



**Worcester Regional Transit Authority
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2024**

Chairperson Belanger called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present by Zoom webinar: Stephen Rolle – Worcester, Brian Pigeon – Worcester Alt. Mark Binnall – Auburn, Hollie Lucht - Shrewsbury Alt, Robert Spain – Millbury, Douglas Belanger – Leicester, Brian Bullock – Holden, Heather-Lyn Haley – Leicester Alt, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Austin Cyganiewicz-Rutland, Marcelino Guerra - Southbridge, (DP). Members entering after call to order: Robert Blair – Berlin, Winifred Octave – Worcester (RCP), Michael Ward – Clinton.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes for November 16, 2024

By: Brian Bullock. 2nd: Robert Spain. Vote: All in Favor (9 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

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.

HIRING STRATEGY WITH INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION

Joshua Rickman gave a brief presentation on changing existing part-time driver’s positions to full-time status. This change was explained as being a major factor in restoring Friday’s to full service. Joshua Rickman stated that CMTM continues to hire and train new drivers. There was no board vote for this hiring strategy. The board will however be voting on the revised FY’24 budget at the February meeting. The FY’25 budget will be reviewed and will include about a \$1.2 million increase for the change. This figure is before the accounting of expected decreases in over-time costs and yellow cab savings. CMTM is expected to start this new hiring strategy once the FY’24 revised budget is approved. The total time for this change and Friday service restore is likely to happen with the August 2024 bid. Joshua Rickman stated how this is the first step in a larger process which includes route structure/schedules and on-time performance.

Board members questioned whether all existing part-time employees would opt up and if part-time would still be available. Joshua Rickman reported that CMTM management says there is interest in the change and more details will follow. Mark Binnall requested consideration of pay increases for van drivers. Mark Binnall stated that many leave the vans to make better money on the fixed route. Mark Binnall stated how PBSTM riders benefit from having consistent drivers. Joshua Rickman stated that CMTM works on hiring issues but his comments would be passed along.

MASSDOT FY24 REGIONAL TRANSIT INNOVATION GRANT

The WRTA will be submitting the completed grant today and will pass any further information when the money is available.

SEVERE STORM UPDATE

Joshua Rickman commended the team for smooth operation when communicating to riders on how the service was impacted. Joshua Rickman stated how CMTM’s safely and effectively cleared showed. The shelters were serviced and text alerts have been upgraded for better use. Joshua Rickman encouraged signing up for this important service.

ADVERTISING POLICY & AD REVIEW

Joshua Rickman gave a brief review of the existing WRTA advertising policy. Joshua Rickman gave considerations for updating the policy to include a change from the existing “public format” position. The old policy’s language created an opportunity for political advertising and other language that concludes “public format.” The policy has not been updated since 2015. Joshua Rickman then introduced Mark Reich, Esq. of KP Law to explain general standards in advertising policies. The MBTA as well as other RTA’s have policies that do not create “public format.”

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



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

Union Station Hub 60 Foster Street Worcester, MA 01608

508.453.3403 Fax: 508.752.1676 therta.com

The Chairperson clarified that the Administrator sets policy for the WRTA and no vote is necessary. The board is however being asked to review the content of an ad due to its political and controversial nature. This is due to the language under the old contract. Questions about exceptions and who does the review under the new policy were address by the Administrator. Board members commented on the ad being shown as to small to see the details. Questions about whether any of the graphic depictions may be deemed as “triggers.” Discussed was the size and placement of the disclaimer statement for the WRTA. Brian Bullock asked for a review of the final artwork prior to being posted. The board members asked for copy of the new policy to be emailed to them.

Joshua Rickman stated that the new policy will take effect on the 18th of January 2024. Joshua Rickman stated how the new policy will not allow for political advertising. The new policy will list allowed and prohibited content consistent with industry standards. The new policy has been reviewed by KP Law for compliance. Board members discussed adding “we reserve the right to reject an ad or it’s content.” Joshua Rickman stated he would work with the attorney to add the appropriate statement of intent. Brian Pigeon asked about Ad’s for public meetings on cannabis. In relation to that specific topic of cannabis. It was stated that Ad’s for public meetings vs sale or use of the product would likely be allowed under the new contract.

MEMBERS COMMENTS

Mark Binnall requested that snow route announcements be expanded to cable news and other such formats.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:21 a.m.

By: Robert Blair, 2nd: Mark Binnall

Vote: All in favor (12 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on February 15, 2024 at 8:00 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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Boylston	Clinton		Leicester	Northbridge		Shrewsbury	Sutton	Westborough	