

Pursuant to written notice sent to Board Members and pursuant to notice posted at least forty-eight hours prior to the meeting, copies of said notice having been sent to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William F. Galvin and the Secretary of the Executive Office of Administration and Finance, Kristen Lepore, the meeting of the Advisory Board of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority was held on November 16, 2017 at the John W. Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301.

**1. INTRODUCTIONS:**

Present were the following Advisory Board Members and/or Member Designees:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	2.07
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	6.32
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.11
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	25.77
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.91
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.67
Howard Bronstein	Plainfield	1.00
Ruth Preston	Southwick	2.54
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	1.29
Richard Tillberg	Whately	2.36
	<u>Total</u>	<u>58.04</u>

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator, Molly Morin; FTM General Manager, Rauley Caine; FTM Assistant General Manager, George Touloumtzis; FRTA Transit Advisory Committee, and Deb Wilson; FRTA Transit Advisory Committee.

Chairman Lance Fritz called the meeting to order at 4:00pm and it was noted that a quorum **was** present to hold a meeting.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Jeff Singleton handed out a request for an agenda item for the next Advisory Board meeting (see attached) with language for a change in the existing Advisory Board by-laws. Lance Fritz stated that Jeff Singleton is on the By-Law Review Committee and should bring this request to that Committee prior to requesting review by the Advisory Board.

### **3. OLD BUSINESS:**

There was no old business.

### **4. REVIEW AND VOTE TO ACCEPT MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 21, 2017 MEETINGS:**

Ruth Preston made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from September 21, 2017. Jonathan von Ranson seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

### **5. FY17 AUDIT REVIEW AND UPDATED WEIGHTED VOTE:**

Peter Otten stated that the Finance and Audit Committee met with the auditor to review the FRTA's FY17 end of year audit and found things to be in order. Michael Perreault added that to save from making numerous paper copies, an email went out to the board members with the final audit documents in electronic format but that if anyone wanted a hard copy to please contact him directly. Michael Perreault also added that included in the meeting packet was the updated local assessment calculations and weighted votes from the FY17 final audit figures and are reflected in the meeting sign-in sheet. Discussion concluded that local assessments and weighted votes are based upon each town's level of transit services and are calculated and updated annually following the annual audit.

### **6. DISCUSSION AND VOTE TO INCLUDE MASSACHUSETTS REHAB COMMISSION INFO INTO HALF-FARE FIXED ROUTE QUALIFICATIONS:**

Tina M. Cote explained that FRTA currently has qualifications for riders to receive reduced fare, often referred to as "half-fare", on our fixed route system. The current qualifications include being 60 years and older, qualifying for a Statewide Access Pass, qualifying for ADA service, being a veteran or active military service member, or being a student through grade 12. Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission had made a request prior to the last Advisory Board meeting for consideration to include clients of Department of Mental Health, Department of Developmental Disabilities, and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission to be included as a qualifier for reduced fare for fixed route transportation. Tina M. Cote added that average breakdown for fares currently stands at 60% full fare ridership, 25% reduced fare ridership, and 15% free fare ridership (which includes children under 5, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind clients, and transfers between buses). Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** for clients of Department of Mental Health, Department of Developmental Disabilities, and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission to be included as a qualifier for reduced fare for fixed route transportation and Peter Otten seconded. Jeff Singleton asked if clients of these organizations would be qualified indefinitely or only for a certain period. Tina M. Cote clarified that clients would qualify for a 1-year period, but could re-apply every year if they remain on as a client of those organizations. The vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

## **7. UPDATE ON BY-LAWS REVIEW COMMITTEE:**

Lance Fritz explained that the By-Laws Committee met recently to review the current by-laws for both the Advisory Board and the Finance and Audit Committee. Once the By-Laws Committee is finished making a list of recommendations and changes to the by-laws they will be presented to the Advisory Board for full discussion and a vote on the changes. Some of the highlights from the initial discussions were to reduce the officer election terms to one-year, explore the possibility of remote participation, and sending meeting notices, packets, and other Advisory Board information, electronically. There was discussion about remote participation and how that would apply to our Advisory Board meetings. Michael Perreault explained that there are rules governing remote participation, such as having a quorum physically present at the meeting, but that the request originally came from the Chairman of the Blandford Selectboard. At the By-Laws Committee meeting everyone agreed that the idea should be considered but that we would need to become more familiar with the rules that govern remote participation and what requirements FRTA and the Advisory Board would need to meet in order use remote participation at meetings. Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to refer Jeff Singleton's proposal to the By-Law Committee to be reviewed with the committee at a mutually agreeable time for the committee members. Jonathan von Ranson seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

## **8. MAINTENANCE FACILITY PROJECT UPDATE:**

Tina M. Cote updated that we are still waiting for the results of the federal grant submitted for construction funding for the new maintenance facility. FRTA does have state capital funds for the purchase of the property this fiscal year. FRTA recently had a kickoff meeting with its Architectural and Engineering contractor, STV, Inc., to make introductions, set ground rules for communication and to discuss the project timeline and critical milestones. After the meeting we went out to visit the project site and were surprised to find an access road, job trailers and a staging area set up on our site for an adjacent solar farm construction project for the Town of Montague. This initially made STV, Inc. uneasy as they were unaware of the conditions in which the solar contractor would leave the site. Since that point we've been in constant communication with the Town of Montague and its contractor to keep everyone apprised of both projects. We continue to work towards the purchase of the property and the next step is to have site surveying completed in December and it is expected that we should be able to get through the Zoning Board's Site Plan Review by the end of the March 2018. Jonathan von Ranson asked if STV, Inc. is satisfied with the explanation from the Town regarding setting up job trailers and project staging on our project site. Michael Perreault explained that the property is still owned by the Town, but confirmed that everything seems to be in order and there should be no issues moving forward with our project. Robert J. Decker III asked if we had drawings for a maintenance facility from a previous contract and Michael Perreault explained that there was only a conceptual design from a previous contract. Lance Fritz added that the contractor is essentially using the conceptual design as the starting point and working to fit that concept onto the new site location. There was further discussion that the Town of Greenfield is potentially eyeing the existing maintenance facility site on Deerfield St. in Greenfield for a future anaerobic digester. Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA is aware of the Town's plans for future use of the current leased facility and that she continues to keep the Mayor informed of the progress of our

