



**Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes March 19, 2026 Zoom Webinar**

1. Chairperson Belanger called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

2. Clerk Robin Grimm called the roll

Remote Attendance members: Stephen Rolle – Worcester, Brian Pigeon Alt – Worcester, Robert Blair-Berlin, Douglas Belanger – Leicester, Brian Bullock – Holden, Robert Spain – Millbury, Suzanne Lewandowski Alt –North Brookfield, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Carol Grueneich Alt - Northborough, Mark Binnall – Auburn, Kelly Bol Alt – Northbridge, Stephenie Abate Alt – Grafton, Laura Wilson Alt - Oxford, Jennifer Gingras Alt – Westborough, Paul Dell’Aquila Alt- Auburn, Mike Kennedy CWD – Millbury, Nelly Medina RCP - Worcester. Remote attending after roll call: Mike Ward – Clinton, Beth Coughlin – Brookfield. Chairperson Belanger asked for a motion to accept the minutes from February 19, 2026.

3. Approval of Minutes from February 19, 2026

Motion: To accept the amended minutes for February 19, 2026. By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Mark Binnall.

Vote by Roll Call: (15 in favor, 0 opposed) vote passed.

Steve Rolle	yes	Robin Grimm	yes	Suzanne Lewandowski	yes
Brain Bullock	yes	Nelly Medina	yes	Laura Wilson	yes
Douglas Belanger	yes	Carol Grueneich	yes	Robert Blair	yes
Robert Spain	yes	Mike Kennedy	yes	Mark Binnall	yes
Kelly Bol	yes	Stephenie Abate	yes	Jennifer Gingras	yes

4. Business from the Public

There was no business from the public outside the agenda.

5. Nancy Garr-Colzie commented on the importance of the WRTA applying for and utilizing existing grants in this fiscal year’s budget. Specifically pertaining to the expansion of the paratransit services and or for pilot programs that would provide for same-day/on-demand paratransit services.

6. Asa Reyes presented a brief overview of the Worcester/Community Rider Forums activities. A summary of their feedback was provided, highlighting expanding weekend services, a review of policy on extra items such as mobility devices and grocery carts, long wait times, and more consistent confirmation calls. The Administrator clarified the policy on large items & carts on the buses. Asa Reyes requested a more consistent approach to this subject with drivers and further review. Some board members spoke in favor of the Administration reviewing this issue.

7. Personnel Committee: Report on Annual Administrator’s Evaluation

Committee Chairperson Binnall provided a summary of the meeting's purpose and opened the floor for discussion. Board members spoke about the Administrator’s consistency in communication and calm demeanor. The general consensus was that performance standards are being met and that team building is noticeable and appreciated. Chairperson Belanger provided further details on the evaluation scoring aggregate of 86.71%, a slight increase from the last annual evaluation. There were no recommendations to amend the existing contract with the Administrator. Chairperson Binnall asked for a motion to accept the Annual Evaluation

Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board votes to approve the Administrator’s Evaluation as presented and enact all of the contract. By: Doug Belanger. 2nd: Robert Spain. Vote by Roll Call: (16 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.

Steve Rolle	yes	Robin Grimm	yes	Suzanne Lewandowski	yes
Brain Bullock	yes	Nelly Medina	yes	Laura Wilson	yes
Douglas Belanger	yes	Carol Grueneich	yes	Robert Blair	yes
Robert Spain	yes	Mike Kennedy	yes	Mark Binnall	yes
Kelly Bol	yes	Stephenie Abate	yes	Jennifer Gingras	yes
Michael Ward	yes				

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



8. FY27 Budget Presentation: Thomas Coyne, Deputy Administrator & CFO

The Administration presented a summary of the consolidated budget, and the board was asked to vote to forward it to the Audit and Finance Committee for review. The overall net cost of Service for FY27 was proposed at \$28,191,872, an increase of \$157,805 (0.6%) from the FY26 budget of \$28,034,067. Highlights presented to the full board included rising cost trends and continued year-to-year level funding from the state, reflecting the use of Federal Operating Assistance monies. Those increases were listed as CARES Act at \$705k and the American Rescue Plan at \$437k. Transportation planning costs will decrease with the addition of an administrative staff. Passenger Revenue is included at \$5.2m, and the WRTA is awaiting the State’s decision on funds applied toward fare-free service, if the board votes in favor. Other increases include Labor, Fringe, and Insurance, as well as two administrative positions and two part-time SCM Elderbus positions. Health insurance is expected to rise, and until the figure is final, the increase is budgeted for \$173k. The WRTA is also in the 2nd year of a 3-year union contract. Projected balances for Pandemic Era Federal Funding are as follows: CARES Act monies remaining \$7,050,558, and American Rescue Plan Act at \$1,338,919, both after FY27.

Chairperson Belanger asked for a motion to send the FY27 Budget to the Audit and Finance Committee for review and recommendation to the full board.

Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board votes to send the FY27 budget to the Audit and Finance Committee for review and to provide a recommendation to the board. By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Brian Bullock. Vote by Roll Call: (16 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.

Steve Rolle	yes	Robin Grimm	yes	Suzanne Lewandowski	yes
Brain Bullock	yes	Nelly Medina	yes	Laura Wilson	yes
Douglas Belanger	yes	Carol Grueneich	yes	Robert Blair	yes
Robert Spain	yes	Mike Kennedy	yes	Mark Binnall	yes
Kelly Bol	yes	Stephenie Abate	yes	Jennifer Gingras	yes
Michael Ward	yes				

9. Administrator’s Update – Joshua Rickman

Lobby Update

The current work was noted as framing, rough electrical, and HVAC. The project remains on schedule.

Real-Time Signs on Platform

5 double-sided signs were installed at the Central Hub, along with Falcon Buttons. The next steps are to update the script and test. The signs are currently operational and available for public use.

C RTP

The Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan was released in February. The next steps for Administration are to develop service concept materials that cover the service span, frequency, crosstown, limited-stop, and microtransit/same-day ADA. Constraints will be funding and assets, which will require some conceptual prioritization. The Administration will bring developed materials to the full board to vote for a public hearing, make adjustments, and then take a final formal vote. Implementation will likely be in short-, medium-, and long-term phases.

Other Administration Updates

The Administrator announced that the 40’ buses are starting to roll out, and they have new interior grab poles and seating. Accessible seating also has identifying seat markings for convenience.

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

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Berlin	Charlton	East	Holland	Northborough	Oakham	Rutland	Sturbridge	Webster	Brookfield
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There was some discussion about the process for continuing Fare Free. Continuation of the funding allocation for this purpose will be outlined in the Administration budget review and voted on by the advisory board at the April or May board meetings. As the state has funded fares free, and if this trend continues, it is likely to maintain that status in FY27. Any changes will be announced by the WRTA after the board vote.

Adjourn

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:08 a.m. By: Mark Binnall, 2nd: Robin Grimm Vote by Roll Call: All in Favor (16 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.

Steve Rolle	yes	Robin Grimm	yes	Suzanne Lewandowski	yes
Brain Bullock	yes	Nelly Medina	yes	Laura Wilson	yes
Douglas Belanger	yes	Carol Grueneich	yes	Robert Blair	yes
Robert Spain	yes	Mike Kennedy	yes	Mark Binnall	yes
Kelly Bol	yes	Stephenie Abate	yes	Jennifer Gingras	yes
Michael Ward	yes				

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on April 23, 2026, at 8:00 a.m., via Zoom Webinar.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R. Pokoly

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