

Approved 9/18/25

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, Matthew Gorzkowicz, the meeting of the Advisory Board of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority was held on May 29, 2025 virtually on the Zoom.us platform by computer and by phone.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

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

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55
Emily Thurber	Colrain	1.19
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04
Total		65.00

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Wayne Waldron, FTM General Manager, Matty, public attendee.

Chairman Eric Twarog called the meeting to order at 4:03 pm and it was noted that a quorum **was** present to hold a meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

2. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON FREE FIXED ROUTE FARES OR REINSTATING FARE COLLECTIONS:

Jeff Singleton requests a review on how much of our revenue was collected in fares.

Tina M. Cote recalls that at our highest, we collected about \$105K on our fixed bus route. We did a calculation a couple of years ago, and it was costing FRTA over \$150K to have fareboxes and to collect fares. Since there are costs to maintain the fare boxes, upgrade the license

renewals, purchase ticket stock, the hours spent counting fares, going to the bank, having to deal with ticket issues or farebox malfunctions the cost of having them exceeds what we collect.

Tina adds that we got the TryTransit grant a couple of years ago, and we got more last year than we did this year. Not every transit authority wants to do the same thing, but they can use it on fixed bus route or paratransit. MeVA (Merrimack Valley RTA) has decided to suspend fares indefinitely, and a couple of other transit authorities may be following suit. It's difficult for someone like PVRTA to do this because they collect \$5 to \$6 million in fare revenues per year and it is difficult for them to make up for it. If FVRTA does this and we lose funding later, we can probably do some outreach in the community and get sponsors to make donations to use in lieu of collecting fares. Overall, being fare-free has increased our ridership, and made the bus experience more pleasant overall.

Paul McLatchy asks for affirmation that we are still collecting data on riders.

Tina affirms that yes, we do. We have passenger counters and collect data on a daily basis for fixed-route, ADA, Demand Response. FVRTA still collects fares on our Access program because it is a specialized transportation.

Rick LaPierre made a motion that we continue the free fixed-route fares as in place. Paul McLatchy seconded, Tina made a friendly amendment to insert the word "indefinitely" and Rick LaPierre stated he accepted the friendly amendment, Eric Twarog verified with Paul McLatchy if the second still stands, and Paul McLatchy affirmed that it does. The vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55	Yes
Emily Thurber	Colrain	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06	Yes
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04	Yes
		Total	65.00

Yes – 65.00

No – 0.00

Abstain – 0.00

3. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON DEMAND RESPONSE FARES:

Tina states that for the last couple of years, we have gotten TryTransit funds from the State. Last year we received an increase over the previous year so FVRTA suspended Demand Response fares from November through June 30th. FVRTA would like to extend this through October 31, 2025

since there are enough funds. It is unsure if we can do this on a permanent basis because we don't know from year to year if we are going to be getting funds. If the FRTA receives funding again in FY26, it is suggested that we offer another year of fare-free transportation for Demand Response.

Eric Twarog summarizes that right now we have it in the current budget to continue fare-free for Demand Response until October of this year, and that Tina is looking for a vote to continue it from November if we get the funding.

Tina clarifies that right now we have it set up until the end of June, but in recalculating, we do have enough to go to the end of October, so she wants that motion to extend it from June through October. If additional TryTransit, funding is received in FY26, we could continue the fare suspension November 1st through October 31st of next year.

Will Cosby asks how much this grant is worth for the service from October through next October.

Tina stated that we received \$218K in FY25. It is unsure if the same amount would come to the FRTA in FY26.

Will Crosby made the motion. Susan Bronstein seconded, and Jeff Singleton had an additional question.

Jeff Singleton asks what happens if we don't get as much or any funding, if we have to re-vote this or re-visit it at a certain meeting.

Tina states we have our next meeting in September and we should know about the funds by then.

The vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55	Yes
Emily Thurber	Colrain	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06	Yes
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04	Yes
		Total	65.00

Yes – 65.00

No – 0.00

Abstain – 0.00

NEW BUSINESS:

4. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY 26 BUDGET:

Discussion began regarding the FY26 budget.

Jim Loynd from the Town of Erving joined at this time.

Revenues: There wasn't anything in the budget for the TryTransit grant because we don't know for sure that we are going to get it, so if we do get it, it's only going to increase our bottom line. We no longer have a contract with Lifepath, so that grant went away, but we do have other grants that we were able to get so we were able to make up some of the difference. It didn't make sense to have a contract with Lifepath since it was coinciding with free Demand Response. We are hoping to utilize our MedRide grant to increase services for transportation outside Franklin County for medical services. We are trying to find a way that we can utilize our handicap-accessible vehicles to help out with individuals who have mobility restrictions- right now we only have volunteers using their own personal vehicles, and that has made it a little bit difficult to help that clientele out.

Beginning in March/April, FRTA started collecting a monthly fee from Greyhound again for the use of our facility and its amenities. As far as we know, State contract assistance should remain about the same as FY25, 5311 Federal funding is showing level funding. Our local share can go up by 2.5% so that line item will reflect the increase. FRTA will draw down their remaining CARES funds in FY25 and going in to FY26, the ARPA and CRRSSA funding will have been drawn as well based on the recommendation from MassDOT and our accounting firm.

Expenses: The FRTA is still trying to figure out annual costs for the new maintenance facility. Once the solar panels are installed, it may help us with the electrical costs. In the interim, we are trying to establish a budget for FTM - heat, insurance, utilities, our fuel station and chargers for our hybrid buses collectively can cause a variance in operations. An increase can be seen for wages, benefits and other operational costs due to union contracts, additional vehicles and increased transit services.

COA budgets have pretty much stayed the same. If we end up getting an increase in funding we may be able to increase line items based on additional services and costs. We are working with Hulmes Transportation (the provider used for transit services in Southwick) to potentially expand service in their area to include the general public. There are plans to do the same thing with Hilltown Easy Ride. It appears as though we will be at a deficit (\$1.4-\$1.8M) on the ending side for FY'25, however we hope to be drawing down from our federal funding at the end of June and expecting some Capital revenue reimbursements so we are very confident that FY25 will end in a balanced budget.

Eric Twarog asks for questions for Tina and seeing none, he added that he Audit and Finance Committee did meet to review the budget, and turns the floor over to Peter Otten to report on that meeting.

Peter Otten states that they went through the lines, had some discussions and determined that FRTA is very efficient in doing what they are supposed to do and not spending more money than they have. The committee has no concerns about the budget at this point.

Bob Decker made a motion to accept the budget. Peter Otten seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55	Yes
Emily Thurber	Colrain	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43	Yes
Jim Loynd	Erving	2.72	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06	Yes
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04	Yes
		Total	67.72

Yes – 67.72

No – 0.00

Abstain – 0.00

5. REVIEW AND APPROVE ADMINISTRATOR'S SALARY:

Eric Twarog stated that the Finance and Audit committee met on this and turned it over to Peter Otten who began the discussion regarding an increase for the FY26 salary for Tina Cote, FRTA Administrator. He stated that this is the only salary that the Board has control over since the Administrator is responsible for staff increases. In reviewing the salaries of other RTA Administrators, Tina is the lowest paid out of 15. He suggested an increase to \$125,000 with an additional 3% increase, bringing the total \$128,750 which would no longer leave her at the bottom but she'd be at the second to lowest paid and that most of them are making thousands more. This would still leave room in the budget to make increases for the remaining staff and Tina is committed to that.

Paul McLatchy from Ashfield is not opposed to the increase and thinks that it is a good thing to do but advised the Board not to compare Statewide positions to hers going forward. He suggested making regional comparisons vs. comparisons with the eastern part of the State. Peter Otten commented that even if her salary was compared to the western part of the State, she still would still be at the bottom of the list. Paul McLatchy was satisfied with that comparison.

Peter Otten made a motion to increase the Administrators salary to \$128,750 for FY26. Bob Decker seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55	Yes
Emily Thurber	Colrain	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43	Yes
Jim Loynd	Erving	2.72	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06	Yes
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04	Yes
		Total	67.72

Yes – 67.72

No – 0.00

Abstain – 0.00

6. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY26 RESOLUTION:

Review of Resolution with Board occurred (no changes from FY25). Peter Otten stated that the Finance and Audit Committee also reviewed this and has no issues.

