

MEETING NOTES

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 8, 2018 at the John W. Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

Present were the following TAC Members:

Chairman George Touloumtzis and Jasper Lapienski.

Also present were:

Peter Kuusisto, Jeff Singleton, Molly Morin; FTM General Manager, Ron Andronaco; FTM Safety and Training Manager, and Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator.

George Touloumtzis called the meeting to order at 1:00pm and it was noted that a quorum **was not** present to hold a meeting. If anyone is interested in becoming a committee member, or knows someone that may be interested, please email Michael Perreault at michael@frta.org.

2. REVIEW MEETING MINUTES FROM MARCH 9, 2017 AND MEETING NOTES FROM JANUARY 11, 2018:

The meeting minutes from March 9, 2017 was tabled until the next meeting. There were no comments regarding the meeting notes from January 11, 2018. George Touloumtzis commented on the discussion on keeping bus stops clear and accessible from snow throughout the winter and asked if others knew of any other communities that have found success or could offer best practices. Michael Perreault offered to email Rachel Fichtenbaum to see if she might have any information she could share from MassMobility. Peter Kuusisto also offered to speak with his supervisor to see if there is any information from MassRides and Safe Routes to School. Jasper Lapienski suggested that ordinances that require property owners to maintain city-(or town-) owned property are not an effective solution.

3. DISCUSSION ON FY19 FUNDING OUTLOOK AND SUPPORT:

Continuing the discussion from the last meeting, Michael Perreault stated that at the end of January the Governor released his FY19 budget proposal which included funding all transit authorities at \$80.4 million, which is the equivalent to funding regional transit authorities received in FY15. The transit authorities were expecting to receive \$88.35 million for FY19. FRTA Administrator, Tina Cote, thought having letters of support for funding may help convey to the Governor the importance state funding and how the proposed budget will impact our area. Michael Perreault provided a draft letter which TAC members could use, if so inclined (see attached). With the proposed state budget FRTA would be facing a projected deficit of \$185,000.

George Touloumtzis commented that Michael Perreault was originally scheduled to meet with local legislators today and asked if that meeting would be rescheduled. Michael Perreault stated that the meeting is expected to be rescheduled for next Wednesday. George Touloumtzis also asked if there was any strategic decision for sending letters of support to the Governor versus sending to local legislators or both the Governor and local legislators. Michael Perreault was not aware of any strategy in the way the draft letter was proposed but didn't see any reason against contacting local legislators with the same information and request for support. Discussion continued that Michael Perreault could create a spreadsheet listing local legislators and contact information by town to make it easier for people to be able to make contact rather than wasting time searching for contact information. Michael Perreault added that FRTA Administrator, Tina Cote, recently had a conversation with Senator Rosenberg's office to reiterate again the need for future funding consideration to start, and then sustain, weekend service.

4. UPDATED TRANSPORTATION INVENTORY:

Michael Perreault stated that he was recently contacted with information about a transportation program for veterans in Massachusetts that might be an additional source to add into our list of transportation inventory. FRTA is currently researching that program to ensure that it is still currently operating and to collect basic program information that can be added onto our transportation inventory list. Michael Perreault suggested that during this time FRTA will review the list to make sure it is updated but that if anyone knows of any corrections, additions, or deletions to the list to email Michael Perreault at michael@frta.org. Peter Kuusisto added that as of January 1st MassRides' NuRide program changed its name to Baystate Commute. Jasper Lapienski suggested that the transportation inventory should be put into a brochure and/or posted onto one of the monitors in the transit center for people to have easier access to the information.

5. MASSRIDES 'GIVE TRANSIT A TRY' INFO:

Peter Kuusisto had shared with Michael Perreault an informational flyer about MassRides he uses when promoting public transportation, ride sharing and other non-traditional modes of transportation with local businesses and organizations with the goal of reducing

traffic congestion and improving air quality and mobility statewide. Michael Perreault had suggested some draft language changes to the “Riding Transit” flyer (see attached) to remove references to the MBTA and insert FRTA and other language to make it more applicable for greater Franklin County when speaking with area businesses and their employees.

