

Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes August 21, 2025
Hybrid WRTA Hub 60 Foster St. 3rd floor conference room & Zoom Webinar

1. **Chairperson Belanger called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.**
2. **Clerk Robin Grimm called roll**

Stephen Rolle – Worcester, Robert Spain – Millbury, Douglas Belanger – Leicester, Mark Binnall Alt – Auburn, Brian Bullock – Holden, Carol Grueneich Alt, - Northborough, John Jovan-Southbridge, Suzanne Lewandowski – Alt, North Brookfield, Jennifer Gingras Alt, Westborough, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Kelly Bol Alt, - Northbridge, Laura Wilson Alt, Oxford, Robert Birkbeck – Paxton, Austin Cyganiewicz, - Sutton. Entered meeting after roll call: Brian Pigeon – Alt Worcester, Nelly Medina RCP- Worcester, Mike Kennedy – Millbury CWD, Adam Menard Alt, Auburn.

3. **Approval of Minutes from June 26, 2025**

Motion: To accept the minutes for June 26, 2025 By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Mark Binnall. Vote by Roll Call: (13 in favor, 1 abstained, 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.

Steve Rolle	yes	Robin Grimm	yes	Kelly Bol	yes
Robert Spain	yes	Brain Bullock	yes	Laura Wilson	yes
Douglas Belanger	yes	Carol Grueneich	yes	Jennifer Gingras	yes
Mark Binnall	yes	John Jovan	yes	Suzanne Lewandowski	yes
Auston Cyganiewicz	yes	Robert Birkbeck	Abstained		

4. **Business from the Public**

Adam Thielker spoke about the difficulties people with disabilities (specifically the blind) have when using the Hub. Announcements were deemed inconsistent and insufficiently informative (lack of bus slip #). Adam Thielker requested that the board resolve the gap due to the term lengths for Ridership and Commuters with disability positions. Doug Belanger stated that the WRTA attorney was consulted, and those presently servicing will sit on the board until a replacement from the town/city is obtained.

Nelly Medina shared an experience traveling with her blind uncle, highlighting the problems they encountered at the Hub. Nelly Medina questioned whether these deficiencies are a violation of the ADA and warrant possible lawsuits. Josh Rickman stated that since June's meeting, the WRTA has sent letters of invitation to form a working group to identify and address issues. Letters were sent to the Mass Commission for the Blind, the City of Worcester disability office, the Center for Living and Working, and other agencies. The letters requested their interest by the 29th of August. Administration will report to the board in September.

Chairperson Belanger announced Nick Burnham, who would be giving the "Good News" on the FY25 Ridership update and the AECOM update 2025 by Jamie Winters.

5. **Fiscal Year 2025 Ridership Update – Nick Burnham, Director of Transit Operations & Planning**

Nick Burnham announced that in FY25, the WRTA provided 5,107,431 passenger trips! This was the highest ridership that the WRTA has provided this century.

The WRTA passenger ridership increased by 7% from FY24, and CMTM ADA ridership grew 22% from FY24. The ADA ridership growth was attributed to the increased driver pool, which stemmed from the revised FY25 budget and growing ridership on Weekends. Such increases highlight the importance of daily service. The top five routes by total ridership are Route 19, Route 27, Route 26, Route 11, and Route 7, which fall in the exact same order as FY24. The top 5 routes account for 44% of all fixed-route ridership, with Routes 19 and 27 totaling over 1 million passengers combined. Elder Shopper Bus lost ridership due to the closing of supermarkets specific to the service. The WRTA /CMTM is reviewing the service needs due to this change. Total Demand respond ridership (van/cab) shows an 8% increase over FY24 and stands at 227,97. Ridership for Paratransit increased 22% from FY24 and is at 43,303 for FY25, while Yellow Cab increased 6% from FY24 and stands at 74,536 for FY25. Councils on Aging increased

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	

by 6% to 35,094, SCM Elderbus increased by 9% to 43,1791, and Via-WRTA decreased by 2% from FY24 to 31,859. Via-WRTA encountered the same staffing issues, but their ridership is expected to increase. Mike Kennedy commented that he attributes the increase partly to the Fare Free initiative.

6. AECOM Comprehensive Service Analysis – Nick Burnham, Director of Transit Operations and Planning, Jamie Winters, Director of Marketing & Communications

Nick Burnham gave a presentation highlighting the progress on the AECOM Comprehensive Service Analysis (CRTP). This initiative is supported by MassDOT across all 15 RTAs. The Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan is scheduled for another update in 2025. The WRTA's three goals for the (CRTP) are to reimagine mobility solutions, prioritize innovative planning and capital projects, and promote WRTA's value in the community. AECOM has been provided the necessary information from the past 5 years to assist with developing plan recommendations. Administration will keep the board updated as this process continues. Jamie Winters presented the design for the "We Want To Hear From You" open house. The short survey media announcements will be displayed on all WRTA Media outlets, and flyers will be posted/mailed. Also, the WRTA will have staff available for the Open House on September 17 and 18th at the WRTA Hub. Chairperson Belanger invited board members to attend, especially on the 18th, as that is the next board meeting date. The hours are 9 am to 5 pm on September 17 and 18, 2025. Josh Rickman informed the board that letters with materials will go out to the board members.

7. Administrators Report - Josh Rickman, WRTA Administrator

1. The lobby bid is out, and in mid-September, an award will be given. At that time, the timeline for the project will be shared with the board. 2. The Fixed Route Technology Upgrade remains on Schedule for rollout on January 1, 2026. Installation & testing are scheduled for October – December, and during this testing phase, the Bus Tracker may have some loss of usage. While not unusual when switching over, the WRTA apologizes for any inconvenience and will work to inform riders. 3. Josh Rickman also invited the board to the Riders' Forum on the 17th and 18th at the WRTA Hub. 4. It is anticipated that TransDev, the transit management contractor, will be providing an administration update on the status of the new labor agreement. As appropriate, the board will be provided with updates. Josh Rickman announced his two-year anniversary with the WRTA. Thanking the board and his staff for their work, and looking forward to the future.

8. Advisory Board members and Other(s) as directed by the Chairperson

Robert Spain asked the Administration to review and work on shifting overflow away from the Yellow Cab use. Robert Spain expressed concern over high usage, which represents a higher cost for service. Mark Binnall commented on shared rides usage, which can reduce costs.

9. Adjourn

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:01 a.m. By: Robert Spain, 2nd: Robin Grimm Vote by Roll Call: All in Favor (16 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.

Steve Rolle	yes	Robin Grimm	yes	Kelly Bol	yes
Robert Spain	yes	Brain Bullock	yes	Laura Wilson	yes
Douglas Belanger	yes	Carol Grueneich	yes	Jennifer Gingras	yes
Mark Binnall	yes	John Jovan	yes	Suzanne Lewandowski	yes
Auston Cyganiewicz	yes	Robert Birkbeck	yes	Nelly Medina	yes
Michael Kennedy	yes				

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on September 18, 2025 at 8:00 a.m., Hybrid: in-person at 60 Foster Street 3rd Floor Conference Room & Zoom Webinar.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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Boylston	Clinton	Brookfield	Leicester	Northbridge	Oxford	Shrewsbury	Sutton	Westborough	Worcester