



**Worcester Regional Transit Authority
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
June 16, 2022**

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

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present by teleconference: Mark Binnall – Auburn, Kristen Las – Shrewsbury, James Nee – Charlton, Barbara Connelly – Grafton, Laura Wilson – Oxford, Robert Spain – Millbury, Douglas Belanger – Leicester, James Delage – Worcester DP, Jacquelyn Ryan – Southbridge Alt, Brian Bullock – Holden, James Ferrera – Warren, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt Brian Pigeon – Worcester Alt, Michael McCall – Southbridge, Gary Rosen - Worcester. Members entering meeting after call to order: Jeffrey Bridges – Spencer, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Sean Hendricks – Millbury.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes for May 19, 2022

By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Mark Binnall.

Vote: All in Favor (12 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

BUSINESS FROM ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS – Election of Officers

Chairperson Rosen asked for a motion to accept the existing slate of officers for FY`23. There was no discussion.

Motion: I move that the WRTA Advisory Board moves to elect and approve the following persons as officers for FY`23; Chairperson - Gary Rosen, Vice Chairperson – Douglas Belanger, Treasurer – Kristen Las, Clerk – Robert Spain.

By: James Ferrera. 2nd: Mark Binnall.

Vote by roll call: (12 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

- Gary Rosen yes
- Douglas Belanger yes
- Brian Bullock yes
- Mark Binnall yes
- James Nee yes
- Barbara Connelly yes
- Robert Spain yes
- Kristen Las yes
- Laura Wilson yes
- Jacquelyn Ryan yes
- James Delage yes
- James Ferrera yes

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

INTRODUCTION OF JAMIE WINTERS MANAGER OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATONS – out of order

Mr. Lipka introduced Ms. Jamie Winters the new Manager of Marketing and Communications for the WRTA. Ms. Winters introduced herself as being local, residing in Sterling. Ms. Winters spoke briefly about her background. Ms. Winters thanked the board for the opportunity to speak with them. Chairperson Rosen welcomed Ms. Winters and stated how important public outreach was to the board. Chairperson Rosen stated how they look forward to future

Communities Served:

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Barre	Brookfield	Dudley	Holden	New Braintree	Brookfield	Princeton	Spencer	Warren	West
Berlin	Charlton	East	Holland	Northborough	Oakham	Rutland	Sturbridge	Webster	Brookfield
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presentations regarding marketing efforts. Mr. Lipka announced that website redesign would be one of Ms. Winters priorities. Ms. Winters listed some of her initial projects; branding and color themes, bus wrapping, upgrades in design to social media as well as the media kit.

Mr. Lipka informed the board that the administration will present their new fare policy for review and discussion at the July meeting. The administration will ask the board to vote to authorize the administration to conduct public hearings on new fare policy to take effect January 1, 2023.

PRESENT AND REVIEW POTENTIAL SERVICE CHANGES

Mr. Lipka asked the board members to vote to authorize the administration to conduct public hearing on proposed service changes being presented for August 27, 2022. Mr. Lipka stated that the date for service changes are fixed by the union contract as the last Saturday of June, August and January. Mr. Lipka introduced Nick Burnham who gave the presentation and answered questions pertaining to the proposed service changes. The presentation was sent to the board members upon request. The power point included maps for greater visual context.

Routes 1 and Route 3 – Combine Route 1 (Providence St./Walmart) with Route 3 (Highland St/WSU) to increase productivity. Result: add 3 round trips to Route 1, 5 round trips to Route 3 which is result of schedule adjustments to both routes.

Route 5 and Route 6 -Weekdays. Remove all prior electric bus charging times. Result: add 4 round trips to both routes, provide additional travel time during peak AM/PM traffic on Grafton St. 45-minute travel time non-peak and 50-minute travel time peak, Shift/Remove both North High School trips to Route 12 – avoids confusion of which route serves school, at which times.

Route 8 (Park Ave) and 25 (Canterbury St) – Weekdays. Combine routes to provide better service. Result: New route to combine Route 8 and 25, New route will service the WRTA Hub – Currently, Rt 8 does not service the Hub. Extend new route to end at the Greendale YMCA instead of Reliant Medical at Greendale – in response to several requests for Greendale YMCA service.

Route 12 – Weekdays. Add and extend service. Result: Serve North High School for AM and PM trips for one bus consistency, Schedule with attention to school bus arrivals at North High, extend route to new Market Basket development in Shrewsbury, add another bus to provide more trips from WRTA Hub.

Route 14 – Weekdays. Change end/turn around location. Result: All trips will end/turn at Porter and Chester (closure of showcase Cinemas). Schedule adjustments for a new total travel time of 55 minutes vs. the current 60 minutes.