Bob Decker made a motion to approve the Resolution. Peter Otten seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55	Yes
Emily Thurber	Colrain	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43	Yes
James Loynd	Erving	2.72	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06	Yes
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04	Yes
		Total	67.72

Yes – 67.72

No – 0.00

Abstain – 0.00

7. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF CHAIR FY26 – FY28:

Eric Twarog is the current Chair and is open for nomination again.

Bob Decker made a motion to nominate Eric Twarog as Chair for FY26-FY28. Peter Otten seconded and motioned to close nominations. The vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55	Yes
Emily Thurber	Colrain	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43	Yes
Jim Loynd	Erving	2.72	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06	Yes
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04	Yes
		Total	67.72

Yes – 67.72

No – 0.00

Abstain – 0.00

8. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FY26:

Peter Otten is the current Vice-Chair and unfortunately will be moving and will no longer be able to serve in this role. Emily Thurber is willing to step in to the role if no one else is interested.

Bob Decker made a motion to elect Emily Thurber as Vice-Chair for FY26. Peter Otten seconded and motioned to close nominations. The vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43	Yes
Jim Loynd	Erving	2.72	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06	Yes
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04	Yes
		Total	66.53

Yes – 66.53
No – 0.00
Abstain – 0.00

9. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FOR FY 26:

The current Finance and Audit committee consists of Eric Twarog as Chair, Bob Decker and Peter Otten. We need at least one additional member to fill Peter's void. Jeff Singleton offered to sit on the committee and Bob Decker and Eric Twarog both agreed to stay on.

Paul McLatchy made a motion to accept nominations and proceed with the election of committee. Peter Otten seconded and closed nominations. The vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55	Yes
Emily Thurber	Colrain	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06	Yes
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04	Yes
		Total	65.00*

Yes – 65.00
No – 0.00
Abstain – 0.00

*Jim Loynd from Erving left the meeting

10. DISCUSSION/VOTE ON HYBRID MEETINGS:

Discussion took place on whether the FRTA should vote to keep meetings virtual or to go with a hybrid model. The Administrator stated that we have more participation since we have had virtual meetings, it allows more Board members the ability to participate without long drives, meetings during inclement weather etc. Some Board members wanted to vote on a hybrid set up going forward and wanted to have the discussion. Persons wanting to meet in person could do so at the JWO Transit Center while others could still join through Zoom, creating the hybrid meeting.. Susan Bronstein suggested that the meetings be all Zoom or all in person because hybrid meetings have many challenges and she does not feel as though they are productive since people tend to talk over each other and feels that the conversations are much better outside of a hybrid setup. Michael Bates agreed. Bob Decker indicated that he participates in many meetings and feels that we should move to a hybrid set up. Jeff Singleton states that there have been

technical difficulties in the hybrid meetings that he attends and that it could affect the outcome if a quorum is needed. Eric Twarog did state that in the Town hybrid meetings if the Zoom part goes down, the meeting is canceled. Both sides can be seen but hybrids tend to have technical difficulties creating issues. Rick LaPierre made a motion to keep the meetings virtual. Susan Bronstein seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55	Abstain
Emily Thurber	Colrain	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43	No
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06	Yes
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04	Yes
		Total	59.02

Yes – 59.02

No – 4.43

Abstain – 1.55

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on September 18, 2026.

Tina expressed her gratitude and appreciation to Peter Otten for all that he has done for the FRTA having over 30 years of service. He has served on various Boards and committees during that time and has even driven FRTA vehicles through the Shelburne Senior Center.

11. Discussion of any subject not anticipated prior to the notice being sent to the Advisory Board Members pursuant to Article II, section 4 of the by-laws or anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting pursuant to the Open Meeting Law or a subject which cannot be delayed until the next Advisory Board meeting, including the need for an executive session.

Tina wanted to add that we have a job opening for an Assistant General Manager at FTM. Our former AGM has to resign due to health reasons and we will be working closely with TransDev and Wayne to fill this position as quickly as possible.

Eric made a motion to adjourn. Bob seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Paul McLatchy	Ashfield	1.20	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.55	Yes
Emily Thurber	Colrain	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	4.43	Yes

Eric Twarog	Greenfield	33.81	Yes
Will Cosby	Hawley	1.06	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	12.06	Yes
Michael Bates	Orange	5.02	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.02	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.62	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.04	Yes
		Total	65.00

Yes – 65.00

No – 0.00

Abstain – 0.00

The meeting concluded at 4:45pm.