

## RECORD OF EVENTS

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 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, and Deb Wilson.

Also present were:

Rachel Fichtenbaum, Jeff Singleton, Carol Letson, Jan Gibeau, 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 not** present to hold a meeting.

### **2. REVIEW MEETING MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 12, 2019:**

The minutes from the September 12, 2019 meeting were tabled until the next meeting.

### **3. REVIEW/DISCUSSION ON TAC BY-LAWS AND PROPOSED LANGUAGE CHANGE:**

Review and discussion on the TAC by-laws was tabled until the next meeting.

### **4. DISCUSSION ON AFL-CIO FY20 RIDER COMMUNITY REP:**

Michael Perreault explained that the FRTA Advisory Board has voting member position that must be filled every year for the Rider Community representative. As in years past, anyone interested in volunteering to serve as the Rider Community representative or has questions about the position should contact Michael Perreault at [michael@frta.org](mailto:michael@frta.org). Michael Perreault will put forth a list of volunteers interested to the AFL-CIO to approve and then move forward for the town to select one individual. This year the Rider Community representative will be for the Town of Rowe. Jeff Singleton suggested that the Transit Advisory Committee should be the body that makes the recommendation of

people to serve as the Rider Community representative. Rachel Fichtenbaum explained that the Rider Community representative came about through the MA General Laws. Jeff Singleton stated that there should be better way to fill this role because the AFL-CIO doesn't know people in Franklin County to fill this role. George Touloumtzis suggested that the Transit Advisory Committee could discuss this at its next upcoming meetings to be proactive about finding a better process prior the end of the next Rider Community representative term.

## **5. DISCUSSION ON MICROTRANSIT PILOT PROJECT:**

Michael Perreault updated that FRTA officially launched its microtransit pilot project, called FRTA Access, on October 1<sup>st</sup>. This pilot project uses the current scheduling software for demand response. Available to the general public, users can download the FRTA smartphone app through the App Store or Google Play. Trips can be scheduled same-day or one day in advance. The initial pilot project is starting with two travel zones; one zone consisting of the towns of Greenfield, Montague, Gill, Leyden, Deerfield, and Whately and a second zone consisting of the towns of Orange, New Salem, Warwick, and Wendell. Currently transportation can only be scheduled within those two zones. Hours of service have also been expanded to Monday through Friday from 7:00am to 6:00pm in the Greenfield area and 8:00am to 5:00pm in the Orange area. These expanded hours also apply for demand response users as well. Cost for the pilot project is \$5.00 each way and \$2.50 for each additional passenger. If this pilot project is successful, the intention is to be able to replicate and roll this out into all FRTA towns.

George Touloumtzis asked what the duration of the pilot project is. Michael Perreault stated that the pilot project will go through June 30, 2020. Molly Morin added that the intention is to roll this into FRTA's existing budget to continue this program into the future. George Touloumtzis asked how word was getting out about this. Michael Perreault stated that as of now information has been sent out through email and put on FRTA's website and Facebook page. Next steps are working on creating posters, flyers, and other marketing materials. In addition, FRTA is looking to attend public functions, such as Community Action's provider fair in December, to spread the word.

FRTA will be collecting feedback throughout the pilot project on users' experiences and reviewing data on trips that we're able to be scheduled to look at potential demand. This information will help FRTA shape and make changes to this program to be successful.

Deb Wilson asked if other transportation providers were doing something similar to this. Michael Perreault stated that there are similar projects in the Attleboro/Taunton area and in Newton MA. Rachel Fichtenbaum added that this type of project is very new and seems to be very popular all over the country.

## **6. FRTA/GCC WORK-STUDY PROJECT:**

Michael Perreault updated that FRTA and GCC has been working together to fill a work-study project. FRTA has interviewed two students and selected one. The person selected

is local woman and an FRTA rider. Jeff Singleton asked what this person would be doing for the work-study project. Michael Perreault stated that initially there was an idea for a marketing campaign to combat the stigma of riding public transportation. She will be helping FRTA with marketing, outreach, and promotion of FRTA and its services. FRTA is working to finalize a contract with GCC for the work-study and hopefully start on this new project soon.

## **7. UPDATE FROM WESTERN MASS TRANSPORTATION FORUM:**

Michael Perreault stated that Megan Rhodes was unable to attend today but that she did email a summary of the Western Mass Transportation Forum.