Southbridge, Dudley, Webster Shuttle – Extend Route. Result: Add Nichols College to existing route. Route will continue to service all existing locations in each community.

Public review would be via Zoom and start shortly (early July) with announcements in all usual outlets including the Audio Journal. The WRTA is looking into covering early morning hours on the routes 12 and 8. James Nee questioned if there were any funding compliances given the service changes. Mr. Burnham replied that the service changes benefited more expansion and therefore no compliance issues with funding. Mr. Burnham stated that if approved, announcements are posted about 2 weeks before the change. The WRTA also runs schedule change notices on the front of the buses. The WRTA does not presently use the in-bus microphone to announce service changes.

Chairperson Rosen asked for a vote to authorize the administration to conduct public hearing.

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Motion: I move that the WRTA Advisory Board votes to authorize the administration to conduct public hearings on proposed service changes for August 2022.

By: Jacquelyn Ryan. 2nd: Mark Binnall.

Vote by roll call: (11 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

- Gary Rosen yes
- Douglas Belanger yes
- Brian Bullock yes
- Mark Binnall yes
- James Nee yes
- Barbara Connelly yes
- Robert Spain yes
- Kristen Las yes
- Laura Wilson yes
- Jacquelyn Ryan yes
- James Delage yes

The WRTA voted to authorize the administration to conduct public hearings on proposed service changes for August 2022.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC – Out of Order

Chairperson Rosen introduced the following persons requesting to address the board.

Adam Thielker, Project Manager, Zero Fare Coalition

Mr. Thielker spoke about the importance of having a hybrid format for WRTA Board Meetings. He requested the meetings format be changed as soon as possible.

Chantel Bethea, Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester.

Chantel Bethea spoke about the importance of Fare Free continuing. Zero Fare funding from MassDOT at \$2.5 million as a pilot for 2022 and is awaiting a commitment from the State.

Anne Bureau, LICSW. Program Director Worcester Community Connections Coalition YOU, Inc., an affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation. Anne Bureau spoke about the importance of Zero Fares as a policy, hybrid meetings and how community groups can help through their connections.

Mr. Lipka informed the board members that the proposed new fare policy is designed to better address equitable pricing. It will be presented at July’s meeting. Hybrid meetings continue to be reviewed for in-person compliance and IT specific needs. The WRTA will likely hold future Advisory Board meetings as hybrid with in-person participation at the M&O. A shuttle from the WRTA Hub to the M&O and back would be provided for public convenience for the meeting. Once all the details have been settled an announcement will be forthcoming. Mr. Lipka stated that setting up for the change to the M&O will take some time but hopes to have it done by the Fall 2022.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Jacquelyn Ryan commented on the bus stop signage in front of the Southbridge Library. Mr. Burnham replied that all towns are flag stop and with the exception of that library there are no signs for stops in the towns. Mr. Burnham stated he would check with operations regarding updating or handling that issue. Jacquelyn Ryan thanked the administration for the proposal to extend service to Nichols College. Mark Binnall asked if advertising on the vans would be possible. Mr. Lipka informed the board that space was limited and windows cannot be covered. Mark Binnall asked about collective buying options for fuel costs. Mr. Lipka explained that the WRTA presently benefits most from the system in place. Collective buying options carry delivery issues, storage capacities differences

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Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

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between RTA’s and other exceptions. Fuel costs are variable and Mr. Lipka stated that pricing is likely to raise for future needs. James Nee commented on how positive it is that June’s ridership numbers are showing 100% of pre-Covid. Brian Pigeon announced that the City of Worcester will have a Visioning Workshop on June 23, 2022 and via Zoom on July 7th 2022. Information, registration and more details can be found on the City of Worcester’s website. Doug Belanger commented on the opportunity that board members have to publishing and announcing the service changes in their respective towns. Brian Bullock suggested local cable access stations for service and other WRTA notices.

Doug Belanger inquired about buses on First Street due to a complaint by a resident. Mr. Lipka informed the board that he is aware of the complaint. Mr. Lipka has spoken to and replied to both the resident and the District Councilor regarding the need for service through that street. Coes Pond Village has ridership and the bus goes takes 8 trips inbound per day. The bus runs every 1 an ½ hours. The WRTA feels that stopping service to one of Worcester Housing Authority’s flagship projects is not in the best interest of the public. Mr. Lipka stated that paratransit vans may be serving the area as well as fixed route.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:39 a.m.

By: Robert Spain, 2nd: Jacquelyn Ryan

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

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on July 21, 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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