

Approved 9/9/21

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 May 13, 2021 virtually on the Zoom.com platform by computer and by phone.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

Present were the following TAC Members:

Vice-Chair Elizabeth Quirk, Kate Bavelock, Kim Scammon, and Deb Wilson.

Also present were:

Rachel Fichtenbaum, Jeff Singleton, Carol Letson, Molly Chambers, FTM General Manager, Wayne Waldron; FTM Assistant General Manager, Catherine Connolly; FTM Safety and Training Manager, and Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator.

Elizabeth Quirk 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 10, 2020 AND MARCH 11, 2021:

Deb Wilson made a **motion** to approved meeting minutes from September 10, 2020 and March 11, 2021. Kim Scammon seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Kate Bavelock: September 10, 2020 – Yes; March 11, 2021 – Abstain

Kim Scammon: September 10, 2020 – Yes; March 11, 2021 – Yes

Deb Wilson: September 10, 2020 – Yes; March 11, 2021 – Yes

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

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

Discussion continued from our previous meeting on ideas to attract riders to consider joining the FRTA Advisory Board as the Rider Community Representative. Jeff Singleton asked if the role of the TAC was prior to a list of potential candidates is sent to the AFL-CIO. Michael Perreault agreed that the intent was to have the TAC get in on

this early in the process to help find people interested in serving in this position on the FRTA's Advisory Board. The Massachusetts General Law really doesn't give any guidance on how to go about filling this position. Discussion continued that the TAC should work on an appealing message to post on the buses to target bus riders. Discussion concluded with the suggestion of posting targeted information in the local newspaper as well.

4. UPDATE/DISCUSSION ON WEEKEND SERVICE AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS:

Elizabeth Quirk stated that she is familiar with a rider that had issues with the smartphone app and needed to call in for help with scheduling their transportation and asked if there is any progress on allowing people to call in to schedule trips. Michael Perreault stated that the FRTA Access program is pilot project that allows users to schedule and manage they're own trips through a smartphone app. FRTA does try to assist people with questions about downloading the app or registering their account. For those that don't have a smartphone FRTA has an online web portal that people can access through a computer or tablet. General questions about the Access program can be emailed to FRTAAccess@gmail.com. If there is a situation that requires immediate attention with transportation, such as a missed bus, people should contact the dispatch desk at 413-773-8090 Ext. 103 for assistance. FRTA is looking at the possibility of opening up the call center to schedule Access trips over the phone in the future.

Michael Perreault stated that FRTA received a grant through the Metropolitan Area Planning Council to pilot a project for transportation to 2nd and 3rd shift jobs in Franklin County. FRTA is contracting with local area taxi and livery providers to deliver the transportation, and anyone interested in participating in the pilot project should contact Michael Perreault at michael@frtra.org. Jeff Singleton asked if this project is using an app for scheduling like the Access program. Michael Perreault stated that employees would contact FRTA directly to have their transportation arranged. This may be something that adds, or changes, to a technology-based app like the Access program in the future. Jeff Singleton suggested that 1st shift employment is also important and that FRTA should work to better tie employment trips into traditional fixed route service.

Kim Scammon asked if there is a possibility for fixed routes to be able to target certain employers in the future. Michael Perreault stated that depending on the data collected from this pilot where people are travelling to and from will help shape transit services for getting people to work in the future. This could be with fixed routes, microtransit, or a mix of both. This grant specifically was for us to partner with local taxi and livery companies to deliver the transportation.

5. REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL TOPICS:

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

- MassDOT will be holding a virtual transportation conference at the end of the month. Information about the conference can be found online at: www.massdotinnovation.com. Registration for the conference is open through 5/18/21 and fee waivers for the conference are open through 5/14/21. For information on the fee waiver application go to: https://www.umasstransportationcenter.org/Forms.asp?MODE=NEW&Forms_FormTypeID=-27.
- There are several transportation grant opportunities available right now including Shared Streets and Spaces, Community Transit Grant Program, Helping Hands, and Transportation Justice. Information about these funding opportunities can be found online at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/funding-for-community-transportation>.

6. REVIEW OF MAINTENANCE FACILITY EQUITY ANALYSIS:

Michael Perreault updated that FRTA had worked with the FRCOG on creating a Maintenance Facility Equity Analysis. This was a federal requirement to review proposed sites for our maintenance facility to ensure that we are not disproportionately impacting low-income neighborhoods or any minority populations. The result of the analysis determined that building our facility on Sandy Lane in Turners Falls would not disproportionately impacting low-income neighborhoods or any minority populations. FRTA held a virtual public meeting last night to review the analysis in which several people attended including some abutters and representatives from area businesses.

7. DISCUSSION ON DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL TRANSIT PLAN:

Started in 2020, FRTA had been working with a consultant to update its Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan. Over the summer and early fall FRTA had sought out feedback and comments from the public. The final draft is now complete and now we are into a 30-day public comment period prior to finalizing. The full plan can be found online at: http://frta.org/wp-content/uploads/FRTA_CRTPU_MASTER_20210216_508-1.pdf. The last date to submit comments is on June 4th and comments can be submitted by email to frta@frta.org, posted on the FRTA Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/Franklin-Regional-Transit-Authority-216649941687231/?ref=page_internal, or sent by mail to 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301.

Kate Bavelock asked if there were any demographic trends or shifts that came out of this study. Michael Perreault stated that there were no demographic trends or shifts that stood out. Jeff Singleton stated that he submitted comments on the plan into the FRTA, including the need to include broadening the ridership base, the need to target the middle class to get them to become transit users, and that weekend fixed route service should be top priority. Elizabeth Quirk stated that she skimmed through the draft report and is excited to see improvements happening including weekend service, microtransit, and access to 2nd/3rd shift employment. Jeff Singleton asked that his comments be shared with the group and Michael Perreault will send them out after the meeting.

8. FRTA UPDATES:

Michael Perreault provided the following updates and information:

- FRTA received a grant award from MassDOT on a project to make Elm Terrace bus stop improvements. FRTA is working with the FRCOG to hire an engineer to do the design work this summer.
- HST's MassHealth brokerage contract has officially been awarded to the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority.
- JWO Transit Center remains closed to the public, but FRTA is hoping to reopen soon. We continue to monitor CDC guidelines and the Governor's re-opening plan.
- Fixed Route fares will continue to be suspended through June 1st. The FRTA Advisory Board will take up that topic again at their next meeting to determine if fares will continue to be suspended or if we will transition back to collecting fares.

9. 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 May 20th 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 September 9, 2021. Kim Scammon made a **motion** to adjourn, Kate Bavelock seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.