Jasper Lapienski asked if there is a list of area employers that offer pre-tax benefits. Peter Kuusisto stated that some of the information regarding pre-tax benefits has recently changed with the new tax bill that passed, which will need to be updated along with FRTA’s updates. Peter Kuusisto is unaware of any area businesses who offer pre-tax benefits. Molly Morin stated that Franklin Transit Management does offer pre-tax benefits for its employees. George Touloumtzis asked how the Emergency Ride Home Program works. Peter Kuusisto explained that employees from businesses that have registered with MassRides would be able to be reimbursed for expenses due to an emergency/unforeseen situation, such as with child care issues or becoming ill. Employees would submit receipts for expenses related to an emergency ride home to MassRides, such as for a taxi ride or Uber, and will receive a refund from MassRides for 100% of the costs up to \$100. This would only apply to similar events up to a maximum of four times per year. MassRides works to educate employers and employees on the program including eligible uses and the reimbursement process.

6. REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL TOPICS:

Michael Perreault explained that Rachel Fichtenbaum was unable to attend today’s meeting but wanted to pass on the following information to the group:

- Travel training has been a frequent topic discussed at TAC meetings. Travel Trainings is when a professional is available to teach seniors, people with disabilities, or anyone else the skills and knowledge they need to ride public transit independently and safely. This could be a brief introduction to how to pay a fare and where to wait for the bus, or it can be an in-depth, individualized, one-on-one process of making sure the rider knows how to cross streets safely, riding with them to help identify landmarks, going over safety protocols for what to do if they get lost, shadowing the rider as they get the hang of it (so that they can try it on their own but the travel trainer is in the back of the bus), strategies to make sure you don’t lose your bus fare (or spend it at the mall), and so forth. FRTA is interested in having this service available but does not have a staff member available to provide it. A number of local organizations were found to already be offering some informal training and some were potentially interested in offering that type of service but lacked in-depth knowledge of the FRTA bus system. Last March FRTA worked with Rachel Fichtenbaum to come up with an introductory training to the FRTA bus system for human service agency staff. This training was well attended and concluded with an optional bus ride with Molly Morin as the driver. FRTA has decided to offer another System Orientation for Human Service Agency Staff on March 26th. Please help spread the word to any non-profits, human service agencies, etc. (See attached flyer)

- For those that have attended the Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference in past years, the conference is an opportunity for human service agency staff, transportation providers, disabled advocates, regional planners, and anyone interested in community transportation to come together to learn about programs people are piloting around the state to improve mobility for seniors, people with disabilities, low-income individuals, or anyone who does not drive a car. It's also an opportunity to meet peers from other regions who are working on similar challenges. This year MassDOT merged this conference with their Innovation & Technology conference and named it the Innovation & Mobility Exchange. The whole conference is April 10th and 11th, but April 10th is mainly engineering and highway topics. All of the content around community transportation topics are covered on the second day, April 11th. Registration is open, and although there is a registration fee, MassDOT and MassMobility want to enable everyone to attend, so there's a Community Mobility Scholarship that registrants can apply for. Scholarship deadlines will be extended for another week or two, but please apply as soon as possible. You can find a link for the scholarship, registration, and a preliminary schedule online at: www.massdotinnovation.com. In terms of content for the second day of the conference, there will be a plenary session in the afternoon on accessibility and equity in driverless cars, as well as breakout sessions on partnering with Uber and Lyft, healthcare transportation, engaging employers, marketing community transportation services, funding community transportation services, advocacy and more. Feel free to contact Rachel Fichtenbaum with any other questions at: rachel.fichtenbaum@state.ma.us.

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

Jeff Singleton stated that he wants to work with the FRTA and the Town of Montague to come up with a plan to provide better access to Amherst and Montague Center from Greenfield. Jeff Singleton added that area manufacturers would be interested in supporting transit if FRTA could accommodate their employee shift times. Jasper Lapienski suggested that FRTA and PVTA should coordinate their systems to attract more riders and make transferring between the two systems easier and more convenient for riders. Jeff Singleton stated that keeping the weekend service discussion going is very important. Jasper Lapienski asked if the Commuter Rider Representative has been selected. Michael Perreault stated that the Town of Petersham had selected Megan Rhodes. Jasper Lapienski asked if Megan Rhodes rides the bus and Michael Perreault stated that he was unaware if she did or didn't. Jasper Lapienski stated that there is an issue with the pressure in the water fountain. Michael Perreault stated that he would pass this information on to the building maintenance department to address.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 10, 2018. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm.