

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 September 10, 2020 virtually on the Zoom.com platform by computer and by phone.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

Present were the following TAC Members:

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

Also present were:

Rachel Fichtenbaum, Jeff Singleton, Carol Letson, Jan Gibeau, Teri Anderson, Trevor Boeding, Molly Morin; FTM General Manager, Wayne Waldron; FTM Assistant General Manager, Catherine Connolly; FTM Safety and Training 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 12, 2019 AND MEETING NOTES FROM NOVEMBER 14, 2019:

Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to accept the minutes from the September 12, 2019 meeting. Elizabeth Quirk seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried. There were no comments on the meeting notes from the November 14, 2019 meeting.

3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

George Touloumtzis explained that the TAC has three officer positions on the committee: Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Currently George Touloumtzis is the Chair, Elizabeth Quirk is the Vice-Chair, and the Secretary position is vacant. Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to elect George Touloumtzis as the Chair. Elizabeth Quirk seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried. Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to elect Elizabeth Quirk as Vice-Chair. George Touloumtzis seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried. The Secretary position remains open to anyone interested.

4. FRTA COVID-19 UPDATES AND RETURN TO 'NORMAL':

Michael Perreault presented the following updates:

March and April 2020:

- At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic we went to work procuring personal protective equipment (PPE) for all employees and increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting buses and the transit center.
- On March 25th was our first round of reduced fixed route service.
- Allowed riders affected by the service reductions on our fixed route to utilize our microtransit program for essential travel.
- By the end of March FRTA suspended fare enforcement, instituted rear-door only boarding on vehicles, the transit center was closed to the public, and administrative employees were working remotely.
- At the end of March 3 out of 10 demand response programs completely shut down.
- On April 7th was our second round of reduced fixed route service.
- By mid-April we have finally had some success in procuring an initial round of PPE and cleaning supplies including masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant spray cleaner for all providers and drivers.
- By the end of April began installation of driver barriers on all buses.
- At the end of April fixed route ridership was down 89.5% and demand response ridership was down 64% compared to the previous fiscal year.

May and June 2020:

- Working with a consultant to update our Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan we sought feedback from both fixed route and demand response drivers.
- At the end of May 2 out of 10 demand response programs remain completely shut down.
- MassDOT allowed for FRTA vehicles to be used for incidental uses such as meal or grocery delivery for seniors that remain homebound during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- June 15th was our first round of reinstating some fixed routes that were previously suspended and instituted reduced maximum capacity of buses to maintain social distancing.
- At the end of June fixed route ridership was down 85.1% and demand response ridership was down 64.8% compared to the previous fiscal year.

July and August 2020

- At the beginning of July administrative employees began returning to work at the transit center.
- Working with a consultant to update our Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan we sought feedback from riders and non-riders through online survey and call-in phone number.

- At the end of July 1 out of 10 demand response programs remain completely shut down.
- We are continuing to monitor information from Governor's office, MA DPH, and CDC on COVID-19. Still no plan to return to full pre-pandemic fixed route and demand response service or the re-opening of the transit center to the public.

Trevor Boeding asked about the status of the Med-Ride program and when it would be re-instated. Michael Perreault stated that the Med-Ride program remains shut down and as of now there is no anticipated re-start date. George Touloumtzis asked if any of the drivers have been symptomatic or tested positive for COVID-19. Michael Perreault stated that there has only been one driver that has tested positive but was not hospitalized and recovered.

5. REVIEW OF MEETING ATTENDANCE AND DISCUSSION ON TAC BY-LAWS AND PROPOSED LANGUAGE CHANGE:

George Touloumtzis proposed adding language to the Transit Advisory Committee By-Laws Article II, Section 3. C. that reads: *Resignation/Removal: In the event a member is unable to complete their term, they can resign by contacting the FRTA Administrator. If a member misses two consecutive meetings, their membership may be discontinued at the discretion of the FRTA Administrator.*

There was discussion that the intent of this added language would encourage committee members to attend meetings as to achieve a quorum. The intention is not so much to be punitive to those that cannot attend and have made effort to notify in advance but to those that cannot attend and do not communicate. Elizabeth Quirk made a **motion** to recommend to the Administrator the proposed language change to the Transit Advisory Committee By-laws. Megan Rhodes seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried. Michael Perreault will speak with the Administrator about these changes, make the changes, and report back to the committee at the next meeting.

