding our funding projections for FY17 and those last evening runs were then added back in and were part of the approved changes. FRTA and FRCOG have since been working on final revisions of the new bus schedules and it is anticipated that new schedules will be delivered by July 25th to start distributing. Megan Rhodes added that the new schedules will have route time tables and maps on one side and a system wide map on the reverse.

There have been three main issues FRTA has either been working to educate riders on or searching for solutions on since the FRTA Advisory Board voted to approve the changes at their last meeting in May. The Route 31 from Northampton to Greenfield will now by-pass South Deerfield Center on the 7am run. This was done in order to get the bus into Greenfield prior to 9am to make connections with the Route 21 heading to GCC. Riders in South Deerfield Center will be able to take the UMass Route 46 bus from South Deerfield Center to the Whately Park & Ride lot and connect with the Route 31 to get to Greenfield. The second issue is regarding the Turners Falls Industrial Park along the Route 32. The FRTA currently doesn’t go into the industrial park on the Route 32 and was not going into the industrial park with the new route changes. We’ve identified one employer in the industrial park whose shift ends at 4:00pm which does not give their employee enough time to get out to Millers Falls Rd to catch the bus. FRTA is working on a possible solution to have the bus drive into the industrial park during that one time point to allow for that connection. Lastly, with the new fixed route changes FRTA is no longer laying over at Hannafords and riders are concerned about layover times to make connections with MART’s G-Link and Athol/Orange Shuttle. In addition, FRTA is working with MART to see if there are things we can do to make connections better.

6. BUS STOPS/FLAG STOPS:

Michael Perreault stated that FRTA recently put out a memo reaffirming its flag stop policy. It was discussed that as a matter of safety and consistency, FRTA is now enforcing the elimination of flag stops. Michael Perreault reiterated that the FRTA is
committed to serving the passengers and is not eliminating the practice of picking or discharging passengers at stops not on the bus schedule, but instead looking for a more formal, and controlled, process of identifying locations not identified on the bus schedules and having them evaluated for safety. Once that is completed then FRTA will have them clearly marked with a bus stop sign. Lisa Paquette added that the memo directs all riders to contact her directly. She is collecting information from riders on all of the locations that have been used as flag stops and will be working as expeditiously as possible to get stops marked with FRTA bus stop signage.

Michael Perreault also noted two exceptions to flag stops detailed in the memo: along Routes 5&10 in Hatfield and Downtown Greenfield. FRTA has been working with the Town of Hatfield and the Town of Greenfield to identify and mark bus stops in those locations in their respective towns. George Touloumtzis added that the Town of Greenfield recently adopted a complete streets policy which should work in conjunction with FRTA in finding downtown bus stops that would improve access for all modes of transportation, including transit.

There was discussion to have Lisa Paquette look into whether the intersection of Christian Lane and Routes 5&10 in Whately and make sure that location is on the list to review and get marked with a bus stop sign.

7. REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL TOPICS:

Rachel Fichtenbaum had attended the Franklin County Resource Network in June to continue discussing travel training and creating a local travel training program in Franklin County to see if there are any organizations that are currently providing this service or would be interested in creating a program to help people in the region. Suzie Hale has also given Rachel Fichtenbaum some contacts with local schools that might have an interest. Suzie Hale also suggested contacting property managers at area low-income housing properties and the Greenfield Senior Center. MassMobility has also recently put out a survey for information on volunteer driver programs around the state and Michael Perreault had asked if there were any updates on the survey results. Rachel Fichtenbaum updated that the results should be published soon. Lastly, the Berkshire Regional Coordinating Council is still interested in working with the FRTA Transit Advisory Committee on either a joint legislative forum and/or some marketing campaigns and will be reaching out at some point to connect with this group.

8. OTHER FRTA UPDATES:

Michael Perreault stated that the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) is working on re-branding and re-designing their RideMatch searchable transportation website and should be launched sometime in August. The website will be www.massridematch.org. Michael Perreault also stated that FRTA has created comment/feedback cards to collect information regarding our fixed route service.
9. PUBLIC COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, OR SUGGESTIONS:

Luisa Plump has heard from riders and employers that people from the North Quabbin area find it is difficult working 9am-5pm in the Greenfield area to connect with the last buses of the day back to the North Quabbin area.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 8, 2016. The meeting was adjourned at 2:05pm.