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 November 10, 2016 at the John W. Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

Present were the following TAC Members:

Chairman George Touloumtzis, Suzie Hale, Josh McElhone, and Deb Wilson.

Also present were:

Susan Mareneck, Carol Letson, Megan Rhodes, Louisa Plump, Taylor Rock, Rachel Fichtenbaum, Amy Rau, FRTA Administrative Assistant, Lisa Paquette, FTM Assistant General Manager, and Michael Perreault, FRTA Assistant Administrator.

Chairman George Touloumtzis called the meeting to order at 1:00pm and it was noted that a quorum was present to hold a meeting.

2. REVIEW MEETING MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 8, 2016:

Suzie Hale made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from September 8, 2016. Deb Wilson seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the motion carried.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR:

There were no nominations from the floor and no Committee members interested in self-nominating for the Vice-Chair position. It was discussed that this item would be removed from the agenda until a later date, to be determined. George Touloumtzis clarified, that in the event he is unable to attend a future meeting, the by-laws has a pro-tem clause to elect someone to preside over the meeting.

4. DISCUSSION OF TAC MEETING DATES/TIMES:

George Touloumtzis discussed that at the last meeting there was discussion on updating the meeting dates and times, but to open up the discussion again. A change to the frequency of the meetings would require a change to the by-laws, but a time change
would not. Suzie Hale commented that although a time change may allow for more people to attend, both she and Josh would not be able to attend if the meeting time were later in the day. Suzie Hale stated that she would be open to alternating times to have meetings 1pm to 2pm one month, and then later in the afternoon for the following meeting. George Touloumtzis suggested that alternating the times may become confusing to people versus having a consistent meeting time. Luisa Plump suggested that moving the meeting to a later meeting time would impact people’s ability from the North Quabbin area from attending due to the limited bus schedule in the later afternoon. Michael Perreault stated that from past experience, meeting at 1-2pm works generally well and meetings are generally well attended. For those people that aren’t able to attend the Transit Advisory Committee meetings, the FRTA’s Advisory Board meetings are held later in the afternoons, typically starting at 4pm, are also open to the public, and the vast majority have a public comment period. The FRTA Advisory Board meets on the third Thursday of the month, generally in March, May, September, and November.

5. BUS STOP/FLAG STOPS UPDATE AND CREATING A LISTING:

Continuing from last meeting’s discussion, Michael Perreault was looking for a simple and creative way to inform riders of bus stops not listed on the schedule. Megan Rhodes asked how many of these stops are there. Michael Perreault stated that there are a significant number of stops. Susan Mareneck asked if those stops could be loaded into a mapping website, like Google Maps or Google Transit, for people to easily find them when inputting starting point and destination information. There was discussion about potentially color-coding the stop ‘dot’ a different color or using a different symbol to differentiate between stops that are listed on the bus schedule versus those that are not. Lisa Paquette suggested using the term ‘request stop’ to indicate that the bus would stop if a passenger would be looking to get off the bus or if a passenger is waiting at the bus stop. George Touloumtzis affirmed that the term ‘request stop’ has been used in the past and may be a good term to use as riders may already be familiar with it. George Touloumtzis also suggested that having a listing online may also be helpful for people. Deb Wilson asked if there would be printed copies for those people that don’t use computers or have access to the internet. Michael Perreault stated that the intention was not to have printed copies, due to limitations with print size, font size, and how the list could be sorted (i.e. by town or by bus route), but that the information could be printed from the website. Amy Rau suggested that this information would be more of a living document, as routes change, stops are added or deleted, and would be better served as an electronic document. Deb Wilson pointed out that there are instances where bus stops could be on one side of the street but not the other side. Michael Perreault will take back these comments and continue developing this and bring back an update at a future meeting.

6. OTHER FRTA UPDATES:

Michael Perreault stated that the FRTA Advisory Board has begun initial discussions on weekend fixed route service planning. The Advisory Board is looking to start discussions with fixed route town representatives and local legislative delegation on what weekend
service would look like, what cost projections will be, and how it could be funded. This is still very early in the planning/discussion process and Michael Perreault will continue to update on the process. Michael Perreault announced that sometime in December FRTA will be hosting a ride the bus with the Mayor event. Greenfield’s Mayor Martin will be joining us to ride along on the Route 21 and then come back to the café at the transit center. Throughout the event people will have the opportunity to talk to the Mayor about transportation. Once we finalize dates/times Michael Perreault will post on the FRTA website, Facebook, and send out information to the Committee. Michael Perreault updated that FRTA’s RouteMatch fixed route real-time bus information system has been not working properly. FRTA is changing cellular carriers from AT&T to Verizon and is hopeful that in the coming month, once the switch is completed, that system will be back up and running. Michael Perreault announced that FRTA will be having Free Friday after Thanksgiving. There will be no fare on all FRTA fixed route buses on the Friday after Thanksgiving.

7. REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL TOPICS:

Rachel Fichtenbaum updated that with her travel training outreach, she has heard from the Community Action Youth Programs and the United ARC that they both would like to provide more formal travel training and orientation to using the FRTA fixed bus routes. Both organizations have staff available that are interested but are requesting more information on getting familiar with FRTA specific routes and system information. Michael Perreault stated that FRTA is happy to work with Rachel and those organizations to help familiarize their clients in successfully using the bus system. Michael Perreault also updated that FRTA is working to update the transportation inventory online to include intercity bus service, update the name change from Franklin County Home Care Corp. to Lifepath, and update on the MART service in Athol/Orange from their dial-a-ride now to their Athol/Orange shuttle.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS, TRANSPORTATION QUESTIONS, OR SUGGESTIONS FOR AGENDA TOPICS:

Megan Rhodes asked about the status of the monthly fare cards. Michael Perreault responded that while FRTA is making progress, the final programing of the system with how the system will work are the last of the hurdles before going live. Michael Perreault is hoping that FRTA will be able to start issuing the monthly passes in early January. Susan Mareneck asked if this would be another fare media that drivers will have to accept. Michael Perreault affirmed that the new reloadable monthly passes, along with cash and magnetic strip bus tickets will all be accepted on the bus. Luisa Plump advocated for increased bus service for the Athol/Orange area, specifically later evening service for people to access transportation for employment. George Touloumtzis asked if this type of service gap was considered in the Comprehensive Service Analysis document. Michael Perreault stated that it was considered and included as part of the service improvements, which essentially concluded the need for increased service frequencies, extending service later into the evening, and offering weekend service. The link to the Comprehensive Service Analysis document can be found online at:
http://frta.org/about/frta-regional-transit-plan/. Carol Letson announced that Greening Greenfield will be holding a transportation forum on Saturday November 19th at GCC. Information on the forum can be found online at www.greeninggreenfield.org. Carol Letson also announced that Greening Greenfield has selected Russ Fisher as their “Green Hero” and has created a video with GCTV which will be posted online in the near future.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2017. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm.