



**Worcester Regional Transit Authority  
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes February 20, 2025**

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

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE

Present by Zoom webinar: Steve Rolle – Worcester, Robert Spain – Millbury, Douglas Belanger – Leicester, Mark Binnall – Auburn, Austin Cyganiewicz – Rutland, John Jovan – Southbridge, Laura Wilson, Oxford Alt, Brian Pigeon, Alt – Worcester, Brian Bullock – Holden, Kelly Bol – Northbridge, Robert Blair – Berlin Alt, Michael Ward – Clinton, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt, Kendra Faldetta – Northborough, Mike Kennedy – Millbury DP, Heather-Lyn Haley – Leicester Alt., Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Jennifer Gingras – Westborough, Suzanne Lewandowski – North Brookfield, Hollie Lucht, Alt- Shrewsbury. Jasmin Rivas-Southbridge Alt, Nelly Medina- Worcester RCP.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

**Motion: To accept the minutes for January 16, 2025**

**By: Mark Binnall. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Robin Grimm. Vote: (17 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.**

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC – (out of order) No business from the public.

Chairperson Personnel Committee update

Chairperson Doug Belanger (acting as Chair for Personnel Committee) gave an overview of the personnel committee’s evaluation summary. The total score was an aggregated average of 8.58 out of a possible 10. Doug Belanger stated how the score reflects the impressive results achieved by the Administrator.

Chairperson for the Advisory Board, Doug Belanger stated that should it be at the pleasure of the full board to consider voting to authorize the Personnel Committee to open into contract negotiations to secure 5 years.

Personnel Committee Chairperson Mark Binnall opened the floor to personnel committee members. Steve Rolle commented on the Administrator’s approachableness and responsiveness to board members and the City. Steve Rolle stated that the evaluation reflects Administrator’s performance but it also includes the team he manages. Clerk, Robin Grimm stated that communication is outstanding and she fully supports the direction set forth by the Administrator. Vice-Chairperson, Robert Spain stated that this Administrator has a good grasp of where the WRTA should be going. Robert Spain agreed that continuing with a 5-year span is justified. Board Member, Adam Menard stated his satisfaction and the importance of keeping the modernization momentum going. General comments for improvement included more details regarding the agenda items and the importance of expanding both bus service and technology needs.

**Motion: The WRTA Personnel Committee votes to approve the evaluation of the Administrator and to recommend to the full board to enter into negotiations with the Administrator regarding his contract.**

**By: Robert Spain. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mark Binnall. Vote: All in Favor (7 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.**

Chairperson Doug Belanger opened the floor to all board members for any discussion pertaining to a vote for acceptance of the evaluation and authorizing negotiation of the Administrator’s contract by the Personnel Committee. There was no discussion.

**Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board accepts the Administrator’s evaluation and authorizes the personnel committee to enter into negotiations for extension and/or negotiations of the Administrator’s contract. By: Robert Spain. 2<sup>nd</sup> Mark Binnall. Roll Call Vote: All in Favor (18 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.**

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



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](http://therta.com)

<b>Brian Pigeon</b>	yes
<b>Doug Belanger</b>	yes
<b>Robert Spain</b>	yes
<b>Brian Bullock</b>	yes
<b>Robert Blair</b>	yes
<b>Jasmin Rivas</b>	yes
<b>Mike Kennedy</b>	yes
<b>Robin Grimm</b>	yes
<b>Mark Binnall</b>	yes
<b>Hollie Lucht</b>	yes
<b>Nelly Medina</b>	yes
<b>Jennifer Gingras</b>	yes
<b>Suzanne Lewandowski</b>	yes
<b>Laura Wilson</b>	yes
<b>Austin Cyganiewicz</b>	yes
<b>Kendra Faldetta</b>	yes
<b>Kelly Bol</b>	yes
<b>Michael Ward</b>	yes

The WRTA Advisory Board voted to authorize the personnel committee to negotiate the Administrator’s contract.

Administrator, Joshua Rickman thanked the board members and acknowledged the positive comments regarding the WRTA team members. Joshua Rickman thanked the WRTA contractors and underscored the privilege it is to serve the riders.

Chairperson Belanger introduced the WRTA Administrator Joshua Rickman for the Administrator’s update.

Administrator, Joshua Rickman introduced Nick Burnham, Director of Transit Operations and Planning to give an overview of the public outreach efforts and to highlight any response changes.

**Approval of Fixed Route Schedule Changes** – Review Summary of Public Outreach Efforts- Proposed Spring 2025 Schedule Changes.

In November the board approved public hearing for the proposed Spring (April 26, 2025) service changes. In January, four in person meetings and one Zoom were held in various locations. The Administration with staff from both CMTM/PBSTM participated in table events held in the WRTA Hub Lobby. The WRTA created a direct email and website page for the proposed changes. Public meeting notices were posted on social media, shelters and all WRTA properties. All events had printed proposed changes schedules for anyone to review and take. Listed are the action items from public comments that were adjusted in the proposal:

- Route 1 & Route 3: timing adopted to allow arriving from Route 3 inbound time to transfer to Route 1 for travel to the Worcester Senior Center.
- Route 19: Modify the 5:30 AM trip from the WRTA Hub to end at Goddard Memorial Drive/Coppage Drive to provide earlier AM Service to the number of employers in the area.
- Route 26: review to determine possibility of utilizing extra layover time to save current 5:20 AM, or 5:30 AM trip.
- Route 42: review proposed schedule to minimize impact and to retain certain AM trips from existing schedule for employee’s coming to Worcester from Oxford/Webster for peak AM/PM commute times.

The Chairperson, Doug Belanger opened up the floor for questions regarding the summary. Brian Pigeon commented on the efforts around the public outreach plan and how clear the website information has been.

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Administrator, Joshua Rickman informed the board about the value of a late April bid. Should any further adjustments need to be done the next bids are in June and August.

**Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board votes to accept the services changes as presented to be implemented April 26, 2025. By: Robert Spain. 2<sup>nd</sup> Mark Binnall. Roll Call Vote: All in Favor (18 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.**

- Brian Pigeon**                    yes
- Doug Belanger**                yes
- Robert Spain**                    yes
- Brian Bullock**                    yes
- Robert Blair**                    yes
- Jasmin Rivas**                    yes
- Mike Kennedy**                    yes
- Robin Grimm**                    yes
- Mark Binnall**                    yes
- Hollie Lucht**                    yes
- Nelly Medina**                    yes
- Jennifer Gingras**                yes
- Suzanne Lewandowski**        yes
- Laura Wilson**                    yes
- Austin Cyganiewicz**            yes
- Kendra Faldetta**                yes
- Kelly Bol**                        yes
- Michael Ward**                    yes

The WRTA Advisory Board voted to accept service changes.

Joshua Rickman continued the Administrator’s report for February 2025

- Hub’s 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Hybrid conference room expected to be ready for April’s board meeting.
- Shout out to CMTM for their response to an emergency request on February 17<sup>th</sup>. A dispatched bus was used as a warming shelter for those impacted by a fire in Worcester.
- A new microtransit service was launched for the residents of Berlin. Starting on February 17<sup>th</sup> Catch Connect will cover the town of Berlin and into Hudson. The grant funding covers 100% and will be until June 30, 2026. The Berlin service is being run by MWRTA and allows them to connect with other MWRTA services.
- Customer Service Response plan is on the WRTA website. The response plan identifies things that were lower scored and broken down to general areas for improvement; Cleaning of the buses, Hub and shelters, Customer Service Communications, Safety on Sunday’s service improvements.
- Follow up on Narcan: No Massachusetts RTA’s have Narcan on their buses.
  1. One has a vending machine provided by health agency.
  2. MBTA has a pilot program which provides inventory, proper storage and the MBTA Police carry it.
  3. MassDOT is starting a program at the RMV’s where the security guards provide Narcan.

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Administration will review viable lobby storage options for Narcan later in the renovation cycle. The WRTA is working with the City of Worcester to give access to agencies for outreach. The WRTA is looking into getting/updating information/training to staff. No cost Narcan availability is at Union Station and City Hall. Treasurer, Brian Bullock was in favor of having Narcan on the buses. Treasurer, Brian Bullock asked if the Union has given an official opinion of this issue. The Administrator commented that there is no history of prior acceptance in general discussions between the management and Union. Chairperson, Doug Belanger stated that any discussion would be under the Union’s negotiations process as it would be a change to their contract. All WRTA fixed route buses are equipped with a phone.

- No major updates to share at this time due to federal funding changes. The WRTA has access to these capital funds however a cautious approach is being taken regarding capital spending.

BUSINESS FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD – out of order

Mike Kennedy asked about employee recruitment. Director of Transit Operations and Planning, Nick Burnham stated that the van division is fully staffed, as of today. The bus positions have an upcoming new class. Chairperson Doug Belanger informed the board that negotiations are coming up with the employee’s union. This provides an opportunity to explore how we can further ways to make it more appealing to work at the WRTA. Board member, Mark Binnall asked how the WRTA advertised the new service in Berlin. The Administrator stated that a every door direct mailer has gone to residents. The WRTA is working with the senior center and the town on website announcements.

Board member, Mark Binnall asked if the microtransit service would go into Worcester. The Administrator explained how aside from needed funding (grant of otherwise) fares are associated with microtransit services. Expansion options would need appropriate budgeting review and dip into the general services budget. Board member, Nelly Medina commented on bus seating issues. The Administrator explained that a procurement for changing out the cloth seats to all vinyl is underway. In answer to a question about internships, the Administrator stated that internships are generally hired though CMRPC but they are looking into internship opportunities.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:11 a.m.

By: Robert Blair, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mark Binnall

Vote: All in favor (18 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on March 20, 2025 at 8:00 a.m., via hybrid teleconference due to the Governor’s State of Emergency provisions for public meetings extended until March 31, 2025.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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