



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

Union Station Hub 60 Foster Street Worcester, MA 01608

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**Worcester Regional Transit Authority
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2023**

Chairperson Belanger called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m.

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present by Zoom webinar: Stephen Rolle – Worcester, Brian Pigeon – Worcester Alt. Mark Binnall – Auburn, Kevin Mizikar – Shrewsbury, Robert Spain – Millbury, Douglas Belanger – Leicester, Heather-Lyn Haley – Leicester Alt, Brian Bullock – Holden, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, John Jovan – Southbridge, Andrew Golas – Charlton, Robert Blair – Berlin, Winifred Octave – Worcester (RCP), Laura Wilson- Oxford. Members attending after the meeting was called Michael Ward - Clinton

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes for July 20, 2023

By: Brian Bullock. 2nd: Mark Binnall. Vote: All in Favor (11 in favor 1 abstention 0 opposed) vote passed.

CHAIR COMMENTS/UPDATE ON RECENT CHANGES ON THE BOARD

Chairperson Doug Belanger announced acceptance of the resignation letter of Gary Rosen from the WRTA Advisory Board. The City of Worcester appointed Stephen Rolle as a board member. Stephen Rolle holds the title of Department of Transportation and Mobility (DTM) Commissioner. Mass general laws and WRTA bi-laws allows for the board to call an election of officers at any time. Also, the Vice Chair becomes Chairperson and, in that role, Doug Belanger has filled out all necessary paperwork. The board will look into reviewing office selections at a future time in order to allow for the new administrator to settle in.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chairperson called for any business from the public. There was no request from the public.

Chairperson Belanger introduced Josh Rickman for the Administrator’s report.

MEET AND GREETINGS

Josh Rickman commented about the beginnings of the meet and greets in the member communities and groups. Josh Rickman explained how the meetings provide for a better lens on local needs as well as the region as a whole. Elizabeth is scheduling the meeting so if you have not yet coordinated a time, please get in touch with us. Josh Rickman stated he has met with Contractors, the GM for Operations and with the team at SCM Elderbus. Josh Rickman announced the first rider’s forum is booked for October 12, 2023 from 11am to 2pm. Josh Rickman will join WRTA and CMTM staff for this public meet and greet. The purpose is to gather feedback, listen to concerns and answer questions. This forum will take place on the platform at the Hub and will be advertised on the website/social media.

A number of communities have been reaching out to the WRTA for possible assistance with their migrant population transportation needs. The WRTA is aware of the situation and evaluating ways they can be of assistance. In the case of Auburn this includes finding available information as well as potentially finding some translation services. The WRTA is scheduling meetings with the City of Worcester to better understand what services are available. Conversations will continue with the Town of Shrewsbury.

Josh Rickman spoke about a Ride-A-Long attended with Chairperson Doug Belanger. Four (4) bus routes were chosen during mid-day due to this higher demand time. Josh Rickman complimented the driver’s friendliness and spoke with riders before and after introducing themselves. Chairperson Belanger recommended that the board members consider riding the bus with or without the administrator. Should they encounter any issues they were encouraged to text the Administrator.

MISSED TRIPS TREND

The Friday schedule changes remain in affect due to the continuation of missed trips. The WRTA and CMTM continue to be in discussions regarding this situation. Josh Rickman stated that missed trips are down for this month and they are hoping to continue this trend.

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	Rutland	Sturbridge	Webster	Worcester	
Boylston	Clinton		Leicester	Northbridge	Oxford	Shrewsbury	Sutton	Westborough	



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Josh Rickman introduced David Trabucco, GM for CMTM for a quick briefing to the board. David Trabucco thanked Doug Belanger and Josh Rickman for recognizing the drivers and will pass along the positive feedback. David Trabucco gave an overview of the limitation’s surrounding workable hours, number of driver’s absent per day (8 to 9), OT hours (300) per week and the need for expanding the budget for the long term. David Trabucco stated the goal is to have full scheduled service and they will continue to work with the Administrator. The driver staffing challenges also effect other areas like inspections and health & safety.

Josh Rickman updated the board members on the hiring efforts. The WRTA is presently short four full time operators but is hoping to add two by the end of next month. CMTM is providing a weekly update on recruiting/retention efforts so as to ensure operational levels. This report will include retirees and assist with budgeting. Human Resources is reporting more application being submitted through the new website.

HIRING EFFORTS

Josh Rickman introduced Jamie Winters to do a brief summary of the new hiring initiatives. The slides showed different open positions with the starting pay rates and extended benefit information. Additional these offerings are now posted on the buses. The WRTA website and social media platforms have been updated. On September 8th the hiring director and marketing director were at the MassHire Job Fair.

FINANCE UPDATE

The WRTA is awaiting the revised State Contract Assistant figures. This funding is slated for additional funds but the amount is yet unknown. Some funding will be used to ensure the present operational needs and those of Fiscal years 2026 & 2027. The WRTA is awaiting details on the Fair Share amendment and will share when received. The WRTA internal audit’s field work is completed. Deputy Administrator Thomas Coyne is finishing local assessments while awaiting the calendar year 2022 pension report.

MEMBERS COMMENTS

Robert Spain asked if they could start back a few routes earlier in the week so as to not have all cuts on Friday’s. Josh Rickman replied they would review the suggestion. Mark Binnall commented on how van drivers move to the buses. Mark Binnall suggested having a hiring contract with a time phase to stay with the van division. Brian Bullock questioned whether the title “garage helper” was outdated. Winifred Octave asked why there was a wage difference between van and bus drivers. Questioning why every driver does not start at the same rate. Josh replied that both positions are union jobs but the bus drivers are at the necessary certification level. Robin Grimm commented on Sturbridge as one of the communities dealing with Migrant Population. Robin Grimm questioned why the state is not looking at the RTA’s to provide these services. Robin Grimm stated she will follow up with the National Guard and the State regarding their contract options. Brian Pigeon asked if Proterra going bankrupt would have any effect on the WRTA. Josh Rickman stated no as all the Proterra buses have been out of commission for more then two years. Brain Bullock questioned if a federal shutdown would impact the WRTA. Thomas Coyne stated that the WRTA’s cash flow is in good standing (drawdowns have been scheduled accordingly) due to a larger payment earlier. Mark Binnall asked if extra money from the state would be used to expand service hours. Josh Rickman replied that is our hope.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 8:47 a.m.
By: Robert Spain, 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 26, 2023 at 8:15 a.m., via hybrid teleconference due to the Governor’s State of Emergency provisions for public meetings extended.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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Berlin	Charlton	East	Holland	Northborough	Oakham	Rutland	Sturbridge	Webster	Brookfield
Boylston	Clinton	Brookfield	Leicester	Northbridge	Oxford	Shrewsbury	Sutton	Westborough	Worcester