



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

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**Worcester Regional Transit Authority  
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
October 26, 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, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Austin Cyganiewicz-Rutland, Robert Blair – Berlin, Winifred Octave – Worcester (RCP), Laura Wilson- Oxford. Members attending after the meeting was called Michael Ward – Clinton, Jasmin Rivas-Southbridge.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

**Motion: To accept the minutes for September 21, 2023**

**By: Robert Blair. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mark Binnall. Vote: All in Favor (10 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.**

CHAIR COMMENTS

Chairperson Doug Belanger announced that starting January 2024 WRTA Advisory Board meetings would begin at 8:00 a.m. as opposed to 8:15 a.m. which was a compromise by the former Chairperson. Chairperson Belanger reminded board members about the upcoming vacancy in the “Disabled Commuter Population” position. Any questions should be directed to WRTA Administration. Chairperson Belanger requested (for November’s meeting) that the board receive a report from the Marketing Manager.

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.

RIDER FORUM

Josh Rickman commented on the success of the first rider forum held at the WRTA Hub. Staff attendees were on hand from CMTM, PBSTM WRTA and CMRPC. Two Spanish translators were made available to assist our Spanish speaking riders. The event was held on October 12, 2023 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Staff took 180 notes while 100 additional comments were tallied from the suggestion boxes provided. The results were internally reviewed at October’s meeting of the WRTA’s Transit Advisory Group. The WRTA intends to continue with these forums throughout the year.

MIGRANTS IN WRTA SERVICE AREA

Josh Rickman gave a brief presentation about their continuing efforts regarding developing transportation for Migrant Population. It was reported that as of early October, there are over 1,000 individuals within the regions covered by the WRTA. The WRTA has been working with the following cities and towns; Worcester/Auburn, Shrewsbury, and Sturbridge/Sutton. The WRTA has provided information, gathered data, travel trained, and continues discussions with all parties involved. The WRTA is pursuing grant opportunities and will continue to work with impacted members communities to develop solutions. A follow up report will be presented at the November 16, 2023 board meeting. Josh Rickman outlined some limitations; current operator availability, vehicle availability, fixed route responsiveness, process to change existing fixed route services and charter regulations/open door. There was discussion by some board members about specific towns having WRTA service via vans to and from shopping locations. Discussions were also about timeline uncertainty and undecided funded sources as well as efforts from the State regarding directed respond for such services.

**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	



SEVERE WEATHER PLAN

Josh Rickman informed the board about the updating of the WRTA Severe Weather Plan. The document summarizes the WRTA policies and procedures during a severe weather event and was last updated in 2016.

SHELTER INSTALLATIONS

Josh Rickman updated the board members on the installation of 8 replacement shelters. Installation is expected to be completed by the end of November. There was some discussion about shelter cleaning/snow removal as well as bus stop shoveling and a suggestion to look into an “adopt a stop” initiative. Josh Rickman stated that shelters will continue to be maintained and owned by the WRTA.

2023 YEAR END AUDIT – THOMAS COYNE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR & CFO

Josh Rickman introduced Thomas Coyne for a briefing on the year end audit. The service is done annually and is an audit of the financial statements made by the WRTA. The Auditors consider risks of materials misstatements, internal controls relevance and performance test of year-end balances based on risk assessment. The audit was completed September 25, 2023 by Roselli, Clark & Associates. The results showed an unmodified opinion (clean) financial statements being materially accurate. Compliance as related to the WRTA’s “major” federal awards program and no significant deficiencies in internal controls were noted. Thomas Coyne showed slides outlining budget v actual revenues and expenses along with revenue & expenses by source.

MEMBERS COMMENTS

Winifred Octave commented on the growing number of paratransit service complaints received from within the community. Long wait times for rides and calling in as well as driver’s not showing up at the right place. Winifred Octave suggested more training to drivers and call takers. Winifred Octave asked about Cares Act funding and budget figures. Josh Rickman stated she would be emailed the approved budget. Josh Richman commented on the timeline for the budget process which included decisions on fares. The budget process starts in the Spring of 2024. Jasmin Rivas inquired about how to assist the WRTA with getting more financial support for services from the State. Jasmin Rivas commented on connecting Spencer and Southbridge with services. Robert Blair suggested including Veterans when marketing to hire. Mark Binnall asked about the rollover time and weekends not having good coverage for paratransit. Josh Rickman state he would look into this.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:04 a.m.  
By: Robert Blair, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mark Binnall  
Vote: All in favor (12 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on November 16, 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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