



Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Question & Answer Special Meeting Minutes Summary December 12, 2022

This meeting took place via Zoom Webinar and was held on December 12, 2022 at 5:04pm to 6:30pm. Panelists: Chairperson Gary Rosen and WRTA Administrator, Dennis Lipka. WRTA support staff answering questions were: Tom Coyne, Deputy Administrator/CFO, Nick Burnham, Grants & Compliance Manager, Jamie Winters, Marketing & Communications Manager, Dave Trabucco, General Manager, CMTM. This meeting was attended by 3 board members: Gary Rosen, Chairperson, Heather-Lynn Haley, RCP, Brian Pigeon, Worcester Alt. Attendees: There was a total of about 49 persons in attendance and 5 used telephone direct dial in.

The meeting was posted as a Question and Answer Special Advisory Board meeting* *Due to open meeting laws this meeting is posted as an Advisory Board meeting however no advisory board business will or was discussed and no votes will or were taken at this meeting.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this public meeting was to encourage members of the public to ask general questions and provide feedback about fixed route and paratransit services throughout Worcester Regional Transit Authority’s 37 communities. Specific questions were directed to further discovery by phoning Customer Service at 508-791-7982 or via email communication or personal intention to be contacted by the Administrator. Chairperson Gary Rosen read a brief introduction about the purpose of the meeting and read the open meeting notice statement. Chairperson Gary Rosen requested that all questions remain general to the services of the WRTA and its operations. That all persons refrain from making speeches or promoting specific agendas regarding WRTA policies, etc. That all persons requesting to speak abide by the 3-minute limit. Explanation was presented as to how to use the “raised hand” function in the Zoom webinar either by direct dial telephone or via computer.

Chairperson Gary Rosen welcomed the attendees and thanked them for their participation. The platform was then opened for questions and comments. Attendees were announced and allowed access individually to speak and receive responses from the WRTA Administrator, Support Staff and/or General Manager of CMTM. The webinar was open to all attendees and participation to speak was by request.

Questions pertaining to how to get information on missed trips or changed routes regarding short staffing issues. Jamie Winters replied that posting is done on the WRTA’s Twitter and Facebook pages as well as on the website. Therta.com. Chairperson Gary Rosen commented on calling Customer Service at 508-791-9782 for details and updates. Dennis Lipka stated how the WRTA is looking to update Alert access with the website changes in March 2023. Dennis Lipka explained that many missed trips and changed schedules are due to driver shortages. Dave Trabucco clarified how the percentage of those out on PMFLA benefits have created problems with staffing. Notices for absence of a shift can be a little as 2 hours before a shift and this does not allow for enough time to replace or causes delays. This is usually on end of week scheduling days.

There were several questions about the mobile fare collection system with an assumption that implementing the system would curtail the possibility of remaining or having a fare free policy. Chairperson Gary Rosen stated that the WRTA Board decides/votes on the fare policy, fare policy changes or fare structure not the Administrator. Dennis Lipka explained that the system has been purchased entirely with a grant and installation will have no effect on whether or not the WRTA is fare free. Details were as follows: cost is base cost of \$5,000 per month whether there is a collect of fares or not. The card holds a value and each card cost \$2.50. The system uses a validator and software to run. Comment was made regarding mandated monies for transit and Dennis Lipka replied that no new or mandated monies have been presented to the RTA’s for review or spending guidelines at this time. A request for service to be added/extended or reinstalled for the Ecotarium was discussed. Complaints about poor response to prior requests were voiced. Chairperson Gary Rosen asked if Dennis Lipka would speak directly to the

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



person. Dennis Lipka confirmed personal communication would be forthcoming about the viability and safety for public transit for their specific request. Several bus stops signage issues were brought to the attention of the WRTA.

City Hall – Front Street- needing updated Route Numbers

Old Route 3A bus stop signage still up on the following streets: Harrington Way, Franklin St, Plantation, etc. Graton Street signage was highlighted as well as specific placement or lack of placement.

Bus Stop signs missing Rt numbers – making the system confusing when traveling the city as a whole.

Tom Coyne explained how the WRTA is seeking to redesign the bus stop signage. Chairperson Gary Rosen encouraged riders to alert customer feedback about signage issues. The WRTA does annual audits and will address the requests issued this evening. A summary of the discussion on bus stops signs was as follows: The WRTA has been working more closely with the City of Worcester and other agencies when signs are taken down but not replaced during construction. The WRTA will look into being more proactive with its signage issues across the city.

Question about the WRTA Hub Lobby was addressed by Dennis Lipka. Dunkin Donuts is not interested in returning due to low volume sales. Having public bathrooms would require a total refit in construction, hiring security and cleaning staff specific to bathroom hours of operations. The cost would be incredibly expensive and limit lobby area seating for riders. The WRTA is seeking options for expanded operational use and public seating area as more likely alternatives. Chairperson Gary Rosen commented on the public restrooms available at Union Station. Request for drivers to announce at the Hub when a bus will change route. Dave Trabucco stated he would make an ask of the drivers to do so. Questions as to why Route 31 was not showing up correctly on the Bus Tracker, maps and other arrival times issues. Dave Trabucco requested the person email him directly when these incidents occur as it maybe a glitch in the system. Nick Burnham stated that in the summer there was a glitch in the system which was to be corrected. Rt 6 was also mentioned as having a disconnection in the bus tracker communication. A compliant was issued about the lack of “pulled back service” given the driver shortages. Dennis Lipka replied that they are aware of the problem and the need to pull back service.

There was a list of specific complaints about bus stop distances (in a specific area on Lincoln Street), unresponsiveness to emails regarding bus service experiences for a rider and end of the line options they wanted discussed. Dave Trabucco stated that drivers use their own discretion on allowing riders to the end of the line. Riders would need to deboard while the drivers have their break regardless of the weather. As the comment was specific to Rt 14 and weather-related days, Dave Trabucco stated he would speak to the drivers of that route. Dave Trabucco stated again that it is at the discretion of the driver whether riders are at the end of the line. This is to ensure the health and safety of all people.

Board Member Heather-Lynn Haley asked if a hybrid option of participation could be considered. Chairperson Gary Rosen stated they would look into viable options for the future.

Chairperson Gary Rosen closed the meeting by thanking the panelists for their time and thanking the attendees for their participation.

Minutes summary prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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