

Approved 11/18/21

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 September 9, 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, Gary Daniele, Megan Rhodes, and Kim Scammon.

Also present were:

Rachel Fichtenbaum, Carol Letson, Bob Williford, Wayne Waldron; FTM Assistant 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 MAY 13, 2021:**

Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to approve meeting minutes from May 13, 2021. Kim Scammon seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

### **3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

Currently, George Touloumtzis is Chair, Elizabeth Quirk is Vice-Chair, and there is a vacancy for Secretary. Megan Rhodes asked if anyone was interested in Office positions. Elizabeth Quirk expressed interest in becoming the Chair and nominated herself and George Touloumtzis for Chair. There were no other nominations, and the vote was as follows:

George Touloumtzis: vote for Elizabeth Quirk  
Elizabeth Quirk: vote for Elizabeth Quirk  
Gary Daniele: vote for Elizabeth Quirk  
Megan Rhodes: vote for Elizabeth Quirk  
Kim Scammon: vote for Elizabeth Quirk

The vote was unanimous to appoint Elizabeth Quirk to Chair. George Touloumtzis nominated Megan Rhodes for Vice-Chair. There were no other nominations, the vote was unanimous, and Megan Rhodes was appointed to Vice-Chair. There was no interest in the Secretary position so Michael Perreault will continue to take minutes for the meetings.

#### **4. NOVEMBER TAC MEETING DATE:**

Michael Perreault wanted to bring to the Committee's attention that the meeting date for November falls on Veterans Day this year and asked if Committee members had an interest in moving the meeting date. George Touloumtzis asked if FRTA is operating services on Veterans Day. Wayne Waldon confirmed that services will be operating on Veterans Day. George Touloumtzis suggested moving the meeting to the following Thursday, November 18<sup>th</sup>. Megan Rhodes suggested another alternative of moving the meeting to the day prior, Wednesday, November 10<sup>th</sup>. George Touloumtzis commented that he would be unavailable to attend on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Elizabeth Quirk asked if there would be any issue with putting the Transit Advisory Committee back-to-back with the FRTA Advisory Board meeting. Michael Perreault indicated that there should be no issues with running the meetings back-to-back. George Touloumtzis made a **motion** to move the November meeting date to the 18<sup>th</sup> from 3:00pm to 4:00pm. Megan Rhodes seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

#### **5. UPDATE/DISCUSSION ON BUS STOP PROJECTS:**

Michael Perreault presented some updates on recent bus stop projects. Over the summer Wayne Waldron worked in conjunction with the Greenfield DPW to install Simme-Seats at bus stops along Main St. and Federal St. in Greenfield. In addition, FRTA continues to work towards bus stop improvements along Elm St. in Greenfield at Elm Terrace. There have been some recent issues with acquiring easements for construction, but FRTA remains hopeful that this project will get completed this year. Elizabeth Quirk asked if there was any headway on making bus stop improvements at Big Y in Greenfield. Wayne Waldron responded that he has not had time to review that stop yet. George Touloumtzis added that he was pleased to see the new seating at bus stops being used.

#### **6. DISCUSSION ON AFL-CIO FY22 RIDER COMMUNITY REP:**

Michael Perreault continued discussions on the AFL-CIO FY22 Rider Community Representative from the previous meeting. Megan Rhodes created a draft flyer to draw interest from riders to attend TAC meetings as well as garnering interest to become the Community Rider Representative at the Advisory Board meetings. George Touloumtzis asked if there is a deadline for getting information to fill the spot for the Rider Community Representative position. Michael Perreault stated that the current term ends in February and suggested getting information out to riders around Thanksgiving would be a good target. George Touloumtzis suggested some additional clarity adding to the flyer may be needed for people to consider, such as a deadline to apply and the need to

submit interest in writing along with experience and interest with public transit. Clarification between the TAC and the Advisory Board may be helpful as well.

## **7. UPDATE ON ACCESS SERVICE AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS:**

Michael Perreault gave some brief updates on the Access and Workforce Development grants. The Access and Demand Response programs are running above pre-pandemic levels. In July 2021 there were just under 1,300 completed trips, and in August 2021 there were just under 1,400 completed trips. At the start of the grant and prior to the pandemic, monthly completed trips averaged around 750. In addition, FRTA recently made an improvement to the program which will allow credit card payment over the phone to load fares directly onto clients' accounts. This allows fares to be deducted directly from their accounts from the bus without the need for clients to carry cash or purchase passes from the transit center.

FRTA launched the new Workforce Development program at the beginning of June. Working with three local taxi and livery providers there were a total of 389 trips with 13 clients combined for June and July. While still early in the project, it is expected to continue to increase over the coming months.

Megan Rhodes asked if any noticeable patterns have been determined with preliminary data. Michael Perreault stated that he hasn't had an opportunity to review any patterns yet, but there have been several job positions at MBW in the Orange Industrial Park that have been filled through a local staffing agency. George Touloumtzis asked how well the Access program has been utilized on the weekends. Michael Perreault stated that he didn't have specific figures, but that weekend service has been well received. Molly added that staffing has been challenging throughout the COVID pandemic but that her team continues to hire and fill vacant positions. Elizabeth Quirk asked about the status for credit card payments and the ability for people without smartphones to call in to schedule their rides for the Access program. Michael Perreault commented that FRTA has had some internal staffing and re-organizational changes since the change in the MassHealth contract took place on July 1<sup>st</sup>. While there is no specific timeline for implementing, it is anticipated that Access users will be able to call in to schedule their trips at some point in the future, like Demand Response and ADA riders. In addition, FRTA has begun a soft launch with taking credit card payments over the phone and loading fares directly onto riders' accounts. This can be done for all Access, Demand Response, and ADA riders. Long-term FRTA would like to have the ability for riders to load fares onto their accounts through the smartphone app.

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

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

- October 5<sup>th</sup> MassMobility will be hosting a virtual Rural Volunteer Driver Program meeting. This will be an opportunity for programs to share information and best practices.
- This coming fall there will be more upcoming trainings in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association and Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging.
- The most recent MassMobility newsletter highlighted transit agencies experimenting with fare discounts and free fares including Cape Cod RTA, Brockton, MBTA, Merrimack Valley RTA, and PVTA.

For more information on MassMobility and its monthly newsletter please contact Rachel Fichtenbaum at [rachel.fichtenbaum@state.ma.us](mailto:rachel.fichtenbaum@state.ma.us).

## **9. FRTA UPDATES:**

Michael Perreault provided the following updates and information:

- HST's MassHealth brokerage contract has officially transferred to Montachusett Regional Transit Authority. FRTA is no longer providing brokerage services for the Franklin County area. Updated information about this is included on FRTA's website.
- FRTA continues to work towards a return to full service. Last service increase was in the spring. Hiring drivers remains a challenge, but next route additions are expected to take place sometime this fall.

Gary Daniele suggested that FRTA put a link on its homepage for people to be able to quickly find information on the change for the MassHealth transportation.

## **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 23<sup>rd</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 Transit Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2021. George Touloumtzis made a **motion** to adjourn, Megan Rhodes seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.