

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 March 14, 2019 at the John W. Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

Present were the following TAC Members:

Chair George Touloumtzis, Vice-Chair Elizabeth Quirk, Gary Daniele, Megan Rhodes, and Deb Wilson.

Also present were:

Jenna Henning, Trevor Boeding, Jeff Singleton, Jasper Lapienski, Carol Letson, Molly Morin; FTM General Manager, and Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator.

George Touloumtzis called the meeting to order at 3:00pm and it was noted that a quorum **was** present to hold a meeting.

2. REVIEW MEETING MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 13, 2018 AND MEETING NOTES FROM NOVEMBER 8, 2018:

Elizabeth Quirk made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from September 13, 2018, Megan Rhodes seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Elizabeth Quirk – Yes
Gary Daniele – Yes
Megan Rhodes – Abstain
Deb Wilson – Yes

The vote passed and the **motion** carried.

There was no discussion on the meeting notes from November 8, 2018.

3. UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON RTA TASK FORCE:

Michael Perreault stated that he was hopeful that a draft report from the RTA Task Force would have been released prior to this meeting, but there has been no such news. Once the Task Force releases their draft report, they will also hold public hearings; one of which will be in western MA. The MA House of Representatives are already underway with budget discussions for FY20, so it is anticipated that the final report from the RTA Task Force would need to be released soon if it contains funding/budget implications that the State Legislature would need to discuss with regard to next year's State budget. Megan Rhodes commented that there has been little in the way of new information posted on the RTA Task Force webpage. Discussion continued that there is a lot of concern of the lack of transparency in the RTA Task Force meetings and process. More information should be revealed before the next TAC meeting and Michael Perreault will email information about the RTA Task Force report when it becomes available.

4. MASSRIDES PROGRAM ENDING AFTER JUNE 2019:

Michael Perreault stated that he recently received an email from MassDOT indicating that funding for the MassRIDES employer-based education and outreach program services will be ending June 30th. There was no indication as to what, if anything, will take its place after that time other than the funds will be repurposed. George Touloumtzis suggested Michael Perreault reach out to Peter Kuusisto, MassRIDES coordinator, to see if he has any insight on the future of MassRIDES. Hopefully more information will be available by the next meeting.

5. REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL TOPICS:

Jenna Henning provided the following updates and information to the group:

- April 9th and 10th will be the MassDOT Transportation Innovation Conference in Worcester at the DCU Center. Some of the topics at the conference will include mobility management sessions including employment transportation, inclusive planning, healthcare access, and Transportation Network Companies. There is a fee for attending the conference but there are scholarships that will cover the fees. More detailed information on the conference, fees, scholarships, and agenda can be found online.
- MassMobility is re-engaging their statewide volunteer transportation network, which is a technical resource for organizations looking to use or provide volunteer transportation services. They are holding quarterly meetings at different locations across the state to share information and best practices to effectively operate volunteer transportation programs. The next meeting will be scheduled in May and held in North Andover.

If anyone has questions or would like more information about either the Transportation Innovation Conference or the statewide volunteer transportation network please email

Michael Perreault at michael@frta.org and he will put you in touch with Jenna Henning or Rachel Fichtenbaum.

Megan Rhodes asked when information and applications for the next round of Community Transportation grants would be announced. Jenna Henning indicated announcements should be made sometime in April.

6. FRCOG REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE:

Megan Rhodes discussed that the FRCOG has started the process of updating their long-range Regional Transportation Plan. This plan looks at transportation needs over the next 20 years and is updated every 4 years. There was an online survey for people to complete and submit information, followed by several public meetings and stakeholder meetings. While the plan covers all modes of transportation, this year there is a big emphasis on transit including more frequency of transit, more routes, on-demand transit. A draft of the plan should be ready for release and public comment at the beginning of June. This plan will help shape funding priorities in the region over the next 20 years.

Gary Daniele asked about on-demand transit. Megan Rhodes said that a lot of initial feedback is about increasing access with transit vans operated by local Councils on Aging and also access and partnerships with companies like Uber and Lyft. There was discussion about the convenience with accessing on-demand transportation but there are concerns about the affordability of those services.