“On Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>, the Western Mass Transportation Forum was held in Northampton with the purpose of bringing together elected officials and individuals interested in improving transportation for the region. Jeff Singleton gave a great speech about the importance of riding the bus. Others shared quick stories about innovative projects and actions being taken around Western Mass to improve transportation. Brainstorming was done in small groups about transportation priorities for the region. Almost all of the elected delegation from Western Mass was present.

There was a follow-up meeting in November 1<sup>st</sup> from participants who indicated that they would like to serve on working groups that would continue to advocate and push for transportation improvement. At this meeting, the general consensus was that we shouldn't be duplicating advocacy efforts and that we should have more representation with T4Mass who already conducts advocacy and lobbying. It may also be difficult to get all of Western Mass to agree on certain policies (ex. increasing tax revenue). However, it is great that there is momentum around this topic, especially with the legislation. We will be exploring how to more efficiently help them during the upcoming budget process.”

## **8. REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL TOPICS:**

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

- MassMobility has been working with a statewide network on presentations on travel training with aging service providers. There has been one agency that has been combining travel training with fall prevention. There have been two agencies that are recruiting older adults that use public transportation to work with other older adults to learn to use public transportation.
- One of the Governor's Council to Address Aging in MA recommendations was to provide training for staff of human service agencies on available transportation resources in their area. MassMobility has created videos posted online to help agencies get started on finding transportation resources and other information on creative ways organizations have dealt with transportation.
- MassMobility partnered with the MA Healthy Aging Collaborative to report on organizations that are doing some age-friendly initiatives.

Jan Gibeau stated she was excited to hear about successful programs with older adults teaching others how to use public transportation and that having a ‘bus buddy’ program may do well in the Western MA area, particularly in the Hilltowns where they are working on creating age-friendly communities.

## **9. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE TO TRANSPORTATION INVENTORY LIST:**

Michael Perreault discussed the current transportation inventory list and suggested a review and update to keep information current. The current list was last updated in May 2018. George Touloumtzis suggested adding the new FRTA Access Program. Rachel Fichtenbaum stated that Peter Pan no longer has a route to Greenfield. There was a suggestion to put information about the train service to Greenfield. George Touloumtzis asked if any of the fare information needed to be adjusted. Michael Perreault stated he would have to review but believed there were some changes needed. Michael Perreault concluded that if anyone has any feedback, suggestions, or other updates for the list to email him at [michael@frta.org](mailto:michael@frta.org).

## **10. PUBLIC COMMENTS, TRANSPORTATION QUESTIONS, OR SUGGESTIONS FOR AGENDA TOPICS:**

Jeff Singleton asked about weekend service and suggested that there needs to be a lobbying strategy for weekend service before the next state budget cycle begins. FRTA remains the only regional transit authority in Massachusetts without weekend service and there needs to be a group that understands the state budget cycle and work on a lobbying strategy. Jeff Singleton stated that he is looking to get a meeting set up with FRTA Administrator, Tina Cote, to discuss this issue further.

Carol Letson asked about the construction of a new maintenance facility for FRTA and if it will be outfit for charging electric buses. Michael Perreault stated that FRTA is working to overcome some funding challenges for the construction of a new maintenance facility, but that it is unlikely that equipment necessary for housing, charging, and repairing electric buses would be included in construction. If it cannot be included in the construction, the intention is to make the design of the facility as such to be able to purchase, install, and/or outfit space and equipment in the future for electric vehicles.

Michael Perreault announced that Community Action is performing a community and internal assessment (see attached). There are links and contact information to participant surveys (deadline of Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>), partner agency surveys (deadline of Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>), and community surveys (deadline of Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>).

George Touloumtzis asked about the FRTA Human Service Orientation at the end of September. Molly Morin and Michael Perreault stated that it was well attended, with many new participants and new agencies, and lots of positive feedback from everyone.

George Touloumtzis asked if we could have an agenda topic at the next meeting to review member attendance and total meeting attendance since the change in meeting frequency and times with the last change of the by-laws.

The next FRTA Advisory Board meeting will be Thursday November 21<sup>st</sup> at 4:00pm.

Michael Perreault stated that if anyone has agenda topics at an upcoming meeting can send them to [michael@frta.org](mailto:michael@frta.org).

The next meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2020. The meeting was adjourned at 4:05pm.