



**Worcester Regional Transit Authority  
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
March 24, 2022**

**Chairperson Gary Rosen called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.**

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present by teleconference: Douglas Belanger – Leicester, John Ostrosky - Shrewsbury, Laura Wilson – Oxford, Mark Binnall – Auburn, Jacquelyn Ryan- Southbridge Alt, James R. Nee – Charlton, James Delage, Worcester DP, Robert Spain-Millbury, Roseann Carrier – Brookfield, Brian Bullock – Holden, Michael Ward – Clinton, Robert Reed – Sturbridge, James Ferrera – Warren, Jeffrey Bridges – Spencer, Michael McCall – Southbridge, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt, Brian Pigeon – Worcester Alt, Gary Rosen - Worcester.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

**Motion: To accept the minutes for February 17, 2022**

**By: Jacquelyn Ryan. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Robert Spain**

**Vote: (all in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.**

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

**Corrected: Gary Rosen 2<sup>nd</sup> vote to close meeting of March 10, 2022.**

**Motion: To accept the minutes for March 10, 2022 as corrected Gary Rosen 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**By: Robert Spain. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Brian Bullock**

**Vote: (all in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.**

Chairperson Rosen introduced Mr. Lipka for the Administrator’s report on the budget.

Mr. Lipka informed the board that as of March 25, 2022 the WRTA will be at 100% service from the recent Friday’s changes. They are expecting to have steady service despite continuing driver shortages. Mr. Lipka credited General Manager Dave Trabucco and his team for their efforts in this regard. Mr. Lipka stated they are moving forward on the Fare Payment System, a fall (9) nine bus buy and a scheduled 2023 (9) nine bus buy. They will be working on an RFP for the new website design and to fill the Marketing Manager’s position. Mr. Lipka expressed optimism for better candidates regarding positions with a new retirement system, when adopted.

Mr. Lipka introduced Thomas Coyne, Deputy Administrator and CFO to review the FY`23 Budget figures.

The budget highlights are listed.

- \$31.3m budget which is an increase of 8.3% over last year.
- \$22.2m fixed route budget which is an increase of 10.3% over last year.
- \$5.2m demand response budget which is an increase of 2.3% over last year.
- \$1.7m brokerage/customer service which is an increase of 15.7% over last year.
- \$1.6m Administration which is a decrease of 1% over last year.
- \$570k debt service & management fee which is a decrease of 3.5% over last year.

This budget is a level service budget and includes the 4 routes and the fare collection system. Thomas Coyne stated that this budget does not include the upcoming labor negotiations. Based upon the new labor contract a revised budget will be submitted after September 1, 2022. Thomas Coyne informed the board that labor shortages (overtime), COVID, Diesel Fuel, and especially PFMLA (approved by the State) are huge costs considerations. Diesel fuel was locked in at \$3.00 and that cost is linked to home heating oil costs. Thomas Coyne explained how they calculate and choose locking in a price. Increases in the budget are generally a reflection of fuel, fringe, liability insurance and purchased transportation costs (PTC). Increases for fixed route are due to overtime usage during

**Communities Served:**

Auburn	Brimfield	Douglas	Grafton	Millbury	North	Paxton	Southbridge	Wales	West Boylston
Barre	Brookfield	Dudley	Holden	New Braintree	Brookfield	Princeton	Spencer	Warren	West
Berlin	Charlton	East	Holland	Northborough	Oakham	Rutland	Sturbridge	Webster	Brookfield
Boylston	Clinton	Brookfield	Leicester	Northbridge	Oxford	Shrewsbury	Sutton	Westborough	Worcester



driver shortages and wages. The budget reflects a 7% increase for health insurance. First Transit’s management contract expires December 31, 2022 and will go out for an RFP. Administrative revenue increased 11.7% due to vehicles sold and marketing efforts. Federal Operating Assistance increased \$3.3m. Local assessments increased 6.6% while State Contract Assistance (SCA) decreased \$398k from Actual FY`22. As the budget moves through the legislative process the SCA figures may change. \$28 million in CARES ACT money is left while the ARP money is fully funding the 4-route expansion with night service. MassDOT Discretionary Grant Program is yet to be announced.

Fare Revenue (about \$1.37m) on the FY`23 consolidated budget was calculated at \$1.00 fixed route and \$2.00 paratransit based on 6 months. Any continuation of free fare and/or any budget adjustments due to labor negotiations would come out of CARES ACT money.

Mr. Lipka informed the board that in order to meet the RAN filing deadline the budget needs to be approved at the April 2022 board meeting. He asked that the board approve sending the budget to the Audit and Finance Committee for review and recommendation.

John Ostrosky asked about the VIA services funded with money from the Federal Operating Assistance. Mr. Lipka replied VIA is an on-demand app-based service along a fixed route and area in Westborough and Shrewsbury. It is not specifically a door-to-door service. Gary Rosen asked about the increase in Brokerage/CS of 15.7%. Mr. Lipka explained that part of the increase is for the extended use of Yellow Cab. Yellow Cab is the vendor used by PBSTM to fill in the overflow for ADA rides. Mr. Lipka stated they RFP for this service. The cost to the WRTA is about \$19.00 per trip. Vendor’s providing this service must meet the necessary government requirements, trainings and access on handicap use. Mr. Lipka stated that Paratransit rides are up but have not reached pre-pandemic levels.

Chairperson Rosen asked for a vote regarding the budget.

Motion: I move that the WRTA Advisory Board refer the FY`23 Budget to the Audit and Finance Committee for review and recommendation to vote at April advisory board meeting.

On motion by Robert Spain, seconded by James Nee (by roll call vote) the WRTA Advisory Board votes to refer the FY`23 Budget to the Audit and Finance Committee for review and recommendation to vote at April advisory board meeting. The vote was carried: (15 in favor 0 opposed).

- Douglas Belanger        yes
- John Ostrosky            yes
- Laura Wilson             yes
- Mark Binnall             yes
- Jacquelyn Ryan         yes
- James R. Nee             yes
- James Delage            yes
- Robert Spain             yes
- Roseann Carrier         yes
- Michael Ward            yes
- Jeffrey Bridges          yes
- Brian Bullock            yes
- Robert Reed             yes
- James Ferrera            yes
- Gary Rosen                yes

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The WRTA Advisory Board voted to refer the FY`23 budget to the Audit and Finance Committee for review and recommendation to vote at April advisory board meeting.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC - out of order  
No business from the public.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD – out of order  
There were requests for the FY`23 budget power point presentation and any updated Cherry sheets. Mr. Lipka stated administration would make them available. John Ostrosky ask about the fabric on the bus seats. Mr. Lipka stated that new buses would not have fabric seating. They are working on changing out some of the busier routes. Gary Rosen inquired about the progress pertaining to the fare collection system. Mr. Lipka informed the board that his transit advisory group is meeting regularly to work on issues surrounding fare collections. The Administration is looking into an array of options. A report to the board is expected in April or May of 2022. Presently, there is no fare collection system on the buses. They are also working on the details of a card reader, transitioning into to fare collections, and dedicating fare revenue to expansion of service use only. Gary Rosen asked if audit and finance committee members could make specific meeting dates. He requested that Elizabeth Pokoly contact needed members for confirmation of April 7, 2022. Gary Rosen thanked the administration for the bus marquee usage pertaining to No Fares.

ADJOURNMENT  
Motion: To Adjourn at 9:30 a.m.  
By Doug Belanger: 2<sup>nd</sup>: Robert Spain:  
Vote: All in favor (15 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE  
The next meeting will be April 21, 2022 at 8:30 a.m., via teleconference due to the Governor’s continuation of remote participation of public bodies until July 15, 2022.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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