

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 11, 2021 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, Kate Bavelock, Gary Daniele, Megan Rhodes, Kim Scammon, and Deb Wilson.

Also present were:

Rachel Fichtenbaum, Jeff Singleton, 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 NOVEMBER 12, 2020:

George Touloumtzis noted that there was an error with the agenda and the meeting minutes from September were not yet approved. Michael Perreault apologized for the oversight and will make sure to put them on the agenda in May. George Touloumtzis also corrected that because there was no quorum for the November meeting these will be recorded as meeting notes and do not require a vote. George noted on page for there was a typographical error on the word 'county'. There were no other comments on the meeting notes for November 12, 2020.

3. DISCUSSION ON AFL-CIO FY22 RIDER COMMUNITY REP:

Michael Perreault updated that Megan Rhodes had volunteered to serve as the Rider Community Representative for the current year. The AFL-CIO gave their approval and communication has been sent to the Russell Selectboard, but we are waiting for confirmation on her appointment. In the meantime, Michael Perreault wanted to get an early start on the discussion for the next year and how best to seek people interested in

this position on the FRTA Advisory Board. Even though this position sits on the FRTA Advisory Board, in past years the Transit Advisory Committee has helped in the search for people interested in serving in that role. George Touloumtzis asked if the new term for the Rider Community Representative would start at the next FRTA Advisory Board meeting. Michael Perreault stated that the previous term ended in mid-February, but the intention would be to have the new term start as soon as we receive confirmation from the Russell Selectboard, hopefully prior to next week's Advisory Board meeting. Jeff Singleton offered to reach out to the Russell Selectboard to ensure this position gets filled in time for the next meeting. George Touloumtzis suggested that a simplified message that there is a position on the FRTA Advisory Board specifically for transit riders. Discussion continued that an advertisement or article in the local newspaper(s) may help to get the word out. Michael Perreault noted that the next Town for the Rider Community Representative would be Shelburne. Discussion concluded that there could also be targeted advertising posted on the Route 41.

4. UPDATE/DISCUSSION ON WEEKEND SERVICE:

Michael Perreault stated that starting on February 14th FRTA once again expanded on its microtransit pilot project to include weekend service. Now riders can also schedule their own trips on Saturdays and Sundays from 9:30am to 5:30pm. As part of several internal brainstorming sessions FRTA worked to find a way to find a low-cost start to weekend service. As part of this low-cost model, we were not able to include any fixed route service but hope to gain a lot of insight through data collection on travel patterns with this pilot project to be able to expand in the future. FRTA has been focusing on getting the word out about this new expansion for weekend service, including through radio advertising and with posting and sharing of flyers.

Jeff Singleton stated that he will be bringing a motion to the FRTA Advisory Board next week requesting to have MassDOT officials explain why the FRTA is the only transit authority in MA that does not operate fixed route service. Jeff Singleton further stated that he supports microtransit and FRTA's pilot project but is concerned with criteria the state will require the FRTA to meet for the pilot. Elizabeth Quirk asked if there are any benchmarks FRTA needs to meet for the weekend microtransit project, particularly during COVID. Michael Perreault stated that there are currently no benchmarks to meet for our weekend pilot project. The hope is that as FRTA returns to pre-COVID service ridership continues to rebound to pre-COVID levels. Kim Scammon asked if there are any bills in the state budget that might help and support FRTA and weekend service. Michael Perreault commented that this pilot project came about through a grant from MassDOT that was carved out in last year's state budget line item for RTAs, but there are no other specific bills that he is aware of that could help or support this project. Jeff Singleton suggested that a good lobbying strategy is needed to untangle these complicated funding issues. George Touloumtzis asked how much usage is FRTA seeing with weekend service and is this open to the same zones as during the week. Michael Perreault stated that initially there has been roughly 20 trips during the weekends and yes, riders have access to the same zones. Discussion concluded that FRTA should look to make accommodations for people that do not have access to smart phones.

5. REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL TOPICS:

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

- MassMobility is partnering with colleagues in Maine on an upcoming webinar on April 13th highlighting some of the recent micortransit projects in the region. The link for the webinar can be found here: tinyurl.com/webinarApril13
- Two previously recorded webinars on Marketing Community Transportation and Including Riders in Planning Community Transportation Efforts are also available online at: www.mass.gov/massmobility-newsletter-archive
- MassMobility is also available for technical assistance, sharing best practices, and connecting with other transportation programs. You can contact Rachel Fichtenbaum at: Rachel.fichtenbaum@mass.gov
- A link to the MassMobility Newsletter or to subscribe can be found here: www.mass.gov/massmobility-newsletter

6. FRTA UPDATES:

Michael Perreault stated that FRTA is getting ready to release the final draft on our 2020 Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan. FRTA will post the plan online and then start a 30-day public comment period to give everyone an opportunity to review the draft plan and provide comment prior to finalizing the plan. Jeff Singleton stated that at the next FRTA Advisory Board meeting he will be presenting a motion for the Advisory Board to discuss and vote on the CRTP and add a goal to expanding the base of FRTA ridership to include more people that own cars.

Michael Perreault updated that FRTA has been working on a grant application to make bus stop improvements on Elm St. in Greenfield at Elm Terrace. This would include sidewalk improvements and connections to the bus stop, installation of a bus shelter, and bike racks. It does now appear that there are some site challenges at that location that will require more profession design services work outside of the scope of this grant that may prohibit FRTA from meeting the grant deadline. However, FRTA will continue to pursue this project and funds to complete it.

Lastly, Michael Perreault announced that FRTA was awarded a grant from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council for delivering 2nd and 3rd shift employment transportation. This grant is specifically for FRTA to partner with local area taxi and livery companies to provide the transportation. In addition, FRTA is working with MassHire to connect with local employers and potential employees needing transportation to work. All of the details of the project are not yet finalized, but we are very excited about this grant opportunity to help us gauge demand for transit services for 2nd and 3rd shifts.

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

George Touloumtzis asked how long fixed route services will be free or when the transit center will reopen. Michael Perreault stated that there is no formal timeline for either but FRTA will try to give people enough notice when things are going to change. Elizabeth Quirk cautioned that FRTA may experience some rider issues with their fare cards after a year plus with no usage/activation. Michael Perreault asked if Kim Scammon could explain her role with the Western Mass Transportation Advocacy Network. Kim Scammon stated that the WMTAN came out of a transportation forum in the fall of 2019 and suggested that she could forward the meeting minutes from the last meeting to give people a sense of what the Network is doing. Anyone interested in joining the WMTAN or attending their meetings can contact: kim@greenfieldhousing.org.

The next FRTA Advisory Board meeting will be Thursday March 18th 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 13, 2021. Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to adjourn, Elizabeth Quirk seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.