



**Worcester Regional Transit Authority
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
September 22, 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, Laura Wilson – Oxford, Robert Spain – Millbury, James Delage – Worcester DP, Douglas Belanger – Leicester, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Jeffrey Bridges – Spencer, Michael Ward – Clinton, Andrew Golas – Charlton, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt Brian Pigeon – Worcester Alt, Gary Rosen - Worcester, Members entering meeting after call to order: Jacquelyn Ryan – Southbridge Alt, James Ferrera – Warren, Sean Hendricks – Millbury, Michael McCall – Southbridge, Heather-Lyn Haley - RCP.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes for July 21, 2022

By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Mark Binnall.

Vote: All in Favor (11 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

Chairperson Rosen acknowledged a letter sent to Dennis Lipka and Gary Rosen from the Worcester Chamber of Commerce President, Tim Murray. The letter was in favor of extending Zero Fare and forming a 3-year pilot. The letter proposed to create a commission to look at alternative funding for zero fare. Gary referred to another supporting letter from the Worcester Research Bureau in November.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC – Out of Order

Chairperson Rosen introduced the following person requesting to address the board via Zoom participation. Anne Bureau, LICSW Program Director Worcester Community Connections Coalition YOU, Inc., Anne Bureau spoke in favor of Zero Fare and the proposed commission. Anne Bureau thanked the board for considering further extension of the fare suspension.

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

PRESENT AN OVERVIEW OF THE FFY 2022 TAM PLAN

Mr. Lipka introduced Nick Burnham who gave a brief presentation of the FFY 2022 TAM Plan. The TAM Plan lists and supports the capital assets of the WRTA. The Plan outlines protocols and management practices. It is a tool devised by the FTA and must be revised and reviewed every 4 years.

Chairperson Rosen asked for a motion to endorse the FFY 2022 TAM Plan.

Motion: I move that the WRTA Advisory Board votes to endorse the FFY 2022 TAM Plan.

By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Doug Belanger.

Vote by roll call: (13 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

Gary Rosen	yes
Douglas Belanger	yes
Mark Binnall	yes
Robert Spain	yes
Kristen Las	yes
Robin Grimm	yes

Communities Served:

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



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James Delage	yes
Laura Wilson	yes
Andrew Golas	yes
Michael Ward	yes
Jeffrey Bridges	yes
James Ferrera	yes
Jacquelyn Ryan	yes

UNION CONTRACT UPDATE

Mr. Lipka explained the contract details as: yearly wage increases of 5%, 3% and 3%, and 3% gross wages to their retirement plan. This is a three-year contract taking effect from 9/1/2022 to 8/31/2025. Tom Coyne gave a brief working budget overview. Tom Coyne listed some of the items as the labor contract, fare suspension, COVID, RFP with CMTM management all in terms of the FY'23 budget. It was stated that CARES ACT money was used for covering the union contract. Dennis recommended an Audit and Finance committee meeting in early November to review the budget in all its details.

ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION TO EXTEND THE SUSPENSION OF FARE COLLECTION UNTIL JUNE 30TH 2023 AND DISCUSS FARE POLICY WITH THE BUDGET IN THE SPRING OF 2023 FOR FY'24.

Mr. Lipka recommended to suspend fare collection until June 30th 2023. This would assist with budgeting in general. The WRTA fare policy needs to align with the new collection system and what options will be utilized. Mr. Lipka stated that the state funding is "level funded." This suspension would cover fixed route, paratransit, COA's and SCM Elderbus. Mr. Lipka presented the board with the ridership by month calendar (2019-2022). 2019 saw 2.9 million riders, 2020 (COVID) 1.9 million, 2021 2.6 million and 2022 is at 1.9 million with 5 months left to go in the year. Mr. Lipka claims that projecting forward with the current trends the WRTA may break close to 3 million. WRTA in 2013/2014 ridership was 4 million.

Chairperson Rosen asked for a vote to extend the suspension of fare collection until June 30th 2023 and to discuss fare options as part of the budget deliberation in the Spring of 2023 for FY'24.

Motion: I move that the WRTA Advisory Board vote to extend the suspension of fare collection until June 30th 2023 and to discuss fare options as part of the budget deliberation in the Spring of 2023 for FY'24.

By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Jacquelyn Ryan.
Vote by roll call: (13 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

Gary Rosen	yes
Douglas Belanger	yes
Mark Binnall	yes
Robert Spain	yes
Kristen Las	yes
Andrew Golas	yes
Robin Grimm	yes
Laura Wilson	yes
Jacquelyn Ryan	yes
James Delage	yes
James Ferrera	yes
Heather-Lyn Haley	yes
Michael Ward	yes

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The WRTA voted to extend the suspension of fare collection until June 30th 2023 and to discuss fare options as part of the budget deliberation in the Spring of 2023 for FY'24.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Some board members thanked the administration for their recommendation to continue suspension. Kristen Las spoke about the local (town budgeting) implications when fares remain free. Many board members voiced the need to find viable funding streams, if free fares continue in the long run. A sliding scale option was mentioned and questions were raised about the viability of a 3-year pilot without further state or federal assistance. Mr. Lipka stated that the fare collection system target remains at January 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:43 a.m.
By: Doug Belanger, 2nd: Mark Binnall
Vote: All in favor (13 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on October 20, 2022 at 8:30 a.m., via teleconference due to the Governor’s State of Emergency provisions for public meetings extended until 3.31.2023.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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