Trevor Boeding asked if there was any involvement with Baystate Franklin Medical Center for feedback on healthcare and transportation on this Regional Transportation Plan. Megan Rhodes stated that the FRCOG has been working with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Baystate Medical Center on transportation issues and a pilot program. The hospital has acquired some funding to enhance their patient appointment booking software to add a portion to include how people are getting to their medical appointments and working to schedule appointments in conjunction with bus schedules for those that don't have their own transportation.

Elizabeth Quirk asked if the FRCOG was aware that Uber and Lyft will bring people to Greenfield but won't come to Greenfield to pick people up. Megan Rhodes stated that they are aware of that issue and that the FRCOG is trying to work with Uber and Lyft to show that there is demand in Franklin County.

7. FRTA UPDATES:

Michael Perreault announced that FRTA will be holding another System Orientation for Human Service Agency Staff. This is geared to give people a basic level of understanding of FRTA's different services, how to use each of the services, and trip planning. It will be on Wednesday, April 10th, which unfortunately falls on the second day of the MassDOT Transportation Innovation Conference. George Touloumtzis added that he has attended the System Orientation in the past and found it very helpful in better

understanding FRTA and their services. Molly Morin also added that at the end of the training we bring people out to see a bus, the equipment on the bus, and end the day with a trip simulating one of our bus routes. Jasper Lapienski suggested that part of the System Orientation should include transferring to other transit authorities.

Michael Perreault updated that in January FRTA added two new trips on the Route 23 to Sunderland which depart from the transit center at 10:45am and 12:45pm with connections to the PVRTA Route 31 into UMass Amherst. FRTA will monitor use and ridership data over the next several months. Molly Morin added that they will also be running passenger surveys over the coming months to get more specific data on ridership trends, stop usage, transfer information, etc. All of this information will help us better understand how the route is performing, how those two additional runs are impacting service, and allow us to gauge if times, stops, route patterns, etc. should be changed to improved service.

Michael Perreault announced that FRTA was recently awarded a discretionary grant to fund a micro-transit pilot project. In November MassDOT released an application for competitive discretionary grant funds for all the RTAs to apply for new projects. A couple of the limits to the scope of projects that could be submitted included the total amount that could be requested and that the projects would have to be sustainable after the grant period ended. Those limits precluded FRTA from applying for weekend transportation. While all the details are not yet finalized, the pilot will allow the general public to access empty seats on current demand response vehicles through same-day and next-day transportation. The grant funds would enhance our current scheduling software to include scheduling online and through a phone application. FRTA has only received verbal confirmation of the award and awaiting the contract for the grant funds to identify the parameters of the grant. Initially, FRTA expects to open this pilot up to the Towns of Greenfield, Montague, Deerfield and Orange.

Michael Perreault stated that FRTA met recently with Representative Paul Mark. Rep. Mark indicated that he wants to help FRTA request additional funds for a pilot project to start weekend service in next year's state budget. The intention would be to get a request into the budget before the budget goes to Conference Committee. FRTA is cautiously optimistic and will bring more updates on this at the next TAC meeting.

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

George Touloumtzis asked why the Route 21 sometimes goes to the RMV and the Corporate Center and sometimes it doesn't. Molly Morin explained that the Route 21 only goes directly to the RMV twice because the Route 24 has a stop in front of Applebee's, which is within close walking distance to the RMV. George Touloumtzis also explained that there will be some new development at the old Greenfield Inn motel along Mohawk Trail in Greenfield.

Elizabeth Quirk stated that businesses in the Cherry Rum Plaza close before the last run on the Route 21. Molly Morin stated that she was not aware of that but stressed the importance of having consistency with the route so that people living close to Cherry Rum Plaza would have the opportunity to use that stop on the last run again.

The next FRTA Advisory Board meeting will be Thursday March 21st at 4:00pm.

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 May 9, 2019. The meeting was adjourned at 4:10pm.