

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 February 10, 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>
Ted Willard	Charlemont	2.48
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	8.42
Randy Crochier	Gill	1.05
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	26.29
Edmund Jaworski	Hatfield	1.68
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00
Jeff Singleton	Montague	13.37
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.40
Jonathan von Ranson	Wendell	<u>1.05</u>
	Total	56.74

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote, FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault, FRTA Assistant Administrator, Molly Morin, FTM Acting General Manager, Rauley Caine, FTM Acting Assistant General Manager, George Touloumtzis, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee, Senator Adam Hinds, Jon Gould, Office of Senator Adam Hinds, Representative Paul Mark, Paul Dunphy, Office of Representative Stephen Kulik, Connie Englert, TrueNorth/Max Bus, Lindsay Rowe, Office of Mayor Martin, John Lunt, Head of Special Projects for the Town of Greenfield, and Megan Rhodes, Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

Chairman Lance Fritz called the meeting to order at 1:30pm and it was noted that a quorum **was** present to hold a meeting.

**2. FRTA IMPROVEMENTS/ONGOING PROJECTS SINCE THE CSA RELEASE IN AUGUST 2015:**

Tina M. Cote discussed some of the recommendations from our Comprehensive Service Analysis and some improvements the FRTA has made since 2015, along with some information on current and projected budget outlook and proposed weekend service (see attached PowerPoint presentation).

### **3. PROJECTED COSTS FOR WEEKEND SERVICE:**

Tina M. Cote gave cost estimate information regarding the implementation of weekend service. It is estimated that a full day of weekend service, both Saturday and Sunday, would cost approximately \$720,000. Estimated cost for either a full day of Saturday service or a half day of Saturday and a half day of Sunday services would cost approximately \$360,000. It is estimated that a half day of Saturday service would cost approximately \$180,000. All of these costs include operating the buses as well as on-duty managers, dispatchers, garage maintenance staff, and maintenance staff at the transit center. About 18% would be covered by local communities' contributions through an increase in local assessments. The difference would need to be covered by State Contract Assistance, Federal 5311, some other type of grant source, or a mix thereof. The key is to find sustainable, long-term funding for this project.

### **4. DISCUSSION ON NEED AND REALISTIC GOALS FOR WEEKEND SERVICE:**

Jeff Singleton stated that it is important to get clear figures on costs and then lobby with the state legislators for funding. Jeff Singleton commented that he thinks we should advocate for a half day of Saturday service to start, but that it's important to see the breakdowns for what additional costs the towns will be responsible for versus state funding, etc. FRTA should emphasize the fact that FRTA is the only transit authority in Massachusetts that has no weekend service.

George Touloumtzis asked if there had been any other price estimates on running all routes versus only running certain routes. Tina M. Cote responded that cost estimates haven't been broken down to that level, but FRTA is looking to operate whatever is appropriate and actual routes would be based upon public feedback. Michael Perreault added that these cost estimates are more of a high level estimate and once we get a better idea of what weekend service will look like, at least to start, and about how much funding we're anticipating, then we will start to hone things down to what actual routes, routing, and trip times will look like. That will be when public feedback is most crucial.

Jonathan von Ranson asked if FRTA has reviewed other regional transit authorities' weekend services to estimate what similar levels we could/should offer. Tina M. Cote stated that it's not a direct comparison, because our neighbors like PVTA and MART are more urbanized with higher population densities. Megan Rhodes stated that she believes most regional transit authorities run some type of 'reduced' schedule, such as not traveling to schools, not running as frequently, etc. Jonathan von Ranson suggested that weekend schedules would be more geared toward shopping.

Robert J. Decker III asked about the Northampton route and how that was established. Tina M. Cote explained that the Northampton route was established with CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation Air Quality) and JARC (Job Access Reverse Commute) funding and then slowly over time federal and state funds increased to replace those grant funds. Robert J. Decker III wanted to confirm that both Northampton and Sunderland were not contributing to the cost of the FRTA operating service in their respective towns. Tina M. Cote confirmed that Northampton and Sunderland are a part of PVTA and do not pay local assessments to FRTA. Jeff Singleton added that the PVTA also runs into South Deerfield. There was some discussion about new legislation

that was recently passed that would allow a town to belong to two different regional transit authorities.

## **5. NEXT STEPS AND MOVING FORWARD TOWARDS WEEKEND SERVICE:**

Senator Hinds suggested that the FRTA needs to find the level of service it wants to start with and get support from Representative Kulik, as the Vice-Chair of Ways and Means, and for everyone to then get behind his support. Senator Hinds also suggested attending one of the current Commonwealth Conversations meetings happening around the state and to bring this issue up to the Senators that will be in attendance at those meetings as well.

Representative Mark echoed Senator Hinds to have FRTA decide on what we want for weekend service. The legislature will be more effective if they can clearly understand what the need is FRTA and weekend service. The state budget process is beginning soon so decisions will have to be made quickly as the House budget will be in the April timeframe and the Senate following around the May timeframe.

Robert J. Decker III suggested that FRTA could run a shuttle to the Holyoke Mall or Hadley Mall on the weekends.

Tracy Rogers asked what people have been asking for in terms of weekend service. Megan Rhodes suggested that feedback from public outreach over the years has been asking for transportation to major employers, medical facilities, and shopping centers.

Tina M. Cote suggested that we start small with a half day Saturday service and build upon that into the future. Jonathan von Ranson suggested that there should be some reassurance that the bus system is operating at a logical and proper level. Tina M. Cote stated that feedback also suggests that riders and potential riders would like FRTA to be more reliable, meaning offering weekend service, as not everyone works Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm. Robert J. Decker III suggested that if you design the system that is cost effective and reliable then people will want to use it.

Eric Twarog asked about how local assessments are calculated for each town. Michael Perreault stated that as we get closer to determining actual service plan we'll be able to drill down to get better cost estimates and estimates for how this will effect local assessments. Jeff Singleton added that local assessments come off of each town's cherry sheet and not through the usual town budget process.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm.