



## Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Meeting Minutes May 19, 2022

Chairperson Rosen called the meeting to order at 8:30a.m.

### AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present by teleconference: Mark Binnall – Auburn, Hollie Lucht – Shrewsbury, James Nee – Charlton, Barbara Connelly – Grafton, Laura Wilson – Oxford, Robert Spain – Millbury, James Delage – Worcester DP, Jacquelyn Ryan – Southbridge Alt, Brian Bullock – Holden, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt Brian Pigeon – Worcester Alt, Gary Rosen - Worcester. Members entering meeting after call to order: Jeffrey Bridges – Spencer, Michael McCall – Southbridge, James Ferrera – Warren, Michael Ward – Clinton.

Clerk Robert Spain explained the importance of the approval of the minutes for April 21, 2022. The minutes are part of the documents needed for the RAN note. Mr. Lipka stated that the chairperson and clerk are needed to sign documents regarding the RAN. Mr. Coyne stated that the interest rate target on the RAN is about 2.5%.

### ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

**Motion: To accept the minutes for April 21, 2022**

**By: Robert Spain. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mark Binnall.**

**Vote: All in Favor (10 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.**

### BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC - no speakers

Chairperson Rosen read a letter from Adam Thielker, Project Manager, Zero Fare Coalition to the board. “The Zero Fare Coalition expresses deep sympathy to the bus driver who was attacked and injured last week. We are relieved to hear that their injuries are treatable, and we hope the driver will fully recover, both emotionally and physically. Passengers and drivers ride together. We all need to know that our buses are safe to ride. First of all, our drivers need to be better protected. The WRTA Advisory Board must authorize the installation of an effective barrier between the operator and those boarding the bus. We can't risk another incident of this sort. Next time, it might be worse.”

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

Mr. Lipka updated the board members regarding the Lincoln Street incident. The assault on the driver was not a transit related incident. The driver and the assailant were known to each other. The existing driver barrier install in 2018 prevented more serious injuries. The WRTA will however look into other shield options as well. The WRTA will not be releasing the video due to an ongoing criminal investigation. The WPD has the assailant in custody. Mr. Lipka informed the members that the drivers undergo inhouse training which incorporates guidance from TSA.

The WRTA has changed from a mask required policy to masks optional policy. Posters in English and Spanish will be displayed shortly at the Hub. The WRTA continues to provide protective gear for our drivers.

The WRTA’s triannual review has been completed and a draft report is expected in June. The WRTA will be adopting and modifying policies to comply with regulations. The Administration will follow up with the board. The administration continues to work on the budget figures pending finalization of State Contract Assistance and various contract negotiations. Mr. Lipka announced that Jamie Winters will be the new Marketing Manager and is due to start May 31, 2022. She comes from Seven Hills Foundation.

### **Communities Served:**

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



UPDATE ON PUBLIC HEARINGS

Mr. Lipka stated that the administration will bring to the board the fare policy and service changes for the June 2022 meeting. Both of these items will need votes for public hearings (service changes and/or acceptance). Mark Binnall asked if the public meeting would be hybrid. Mr. Lipka informed the board that the meetings would be via zoom. The public meetings would have direct adjustments for public comments due to format and expanded backend coverage. The WRTA has a quote for about \$40,000 to update/expand the existing conference room's tech system but this does not cover space considerations and general access issues. Mr. Lipka stated they are looking at other meeting space venues as they move to a hybrid approach in the future. Mr. Lipka confirmed that board and public attendance is up due to the use of Zoom.

James Nee inquired about forming a subcommittee for fare policy development. Robert Spain stated that the Audit and Finance Committee would handle such a request. Mr. Lipka explained that due to the weighted vote, the forming of subcommittees is different than in city government or other organizations. Any meeting of board members would generally need to be public due to the weighted vote of key participating members. Mr. Lipka stated that a special meeting of the Audit and Finance Committee can be arranged regarding this issue.

UPDATE ON WRTA MEETING WITH CITY COUNCIL'S STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Lipka stated he has attended the meeting. At this time, the WRTA is awaiting the standing committee's written questions to response further.

IMPACT ON WRTA SERVICES DURING WORCESTER'S TRICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Gary Rosen mentioned the City of Worcester 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Mr. Lipka replied the operations team has been meeting with the coordinators. The WRTA will be providing parade transportation and announcements will be forthcoming. Mr. Lipka stated that there will be delays for the buses in and around the city center. Robert Spain commented on the lack of marketing for the upcoming event by the City of Worcester. Gary Rosen stated that the marketing push will likely start closer to the date.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

James Ferrera asked about used vans for his town's service to seniors and veterans. Mr. Coyne stated that the WRTA will be replacing vans in July 2022. Mr. Lipka reviewed some of the financial responsibilities for running of the vans. Mr. Lipka stated he would be happy to work with the town of Warren and suggested a meeting. Mark Binnall asked about fuel costs for the vans. Mr. Lipka stated the increases have a much smaller impact on the budget due to the lower volume needed. Gary Rosen inquired about FY'23 fuel costs. Mr. Coyne went over the general process and existing contract for inquiring diesel fuel for the buses. Mr. Lipka acknowledged talk about East Coast fuel shortage but felt assured that contracted supplies would not be generally affected. Mr. Coyne acknowledged that between contracts for fuel the WRTA did have to briefly buy off-the-shelve to cover a 45-day gap.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:15 a.m.

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

Vote: All in favor (13 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on June 16, 2022 at 8:30 a.m., via teleconference due to the Governor's State of Emergency provisions for public meetings extended until 7.15.2022.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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