6. DISCUSSION ON AFL-CIO FY21 RIDER COMMUNITY REP:

Michael Perreault stated that each year the FRTA assists the AFL-CIO to find a Rider Community Representative on the FRTA's Advisory Board. This is a requirement from the Massachusetts General Laws, but the AFL-CIO has had a difficult time filling this position so FRTA has been working to help with the process. Jeff Singleton brought up at the last Transit Advisory Committee a discussion point to have the TAC take on more of an active role in finding the representative for this position. Megan Rhodes suggested that the representative should be someone from the TAC or a bus rider and suggested posting notices on the buses to seek people that would be interested. Megan Rhodes offered to make up a flyer. George Touloumtzis agreed that having an experienced rider would be beneficial to serving in this position. Jeff Singleton suggested the TAC craft a letter to change the process for electing this position as it seems extremely byzantine and doesn't work well in the FRTA service area.

7. REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL TOPICS:

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

- Check out MassMobility newsletter with information on transportation and mobility, sharing information on different strategies, and provide professional development opportunities.
- MassMobility has been holding volunteer driver forums to present and share information.
- MassMobility offers travel training online instruction.
- October 8th there will be a Universities Exploring Community Transportation webinar which will discuss partnerships between universities and community transportation.
- Webinars will be recorded – for more information please contact Rachel Fichtenbaum at Rachel.fichtenbaum@state.ma.us

Molly Morin asked about the travel training videos and suggested she will reach out to Rachel Fichtenbaum offline for more information.

8. LOBBYING STRATEGY FOR WEEKEND SERVICE:

Michael Perreault stated that this topic was on the agenda from the previous meeting to be discussed. George Touloumtzis stated that he hears often from clients at his job the difficulties of not having access to public transportation on the weekends and the impacts on their quality of life. Megan Rhodes stated that she still has letters and personal testimonies documenting the need for weekend service. Jeff Singleton suggested having a subcommittee to work on this. There were questions about what exactly the process is for getting weekend service and what the process is working with the legislature to get the funding and then turning it into service. Jeff Singleton asked what do we ask for when asking for weekend service; do you start small or ask big?

George Touloumtzis suggested an Ad Hoc Subcommittee could start work on this project before the next meeting. Elizabeth Quirk volunteered to be on the subcommittee. Jeff Singleton volunteered to help. George Touloumtzis suggested that we should keep this item on the agenda to continue discussion at the next meeting.

9. UPDATE ON FRTA PLANNING STUDIES:

Michael Perreault stated that FRTA has been working with a consultant on updating its Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan. The report will contain historical data from fiscal years 2015 through 2019, a separate section focusing on fiscal year 2020 and the impacts of COVID on operations, and finally a section looking ahead at the next five years with recommendations for service improvements. A final document is scheduled to be completed by the end of the calendar year to be submitted to MassDOT and the state legislature. Over the summer FRTA sought public feedback for this plan which will help to define recommendations for service improvements for the next five years. Jeff

Singleton asked if the public input process has completed or if there will be time to provide input on the draft before it gets finalized. Michael Perreault suggested that the final draft of the document should be available in November with opportunity for final review and comment before the report is finalized and submitted.

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

There were no public comments, transportation questions, or suggestions for agenda topics.

The next FRTA Advisory Board meeting will be Thursday September 17th 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 November 12, 2020. Megan Rhodes made a motion to adjourn. Elizabeth Quirk seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 4:02pm.

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