

Approved 5/11/23

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 March 9, 2023 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 George Touloumtzis.

Also present were:

Thomas Albano, Janice Gibeau, Carol Letson, Rachel Fichtenbaum, MassDOT Manager of Grant Programs & Mobility Management, Wayne Waldron; FTM General 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 NOVEMBER 10, 2022:

Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to approve meeting minutes from November 10, 2022. George Touloumtzis seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Megan Rhodes: Yes

Gary Daniele: Yes

George Touloumtzis: Yes

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

3. UPDATE ON ACCESS SERVICE:

Michael Perreault gave some brief updates on the Access service. The Access program continues to be very active, but trip requests continue to outpace available resources. Wayne Waldron continues to work towards filling vacant driver positions in hopes to reduce the number of trip denials on an ongoing basis. Service continues to operate

5:30am-7:30pm Monday through Friday and 9:30am-5:30pm Saturdays and Sundays. George Touloumtzis asked what percentage of trip requests are being denied. Michael Perreault stated that he doesn't have that data available at the meeting but that he can bring that information to the next meeting.

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. FRTA had received a new grant contract on January 18, 2023 to continue this transportation program for an additional 12 months. Having these additional grant funds will allow FRTA to continue collecting data on this program as we look toward finding permanent funding solutions.

5. FRCOG MARKETING CONSULTANT DISCUSSION/UPDATE:

Megan Rhodes stated FRCOG and FRTA continue to work with a consultant on marketing strategies. Recently, the consultant helped with the creation of a television commercial. In addition, FRCOG continues to geofencing UMass and GCC parking lots to send a push notifications to users' cell phones giving additional information about utilizing public transit instead of driving. Lastly, work continues to improve and update FRTA's website and Facebook account. Michael Perreault asked if people in the geofencing area would get a text message. Megan Rhodes stated that people will get a text message with a link to the FRTA's YouTube page with a video of the television commercial. Megan Rhodes will send out a link after the meeting to the YouTube page for those that would like to see the commercial.

6. FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE:

Megan Rhodes discussed the FRCOG's current project to update the Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan. The FRCOG is currently underway in gathering public input through the end of next week (March 17th) and then putting together a draft plan in May and back out to public comment on the draft plan and then the plan is expected to be completed and endorsed in June. This includes information and feedback of all types of transportation including walking, biking, transit, vehicle, etc.

Wayne Waldron added a brief update on FRTA bus stops. His team has received permits from MassDOT on installing bus stop signs throughout Orange and they are just waiting for the spring weather to get the new bus stop signs in the ground, hopefully in the coming weeks. In addition, bus stop signs were recently installed along Route 2 in Charlemont. Megan Rhodes asked if any of these new stops included shelters, seating, or other amenities. Wayne Waldron indicated that all of the previously mentioned stops in Orange and Charlemont are just bus stop signs, however he is working with local DPWs on any good locations to install seating at stops (Simme-seats).

Carol Letson asked if there was a date for moving into the new FRTA Maintenance and Operations facility. Michael Perreault stated that there has not been a move-in date announced yet.

Elizabeth Quirk mentioned that one of the links for the plan update is broken. Michael Perreault stated that he will get all of the links from Megan Rhodes after the meeting and can email the information to the TAC.

7. DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED RTA LEGISLATION:

Megan Rhodes discussed some newly proposed legislation by Representative Natalie Blais, which the MA Public Health Association put together a fact sheet (included in the meeting materials). The proposed legislation is a request for more funding put towards investing in public transit. Most Franklin County legislators have signed onto this legislation.

8. MASSDOT MOBILITY MANAGEMENT UPDATES:

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

- In addition to the Regional Transportation Plan update as discussed in Item 6, the state is also in the process of creating a statewide plan for transportation.
- The previous Mobility Management newsletter has been put on hiatus but will soon be brought back – stay tuned.
- MassDOT is currently working on a study for the creation of a statewide mobility manager(s). MassDOT will be reaching out to RTAs, Regional Planning Organizations, and other stakeholders to discuss as part of the study. The study should be complete by the end of August and should have some action plans for moving forward.

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

Megan Rhodes asked if there was any new information about the conference agenda for the upcoming MassDOT Innovation Conference. Rachel Fichtenbaum stated that an agenda hasn't been released for the conference yet.

9. FRTA UPDATES:

Michael Perreault provided the following updates and information:

- With the recent re-opening of the General Pierce Bridge between Greenfield and Turners Falls, FRTA has resumed normal service routing for the Route 32 again.
- FRTA's new Fixed Route scheduling software and real-time rider app continues to advance. The contractor has been installing hardware onto our fixed route buses and we will soon begin training on the software and new equipment.

- FRTA Maintenance Facility project is expected to reach substantial completion of the building by the end of March of 2023. Exterior site work, exterior lighting, fence installation, landscaping, sidewalks, and paving will take a few more months to complete. At this time, we do not have a move-in date pinned down.

Megan Rhodes asked if FRTA is completing a Zero Emission Transition Plan for its transit fleet. Michael Perreault stated that FRTA will be working with MassDOT to complete the plan. This plan is a requirement to be eligible for the latest round of federal 5339 funding for the purchase of electric, or zero emission, transit vehicles and supported equipment. The next vehicle replacement scheduled for FRTA will be in FY26.

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

George Touloumtzis asked if there's a chance to return to in-person meetings. Megan Rhodes stated that MassDOT has suggested that meetings are held either in-person or virtual as there have been some difficulties in running hybrid meetings. Discussion continued that most people are flexible with meeting platforms. Megan Rhodes suggested she could host the next meeting in the FRCOG library and experienced with that space working well for hybrid meetings. Megan Rhodes made a **motion** to hold the next meeting in a hybrid format and evaluate from there. George Touloumtzis seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Megan Rhodes: Yes

Gary Daniele: Yes

George Touloumtzis: Yes

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

The next scheduled FRTA Advisory Board meeting is Thursday, March 16, 2023 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 May 11, 2023. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.