

Approved 3/10/22

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 18, 2021 virtually on the Zoom.com platform by computer and by phone.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

Present were the following TAC Members:

Chair Elizabeth Quirk, Vice-Chair Megan Rhodes, Kate Bavelock, Kim Scammon, and George Touloumtzis.

Also present were:

Rachel Fichtenbaum, Carol Letson, Jeff Singleton, Wayne Waldron; FTM Assistant General Manager, and Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator.

Megan Rhodes 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 9, 2021:

George Touloumtzis made a **motion** to approve meeting minutes from September 9, 2021. Kim Scammon seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Elizabeth Quirk: Not Present

Kate Bavelock: Yes

Kim Scammon: Yes

George Touloumtzis: Yes

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

3. 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. Based on feedback

from the previous meeting, Michael Perreault made a few minor edits to the flyer to keep it generic enough to be able to reuse the flyer. There was some additional information added that letters of interest for the TAC would be accepted year-round and that letters of interest for the Rider Representative would be accepted by December 31st for the following year. Flyers have been posted on the buses and at the Transit Center. After this meeting Michael Perreault will send this flyer out to the Franklin County Resource Network and Megan Rhodes offered to push it through the FRCOG's social media account as well. George Touloumtzis asked if there has been any interest in the Rider Representative position so far. Michael Perreault responded that there has not been contact from anyone interested as of yet, but the flyer has only been posted since the beginning of the month.

4. UPDATE ON ACCESS SERVICE AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS:

Michael Perreault gave some brief updates on the Access and Workforce Development grants. Both projects continue to see steady increases in ridership although we are starting to see some plateauing. This has to do with the loss of one transportation partner with the Workforce Development project and the difficulty in hiring for additional staffing for the Access project.

At the last FRTA Advisory Board meeting there was discussion about the successes of the Access program and looking to branch out to other towns outside of the FTM service area. FRTA recently had a discussion with the Town of Southwick and they showed some interest in piloting a project to use the same software to help their transportation program.

Michael Perreault announced that the FRTA has been partnering with the FRCOG with some grant funding to further improve the Access program. Megan Rhodes explained that the FRCOG received grant funds from Senator Comerford just prior to the start of the COVID pandemic on a rideshare pilot. At the time the FRTA Access program was not up and running and there were limited transportation resources for the general public outside of the fixed routes. They were originally working with Lyft to provide transportation to local social service agency clients in Franklin County, but the project never fully got off the ground in part due to the timing of pandemic. Now with the FRTA Access program running 7-days a week this was an opportunity for the FRCOG to partner with FRTA while providing help for local social service agencies and supporting local transit. With the limited driver availability, this will be a slow roll-out for a better chance at a successful outcome. This project will start with bringing on the Community Health Center and allow them to schedule trips on their client's behalf and the FRCOG will reimburse the FRTA for the fares so there is no cost to the individual clients. Other partners will soon be brought onboard including the Baystate Franklin Medical Center, Tapestry Health, Center for New Americans, MassHire, and others. George Touloumtzis asked how this project would work from the client/rider perspective. Megan Rhodes explained that each of the agency partners would book trips for their own clients. Individual riders would not have to pay a fare when boarding the vehicle and instead

FRTA will send an invoice for reimbursement to the FRCOG for what the fare collected would have been. The intent would be to make this project sustainable by collecting and sharing data with agencies on the number of trips completed through this grant to show the benefits of access to transit and perhaps getting those agencies to provide their own funding in the future. Carol Letson commented that clients for the Center for New Americans have challenges getting to attend in-person classes and this project could be a great benefit to them.

5. REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL TOPICS:

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

- MassDOT Moving Together Conference will be held on December 7-9, 2021. This will be focused on pedestrian, biking, and transit. www.movingtogetherma.org
- The Alzheimer's Association and Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging will be holding a training on December 8, 2021 on assisting passengers with dementia. <https://fs16.formsite.com/mcoa/16ixh0xetl/index.html>
- The peer network for Travel Training will hold a meeting on December 13, 2021 with orientation specialists to assist people that are blind. Email Rachel Fichtenbaum at rachel.fichtenbaum@state.ma.us.
- UMass Boston, through their Gerontology program, will be holding an upcoming course on Senior Transportation. https://www.umb.edu/academics/caps/corporate/senior_transportation and you can contact nina.silverstein@umb.edu if interested in partial scholarship.

George Touloumtzis stated that he is interested in the MassDOT Moving Together Conference but won't be able to attend due to a conflict with his work schedule and wondered if there is a way to get access to the recordings to view later. Rachel Fichtenbaum will double check to see if conference sessions would be recorded and saved for later viewing.

Megan Rhodes stated that part of FRTA's 5-year plan recommended hiring for a travel trainer and asked if FRTA had applied for any grant funding related to travel training. Michael Perreault stated that FRTA had submitted a request through MassDOT's Community Transit Grant Program for initial funding for a travel training project but has not received any award notifications yet. It is believed that award notices for CTGP projects will be coming out later this year, but that the funding for the projects will be for the following fiscal year.

For more information on MassMobility and its monthly newsletter please contact Rachel Fichtenbaum at rachel.fichtenbaum@state.ma.us.

6. FRTA UPDATES:

Michael Perreault provided the following updates and information:

- In late September FRTA started scheduling Access trips over the phone for individuals that can't use our smartphone app or online webportal.
- In October FRTA received the FTA Administrator's Award "in recognition for outstanding, effective, and efficient service while improving access to vital services, advancing equity, and addressing the needs and challenges of rural transit infrastructure in Massachusetts".
- The pedestrian and bus stop improvement project on Elm St. at Elm Terrace has hit some delays and FRTA has requested an extension on the grant to complete the project in the spring.
- Starting November 8th, the Transit Center increased the open building hours from 7:00am to 6:00pm. In addition, Franklin Transit Management has created a new position for a staff member to be at the Transit Center to clean and sanitize buses in between runs and staff the ticket booth to be available to answer general questions.

George Touloumtzis stated that it is great to hear that FRTA is now able to take phone calls to help with scheduling Access trips and asked if the new staff member can answer other non-FRTA questions, such as providing information about intercity buses or train service. Michael Perreault stated that both FTM and FRTA have provided this individual with as much current information available on FRTA's services, Greyhound, and Amtrak. As this person is new, any questions that cannot be answered, people can still be directed up to the FRTA offices on the second floor for additional help.

Megan Rhodes mentioned that she has recently noticed that people are using the new blue benches found around downtown Greenfield.

Elizabeth Quirk stated that while she was waiting for the bus at Big Y someone had made a comment to her that FRTA buses are reliable.

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

Jeff Singleton stated that the FRTA Advisory Board approved two goals: investigate weekend fixed route service and expand the base of the transit system. There have been ongoing internal conversations about creating a plan for weekend fixed route service. To expand the base of the transit system, there is a need to get more people that own cars to use public transportation. Jeff Singleton suggested that the TAC can help with these goals and would like to add these onto the next TAC meeting agenda moving forward. Michael Perreault added that this information was discussed at the previous FRTA Advisory Board meeting to create a subcommittee in which both Jeff Singleton and Advisory Board Chair Eric Twarog volunteered to be on. Anyone interested in joining that committee for continued discussions should contact Michael Perreault.

The next FRTA Advisory Board meeting will be immediately following this meeting.

Michael Perreault stated that if anyone has agenda topics at an upcoming meeting can send them to michael@frta.org.

The next Transit Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2022. George Touloumtzis made a **motion** to adjourn, Elizabeth Quirk seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:45pm.