

Approved 9/14/23

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 May 11, 2023 at the John W. Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301 and 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, George Touloumtzis, and Deb Wilson.

Also present were:

Jeff Singleton, Carol Letson, 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 9, 2023:

George Touloumtzis made a **motion** to approve meeting minutes from March 9, 2023. Megan Rhodes seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Megan Rhodes: Yes

George Touloumtzis: Yes

Deb Wilson: Yes

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

3. FRCOG MARKETING CONSULTANT DISCUSSION/UPDATE:

Michael Perreault stated that the FRCOG has helped with funding for re-striping the buses, the creation of a commercial, geofencing messages, and updates to the FRTA website. Megan Rhodes added that the FRCOG has acquired an additional \$10,000 to continue assisting FRTA on marketing/rebranding project later this fall.

4. FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE:

Megan Rhodes indicated that the FRCOG is beginning to wrap up the Regional Transportation Plan. They received over 500 responses with feedback and requests for improvements including more frequent fixed route services, weekend fixed route services, along with the need for additional sidewalks and bike paths. It is anticipated that the draft report will be published on May 23rd, then allowing three weeks for public review and final comment before endorsement of the final report on June 27th.

George Touloumtzis asked about the public would be notified when the draft report is available for review. Megan Rhodes stated that they would share information through their website, Facebook page, Twitter page, email to stakeholders, and through local newspaper. Jeff Singleton suggested that he could work with the Montague Reporter to do an article to get the word out as well.

5. FRTA FARES WORKING GROUP UPDATE:

Michael Perreault gave a brief update on FRTA's fares working group, which came out of the initial fare policy discussion from the previous Advisory Board meeting in March. Since then, FRTA convened a small working group which started analyzing FRTA's fare structures for all of the different programs, looking at recommendations for simplifying fare structures, and doing a deeper dive into documenting the cost of collecting fixed route fares. The intention is to come back in the fall at an upcoming with the findings from the working group along with some recommendations for the Advisory Board to consider as they look to amend and adopt an updated fare policy.

Jeff Singleton asked if the calculation of fixed fare collections will take into consideration the long-term impacts on local assessments if FRTA was going to not collect fares. Michael Perreault stated that the early discussions did not include any long-term impacts on local assessments, but only looked at calculating and assigning costs to actual fare collections versus the amount of fares being collected. This includes things such as equipment costs along with costs for collecting, counting, and tracking fares. FRTA needs to make sure that the Advisory Board is fully informed prior to making any decisions.

6. MASSDOT MOBILITY MANAGEMENT UPDATES:

Rachel Fichtenbaum was not able to join today's meeting, but Michael Perreault provided the following updates and information to the group on her behalf:

- MassDOT recently opened their latest round of Community Transit Grant Program. FRTA applies for these funds for Demand Response vehicle replacements. There are also funds available for mobility management programs and for some operating programs.

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

George Touloumtzis stated at the last TAC meeting Rachel Fichtenbaum discussed a study that was going to be concluded in August and was hoping to get an update on that. Megan Rhodes indicated that MassDOT was conducting a study on whether or not it makes sense to have centralized mobility managers available to assist throughout the state. Michael Perreault stated that he would reach out to Rachel Fichtenbaum after the meeting to see if she could share some updates on this that could be shared with the group.

7. FRTA UPDATES:

Michael Perreault provided the following updates and information:

- Our next round of vehicle deliveries are expected to arrive in December 2023 and June 2024. These will include additional low-floor buses and minivans and will be replacements for existing Demand Response vehicles.
- FTM has been working on completing the installation of bus stop signs throughout the fixed route network. Most recently signs were installed at the Greenfield Library, along Route 2 in Orange, at the Erving Bowling Alley, and along Routes 5/10 south between Greenfield and Northampton.
- FRTA has been working with Hilltown CDC training on automated scheduling software to use in their Demand Response service area – Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Plainfield, and Worthington.
- FRTA continues to work towards launching new Fixed Route scheduling and tracking software. While it has taken longer than anticipated the hope is to have it up and running by the fall. This includes a “where’s my bus” app, automated passenger counters, and automated stop announcements.
- FRTA has scheduled a grand opening for the new Maintenance and Operations Facility on June 7th. FRTA Administrator has invited all members of the TAC to attend.

Megan Rhodes asked about the status of MassDOT’s work with FRTA on a Zero Emission Transition Plan. Michael Perreault indicated that MassDOT has brought in a consultant to work with the RTAs to review vehicles and services and one of the tasks is to assist with creating a Zero Emission Transition Plan. The creation of a plan for each RTA is included in one of the Phases of this project but there has been no definitive timeline on completing the plan as of yet.

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

Jeff Singleton asked if FRTA has been included in Montague’s discussions on building a new sludge facility. Michael Perreault indicated he is not aware of any plans regarding that.

George Touloumtzis asked about the percentage of trip denials with the Access program. Michael Perreault indicated that he forgot to get that information for this meeting but would be sure to follow up after this meeting along with any updates from Rachel Fichtenbaum.

Deb Wilson announced that the Franklin Hampshire Career Center is moving from Arch Place to the Corporate Center on 101 Munson St. in Greenfield. George Touloumtzis stated that the hilly terrain, lack of sidewalks along Munson St., and limited transit services will make it difficult for individuals to reach that location.

Michael Perreault announced that the Franklin County Bike Week Breakfast will be on Tuesday, May 16th from 8:00am-9:30am at the Transit Center. FRTA will have a bus available for people to see and try bike racks on the bus.

Michael Perreault announced that CSO will be holding their Mental Health and Wellness Fair on Wednesday, May 17th from 10:00am-2:00pm at the Greenfield Energy Park.

Michael Perreault shared an email on an upcoming community conversations event from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston being held on Wednesday, May 17th at the Transit Center. Pre-registration is requested by Monday, May 15th.

Elizabeth Quirk announced that the Western Mass Transportation Advocacy Network will be holding a conference on Friday, June 2nd in Holyoke.

The next scheduled FRTA Advisory Board meeting is Thursday, May 18, 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 September 14, 2023. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.