project. George Touloumtzis asked if there is any consideration for alternative fuels and alternative fuel vehicles in the design of the new facility. Michael Perreault explained that unfortunately we are not currently planning for any alternative fuels or alternative fuel vehicles for the new facility. The main driver behind that decision is that FRTA has no funding for construction and without that we are not considering things beyond the scope of what is needed to maintain and operate our current fleet-type vehicles. We continue to explore emerging technologies with electric-hybrid buses or fully electric buses which, while would also involve additional infrastructure, would seem to be able to be easily adapted to our future facility.

## **9. OTHER FRTA UPDATES:**

Tina M. Cote gave some brief updates on the following FRTA projects:

- FY18 state budget was expected to include \$86 million in State Contract Assistance for all RTAs, but was reduced to \$80 million. FRTA built our FY18 budget expecting to get \$82 million, which was level-funded from FY17, and is now causing a shortfall of about \$24,800. It is expected that the legislature will put in for additional funds in a supplemental budget later this year, but the Governor has already requested the RTAs to put together FY19 budgets using the \$80 million figure.
- Our new route changes launched on September 5<sup>th</sup> and so far, we're seeing gains in overall ridership. October 2017 compared to October 2016, we've seen an increase of 13% in fixed route ridership. In addition, 16% of our ridership in October 2017 was using the new monthly passes.
- Additional bus stop signs and route signage continues to go up along our bus stop locations making bus stops more visible and user friendly. Other locations with high passenger usage are being considered for bus shelter installations and will be considered on a case by case basis.
- Robert J. Decker III stated that he had heard there is legislation being proposed for cities and towns to be able to use public transportation to transport students to schools. Tina M. Cote couldn't speak to the legislation, but that the Town of Greenfield had approached the FRTA to discuss the possibility of providing transportation for students to school. FRTA met with Greenfield Town and school officials and Tina M. Cote explained that by law the FRTA is not allowed to provide school bus transportation, but that any of our bus routes that travel by middle and/or high schools, students can use public transportation like anyone else. Eric Twarog added that his understanding is the Town is considering a pilot project next year to incorporate some students with using FRTA fixed bus route system to get to school. Jeff Singleton asked to clarify the law regarding public transportation and school bus transportation. Molly Morin stated that as a public transit provider all bus routes are open to the public and we cannot prohibit anyone, children or otherwise, from using the system. Public transportation routes can be created or modified to encompass mass transportation trip generators which include locations such as schools, supermarkets, housing complexes, major employers, industrial parks and medical facilities.
- Union negotiations will be starting up in December for FTM operators. The current contract is in effect through February 2018. While being very budget conscious for FY19 we will be working with FTM to look at cost saving measures through things such switching from weekly to bi-weekly payroll, changing health plans, etc.

- On Monday Tina M. Cote and Michael Perreault will be meeting with representatives from MassDOT to discuss FRTA's Program Preview. This meeting will review our current transportation programs, looking for possible areas for improvement, and projections for funding requirements and service improvements for FY19 and FY20. Tina M. Cote is prepared to request an increase in funding to implement weekend service as well as additional funding for our demand response programs. Jeff Singleton asked if a copy of the request for additional funding could be sent around to the Advisory Board members and Tina M. Cote stated that she would send an email out with that information.
- Through a \$100,000 grant, the Freedom's Shuttle launched on November 5<sup>th</sup>. This shuttle is set up to operate in the west county towns of Ashfield, Buckland, and Conway for people with substance abuse disorders to gain access to recovery services in Greenfield. In addition, the grant also covers funding for two months' worth of bus passes for people with substance abuse disorders that live near our current fixed route system to learn how to use and navigate our public transportation system. The grant is expected to go through December 2018.
- FRTA will again operate Free Friday, the Friday after Thanksgiving, providing free transportation on all fixed routes as a thank you to existing riders and encourage non-transit users to try the system. We encourage all our Advisory Board members to get out and ride as well.
- FRTA recently went out to public sealed bid for four retired vehicles; three transit buses and one maintenance truck. Total high bids netted \$7,651 in additional miscellaneous revenue which will go towards offsetting the revenue shortfall from the State Contract Assistance funding.
- 2018 will be FRTA's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We are exploring different ideas to highlight this occasion like entering the Franklin County Fair Parade in the fall, creating a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary decal for our buses, and/or doing a full bus wrap on one of the large coach buses. If anyone has any suggestions, please contact Tina M. Cote.
- At a recent MA Transit Administrator's meeting Tina M. Cote was highlighting that FRTA is the only transit authority in MA that has no weekend service. It was suggested that writing a letter to the State Secretary of Transportation may help gain the needed attention and call for additional funding. Discussion concluded that the Advisory Board, the Transit Advisory Committee, the Opioid Task Force, and perhaps others could submit letters on behalf of FRTA to request funding and bring attention to the need for weekend transportation service.

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to adjourn; Peter Otten seconded and the meeting concluded at 5:00pm.