

Approved 9/8/22

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 May 12, 2022 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, Gary Daniele, and Deb Wilson.

Also present were:

Rachel Fichtenbaum, Carol Letson, Wayne Waldron; FTM General Manager, Steve Pardoe, 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 MARCH 10, 2022:**

Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to approve meeting minutes from March 10, 2022. Deb Wilson seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Megan Rhodes: Abstain

Gary Daniele: Abstain

Deb Wilson: Yes

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

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

Michael Perreault gave some brief updates on the Access and Workforce Development grants. Both projects have been very successful in filling transit gaps. Working with the FRCOG over the last month, FRTA has been collecting survey information about the two projects. FRCOG is compiling information and feedback received into a report to be

presented to the FRTA Advisory Board at their next meeting on May 26<sup>th</sup>. Megan Rhodes explained that surveys were produced in both paper and electronic form in English and Spanish. Flyers were created with a link to the online survey as well as a QR code. In addition, a Franklin Transit Management staff person was staged at the Transit Center with a tablet for individuals to complete surveys. Megan Rhodes stated that preliminary results on the surveys were very positive results on the Access program and the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> shift employment transportation. Some insight on individuals that haven't used the Access program related to lack of knowledge of the program or that it exists. This leans towards the need for more marketing/advertising strategies to get the word out. In addition, some questions were asked about fixed route fares and responses showed that fare prices would impact transit usage.

#### **4. DISCUSSION ON REDUCING STIGMA AND INCREASING RIDERSHIP:**

Elizabeth Quirk stated that there is a group of artists from the Art Garden that received a grant from the FRCOG to produce a local art project. One of the ideas was a collaboration between local artists and bus riders to create an art project related to reducing stigma, such as showing local destinations along the bus routes. This would not only help to reduce stigma around public transportation but also generate more interest from non-riders to use public transportation. The art installation could be displayed at the Transit Center as well as displays or signs at bus stops and shelters. Deb Wilson stated she is excited to hear about this project. Gary Daniele added that art brings creative awareness, and this project is a great way to potentially incorporate the economic and environmental benefits of public transportation.

#### **5. DISCUSSION ON WEEKEND FIXED ROUTE SERVICE AND EXPANDING THE BASE OF THE TRANSIT SYSTEM:**

Michael Perreault updated that the ad hoc committee met in early May to continue discussions on potential weekend fixed route service. Right now, we are focusing on Saturday fixed route pilot project and hope to reconvene the committee again in June to continue those discussions. Separate from these discussions, FRTA is continuing to look at ways to expand the base of the transit system. Megan Rhodes explained that the FRCOG has access to grant funds to partner with FRTA to hire a consultant to assist with marketing and brand awareness of public transportation services. The end product should be materials and messaging targeted towards expanding the base of the transit system.

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

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

- Anyone that has information, success stories, or other transportation related topics can send them to Rachel Fichtenbaum to be included in MassMobility's monthly newsletter.
- There are some recent operation funding opportunities available for transportation projects including the Community Transit Grant Program, Transportation 4 MA,

and the Department of Public Health – Healthy Aging, and MARTap Helping Hand Grants. For more information on any of these grant opportunities, please contact Rachel Fichtenbaum.

- HST Legislative Task Force is holding two Public Listening Sessions next week. Anyone that cannot attend or would prefer not to provide comment at the Listening Sessions can send comments by email or phone to voicemail.

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).

## **7. FRTA UPDATES:**

Michael Perreault provided the following updates and information:

- New Gillig transit buses went into service last week and three new low-floor minibuses are expected to be delivered soon.
- Thanks to some grant funding through the FRCOG, FRTA has purchased and installed bike racks on Access buses. Next step is to modify the scheduling software to account for bikes during trip booking.
- FRCOG will be hosting a Baystate Bike Week breakfast at the Transit Center on Tuesday, May 24<sup>th</sup> from 7:45am-9:30am. Bring your bike, get some breakfast, and checkout FRTA bike racks.
- MassDOT released their Beyond Mobility MA 2050 Transportation Plan. This is a statewide long-range transportation plan with some public engagement sessions and surveying. Check out the website and provide your feedback: [www.mass.gov/beyond-mobility](http://www.mass.gov/beyond-mobility).
- FRTA has been planning its return to back to full service and it is now expected the official return to full service on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. This includes increasing availability throughout the day on the Access program.

## **8. PUBLIC COMMENTS, TRANSPORTATION QUESTIONS, OR SUGGESTIONS FOR AGENDA TOPICS:**

Elizabeth Quirk stated that Representative Blais is looking for funding for electric bikes but questioned if they can or can't be carried on buses, perhaps due to a fire risk. Wayne Waldron stated that the question is not regarding fire risk but more to the weight of the bikes and width of the wheels. Bike racks on buses are rated for up to three bikes at 150 lbs. If there are electric bikes that fit into the bike racks and do not exceed the weight rating of the bike racks, they can be transported. Elizabeth Quirk asked about the covered bridge on the north side of Greenfield and if buses could travel over it. Wayne Waldron suggested that it would depend on the weight rating and/or height and he would have to look into that further to determine whether the buses can or can't travel over it.

The next scheduled FRTA Advisory Board meeting is Thursday, May 26, 2022 at 4:00pm via Zoom.

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 September 8, 2022. Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to adjourn, Deb Wilson seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.