

MEETING 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 November 8, 2018 at the John W. Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

Present were the following TAC Members:

George Touloumtzis, Kate Bavelock, and Deb Wilson.

Also present were:

Rachel Fichtenbaum, Megan Rhodes, Peter Kuusisto, Gary Daniele, Molly Morin; FTM General Manager, Jenna Howitt; FTM Assistant General Manager, Tina Cote, FRTA Administrator, and Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator.

George Touloumtzis called the meeting to order at 3:00pm and it was noted that a quorum **was not** present to hold a meeting.

2. REVIEW MEETING MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 13, 2018:

Meeting minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

3. UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON RTA TASK FORCE:

Michael Perreault stated that since the last TAC meeting, he has been sending emails to the TAC group email list with updates on information from the state's RTA Task Force. It is believed that the RTA Task Force was expected to give a formal report to the state legislature by the end of November but given that it took longer to get the task force up and running than anticipated it is expected that they will request an extension on their time to report. As of now, meetings have been weekly and held at MassDOT's office in Boston. From the last TAC meeting it was discussed that the committee would send a letter to the Task Force requesting consideration for all transit authorities to be given the ability to operate weekend service. Michael Perreault presented the letter for George Touloumtzis to sign today and it will be sent to the Task Force. In a recent email to the TAC group email list, anyone interested in submitting public comment can do so either by email or by phone.

The next step at the conclusion of the RTA Task Force meeting will be how the additional funding will be distributed to all RTAs. Tina Cote explained that MassDOT has just released a grant application for the RTAs to submit projects to be considered for the additional \$4 million in funding allotted in the state budget for this fiscal year. RTAs can submit projects up to \$500,000 and may submit a second project if RTAs are working on joint projects. The project applications are due at the end of November. Projects will only be funded for one year and RTAs are expected to sustain those projects moving forward after the grant period is over. With these criteria in mind, FRTA will not be applying for weekend service as it could not be sustained without continued funding beyond the grant period. FRTA is still hopefully that MassDOT will provide additional state funding in the future to sustain weekend service. In the meantime, FRTA is working a project submission for this grant opportunity and we will have more information at the next TAC meeting in March.

Rachel Fichtenbaum asked who would be reviewing and awarding the RTA grants. Tina Cote stated that she believes the grants will be reviewed and awarded by the RTA Task Force. George Touloumtzis asked if the TAC could get any preview information on what the FRTA is considering for projects. Tina Cote stated that it is still premature, but that FRTA is looking to expand on its existing demand response scheduling software and potentially working with PVRTA on a joint project submission. Tina Cote stated that FRTA should be more complete and more information should be available next week at the FRTA Advisory Board meeting as well. Deb Wilson asked when people will know what projects are selected. Tina Cote stated that MassDOT is expected to make project award announcements by the end of December.

4. REVIEW/DISCUSSION TAC BY-LAWS:

There had been much discussion at the last meeting on the by-laws. The two main changes include the time change to 3:00pm and adjusting the meeting schedule to four times per year. Michael Perreault and George Touloumtzis will meet and discuss any further changes to the TAC By-laws and will present draft language for consideration at the next TAC meeting.

5. REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL TOPICS:

Rachel Fichtenbaum provided the following updates and information to the group:

- The Governor has convened a Council to address aging. Within that Council is a sub-group working on transportation. That sub-group will be presenting any recommendations to the full Council at their next meeting on December 10th. There was a focus on seniors in rural areas and gateway cities looking at current transportation options, travel training successes, and other current pilot projects and their successes.
- At a recent Quaboag RCC meeting there was discussion on a recent partnership with the Quaboag Connector and a local medical school to have med students perform a two-week clerkship where students would ride the bus and speak with

community organizations and drivers to learn more about health outcomes in relations to transportation services and access to transportation services. Tina Cote asked how the Quaboag Connector is funded. Rachel Fichtenbaum stated that they receive funding and support from multiple sources including MassDOT through the Community Transit Grant Program, grants from the local hospital, private donations, and vehicles provided by PVTa.

- There is a small one-time funding opportunity between \$7,500-\$10,000 for non-profits and activists with project related to transportation justice or climate change. This grant is through Transportation for Massachusetts and is due at the end of November. More information about this grant can be found online at www.t4ma.org/tj_rfp.

Megan Rhodes announced she recently attended a Rural Commonwealth Small Town Summit and learned of a new “Village to Village Network” in the Towns of Leverett, Shutesbury, New Salem, and Wendell. This is a network of volunteers within the four towns available to assist local seniors with different projects, including transportation. More information about this program can be found online at www.villageneighbors.org.

Tina Cote announced that FRTA has recently soft-launched next-day and same-day scheduling with the demand response service in the Greenfield area. Currently, FRTA requires a minimum of 48-hours in advance to schedule transportation in Greenfield, Montague, Gill, Deerfield, Whately, Orange, New Salem, Warwick, and Wendell. Utilizing real-time scheduling and dispatching software, FRTA is hoping to fill empty seats and better maximize driver time already out on the road. If this proves to be successful, FRTA hopes to make this option permanent for its demand response riders.

6. BRAINSTORMING ON PUBLIC AWARENESS:

There was an open discussion brainstorming different existing and new ideas on promoting FRTA and public transit. A listing of ideas brought up during the discussion were as follows:

- Expand on the free fixed route Friday after Thanksgiving to do give-a-way days between Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- Market services to High Schools.
- Outreach to GCC at the beginning of the school year/semester.
- Another/similar Ride with the Mayor campaign.
- Put a bus in the Franklin County Fair parade.
- More social media presence; use wording and/or hashtags that get more ‘likes’, ‘shares’, and ‘views’.
- Create how-to videos; reading schedules, paying your fare, loading/unloading your bike, etc.
- Dump the Pump Day event.
- Enter bus in local touch-a-bus/truck event.
- Work with UMass interns to help with marketing or developing a marketing campaign.

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

Megan Rhodes announced that the FRCOG is starting the update their Regional Transportation Plan. This is a county-wide plan that is updated every four years. Public outreach meetings are scheduled for Colrain on December 11th, Erving on January 8th, at the JWO Transit Center in Greenfield on January 9th, and Sunderland January 16th. Megan Rhodes will send the flyer to Michael Perreault to share the information about these upcoming meetings with the group. Michael Perreault and Peter Kuusisto spoke about <https://baystatecommute.com>. People are able to create a profile online and add their commute trip information (transit, biking, walking, carpooling, etc.). You are able to earn points for your commute trips that you can redeem for coupons and gift cards from local and national retailers, restaurants, and services. MassRIDES has beefed up its outreach to local partners to help commuters save at local businesses.

Michael Perreault stated that if anyone has agenda topics at an upcoming meeting can send them to michael@frta.org.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2019. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.