

Approved 3/9/23

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 10, 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, Kim Croce, Gary Daniele, George Touloumtzis, and Deb Wilson.

Also present were:

Thomas Albano, Rachel Fichtenbaum, MassDOT Manager of Grant Programs & Mobility Management, 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 SEPTEMBER 8, 2022:

Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to approve meeting minutes from September 8, 2022. Kim Croce seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Megan Rhodes: Yes

Kim Croce: Yes

Gary Daniele: Not Present

George Touloumtzis: Yes

Deb Wilson: Not Present

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

3. UPDATE ON ACCESS SERVICE:

Michael Perreault gave some brief updates on the Access service. The project has been very successful and the biggest challenge has been with receiving more trip requests than can be accommodated. Recently, FRTA Administrator Tina Cote attended the MassDOT Moving Together Conference and presented about the Access program. The Access project started in October 2019 where there was a total of 28 one-way trips with 9 unduplicated riders. For the month of September 2022 there were a total of 1,452 one-way trips with 158 unduplicated riders. Since its inception in 2019, we've completed over 18,000 Access trips with more than 1,100 app downloads. Currently, the Access program operates Monday through Friday from 5:30am-7:30pm and Saturdays and Sundays from 9:30am -5:30pm. Service is available in 11 towns in Franklin County as well as a portion of Athol, Charlemont, and Shelburne Falls. Additionally, FRTA has begun working with the Town of Southwick, the Southwick Senior Center, and their transportation provider, Hulmes Transportation, on utilizing the same scheduling software for their Demand Response program. Next FRTA will begin working with the Hilltown CDC and the Towns of Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Plainfield, and Worthington.

Kim Croce stated that the Access program is such a big need in the community and it is great to see it out and operating. George Touloumtzis has been disseminating information about the FRTA Access program to clients he works with and feedback has been very positive and validates the need for this service. Thomas Albano stated that he uses the Access program to get to work. Elizabeth Quirk asked about scheduling trips in advance. Michael Perreault confirmed that trips can be scheduled in real-time or up to a week in advance. Elizabeth Quirk stated that was wonderful to hear and that we should work on getting that information out with changes to this program.

4. UPDATE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GRANT:

Michael Perreault gave some brief updates on the Workforce Development grant for the 2nd and 3rd shift employment transportation. Originally started with grant funding, the FRTA's Advisory Board voted at their meeting in May to support this program but asked FRTA to seek out additional grant funds to continue to gather data on the project before making any final decisions on the long-term viability of this project. FRTA submitted another grant application through Mass Development over the summer and were recently notified that we will be receiving \$233,000 to continue this project for another year. Currently, we are utilizing one provider to deliver transportation and hope to also utilize that same scheduling software as the Access program to help streamline scheduling and trip delivery.

5. FRCOG MARKETING CONSULTANT DISCUSSION/UPDATE:

Megan Rhodes stated that the FRCOG had received grant funds and is working with FRTA to improve marketing and brand awareness of the Fixed Route and Access services. The FRCOG hired a consultant in August for this project and has been meeting

every couple of weeks working on creating billboards, taglines, and campaign strategies with the focus being on attracting new riders into the system along with promoting transit as an environmentally friendly transportation option. A photo shoot is being scheduled for creating billboard ads along with a television commercial. Some of the marketing materials will also go towards promoting free Fixed Route fares through the end of June. Michael Perreault added that this marketing group is also looking at the color scheme on the bus potentially changing the white bus with red and blue striping to some thing new.

6. MASSDOT MOBILITY MANAGEMENT UPDATES:

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

- While Rachel is in a new role with MassDOT, much of her work remains the same as before with MassMobility. Some of her new responsibilities include overseeing the Community Transit Grant Program.
- Previously FRTA and other MA RTAs worked to create a local transportation inventory, which lead to the creation of RideMatch and is a statewide resource for transportation options throughout the Commonwealth. MassDOT is working with a consultant to update the information online and keep it current moving forward. You can check out RideMatch online at: massridematch.org.
- The Volunteer Driver Program network is a peer networking group for anyone that operates, or is thinking about starting, a volunteer driving program.
- Travel Trainers network is another similar peer networking group with travel trainers from across the state (and beyond) that come together to share ideas and best practices and for those looking to start a program to learn and ask questions.

For more information on any of these project and programs please contact Rachel Fichtenbaum at: Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us.

7. FRTA UPDATES:

Michael Perreault provided the following updates and information:

- The last three remaining 35ft low-floor Gillig transit buses have been delivered and two were put into service at the end of September and one at the beginning of October.
- FRTA's new Fixed Route scheduling software and real-time rider app continues to advance. We are awaiting equipment delivery and installation dates and hope to have this software operating soon.
- FRTA has been working with the City of Greenfield to create a new bee sculpture, with a transportation theme, to be unveiled at the Transit Center during the next Bee Fest in the spring of 2023.
- FRTA Maintenance Facility project is expected to reach substantial completion in February of 2023 and will begin moving and fully operational shortly thereafter.
- FRTA has been awarded two Shared Streets and Spaces. The first grant project was recently completed working with the FRCOG and the City of Greenfield

constructing new shelters, bus stops, sidewalks, and crosswalks on Elm St. at Elm Terrace in Greenfield. FRTA also recently received a second grant to do a similar project in Turners Falls on Millers Falls Rd. at Industrial Blvd. We will be working with the FRCOG and the Town of Montague to make intersection improvements for both pedestrians and transit users in that area.

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

Megan Rhodes stated that the FRCOG is gearing up to update the Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan. The process will include public surveys, online interactive mapping, and public meetings. More information will be coming out in the coming weeks and months. George Touloumtzis asked about FRTA Access locations in Athol. Michael Perreault explained that we recognized that some people that live in eastern Franklin County have services located in Athol, even though Athol is not an FRTA town. We tried to balance this by allowing the Access program to stop at a few key locations in Athol: including downtown Athol (near the YMCA), Athol Hospital, and the Market Basket Plaza. Kim Croce stated that the upcoming Western Mass Transportation Advocacy Network (WMTAN) meeting will be discussing legislative priorities. If anyone is interested in attending the meeting or would like to pass along their priorities for consideration, please email Kim Croce: kim@greenfieldhousing.org. George Touloumtzis stated that the introduction of weekend fixed route service in Franklin County should be a high priority. Elizabeth Quirk stated that Question 1 (the Fair Share Amendment) passed, and more funding should be coming but the question remains unanswered as to how quickly they'll get into the pipeline.

The next scheduled FRTA Advisory Board meeting is Thursday, November 17, 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.

The next Transit Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for March 9, 2023. Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to adjourn, George Touloumtzis seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.