



Paratransit Rider's Forum Meeting Summary: Thursday, May 21, 2026, 1:00-2:30 PM

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) is committed to providing exceptional transportation services that meet or exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The WRTA provides accessible fixed route bus service. WRTA also provides ADA paratransit service to people with disabilities as required and non-ADA paratransit service to both seniors and people with disabilities in the 37 communities that comprise the WRTA's service area.

This forum was held in a virtual format via Zoom and from 1:00 to 2:30 PM. It was the second quarterly Paratransit Rider's Forum and was attended by 30 riders and/or members of the public. The following WRTA and Contractor staff were in attendance:

- Nick Burnham, Director of Transit Operations and Planning, WRTA
- Josh Rickman, Administrator, WRTA
- Jamie Winters, Director of Marketing & Communications, WRTA
- David Trabucco, General Manager, CMTM
- Carolyn Foley, Director, PBSTM

In addition to WRTA, several staff from Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates were present to assist with facilitating the meeting. Interpreters were also present to offer Spanish and ASL interpretation services.

The May 21 forum recording is available at this [link](#) for those who were unable to attend. Presentation materials from the meeting are posted on the forum webpage: <https://therta.com/qprf/>. Please email comments@therta.com or use the [WRTA Customer Service Feedback form](#) with any additional questions, comments, or concerns regarding paratransit service.

The next forum will be hybrid on **Thursday, September 10, 2026, from 1:00 to 2:30 PM**. More information will be posted on the forum webpage and sent out to the mailing list closer to the next forum date.

Agenda

This forum covered the following topics:

- Forum 1 Recap and Contractor Team Introductions
- ADA Paratransit Education Series
- Updates on ongoing work and service improvements provided by WRTA staff
- Public participation session regarding paratransit service



Forum 1 Recap and Contractor Team Introductions

WRTA staff gave a brief recap of Forum 1, and what was heard from participants. Takeaways from Forum 1 included ideas for a new demand response software, anecdotes from experiences onboard vans and taxis, and questions about the program, pick-up windows, and rider notifications.

WRTA Staff also outlined their contracted services, allowing each contractor to give a brief introduction. Contractors included Dave Trabucco, General Manager of Central MA Transit Management (CMTM), Carolyn Foley, Director of Paratransit Brokerage Services Transit Management, Inc (PBSTM), and Jorge Morales, Director of SCM Elderbus.

ADA Paratransit Education Series

WRTA Staff then gave a presentation on Understanding ADA as part of the ADA Paratransit Education Series. The presentation began by detailing the WRTA ADA program's service area (within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile surrounding WRTA's fixed-route service) and eligibility requirements. WRTA Staff outlined the three categories of eligibility and how to apply for ADA eligibility. More information about eligibility and application can be found on the WRTA Website: [ADA Application – WRTA](#).

Ongoing Work and Service Updates

WRTA staff continued the meeting by providing updates on ongoing work and service improvements expected in 2026 and beyond.

WRTA is working towards releasing an RFP for demand response software vendors in early June, with the goal of implementing the new software at the start of 2027. Staff noted that the RFP incorporated items that were mentioned during Forum 1, the customer satisfaction survey, and needs assessments sessions with service vendors.

WRTA also awarded an RFP for Demand Response Paratransit Transportation to New Worcester Yellow Cab, Inc., and Bethel Group, LLC. This results from a procurement effort for demand response overflow services. The newly procured services will help to meet demand when or where it cannot currently be met by WRTA's existing fleet.

The construction of the Hub Lobby began in January and is expected to be completed by the end of July. WRTA staff shared images of the current renovation status, as well as milestones that have been completed or are expected to be completed soon. Additional information is available on the WRTA website: <https://therta.com/lobbyreno/>.

Public Participation Session

Discussion from the public participation session is summarized below. Full discussion can be found in the recording.

[Sharon Strzalkowski](#)



- **Comment:** Sharon asked for more information about Bethel, specifically what types of vehicles they used and when the service would begin.
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that Bethel would primarily run service on vans and a few sedans. The area in which they will operate is still being determined, as Yellow Cab will continue service into the new fiscal year.

Mike Kennedy

- **Comment:** Mike asked if the presentation would be available after the meeting.
- **Staff Response:** Staff directed Mike and other attendees towards the Paratransit Rider Website Quarterly Forum page: [Quarterly Paratransit Rider's Forum – WRTA](#), where the presentations are made available.

Mary Haroyan

- **Comment:** Mary asked whether staff had considered extending the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile service restriction in communities with low fixed-route service levels to make the ADA network more complete. Mary pointed out that the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile area is a minimum requirement.
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that WRTA partners with COAs in the service area to provide service to seniors and persons with disabilities. These partnerships and contracted services allow WRTA to expand service offerings beyond $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of fixed-route service.

Kate McGrath

- **Comment:** Kate noted that she did not receive an email about this forum even though she attended the first forum. She also asked whether the new software would include routing and whether it would improve the routing of rides.
- **Staff Response:** Staff confirmed that they would be looking into routing efficiency with the new software, explaining that they regularly receive requests to improve routing efficiency, which is an important goal for the agency as they operate in a large service area.

Jenn-E Memnon

- **Comment:** Jenn-E asked how riders could submit feedback, either positive or negative. As a community advocate, Jenn-E shared personal and community experiences from individuals who are disabled that have been treated as insignificant by contracted operators. She noted that she rarely gets calls back when inquiring about service, and is treated poorly when she does get a response.
- **Staff Response:** Staff thanked Jenn-E for her comments and expressed concern about the way that she had been treated. Staff responded to Jenn-E's question about where to provide feedback by directing her towards the feedback form on the WRTA website: [Feedback Form – WRTA](#).

Brian



- **Comment:** Brian noted that paratransit service does not go to Rutland and asked whether he could use the SCM Elderbus to get from Worcester to Rutland. He wondered why there was no transfer available between different service types and suggested that transfers be made available in the future, and that Worcester residents be included in the eligible riders.
- **Staff Response:** Staff explained that trips typically do not serve Worcester residents but instead serve the 22 towns within the WRTA service area. Staff also explained that SCM Elderbus and WRTA use different systems currently, but the upcoming software procurement may allow these different providers to work under one umbrella.

Sharon Strzalkowski

- **Comment:** Sharon noted that she has not been getting notification calls for trips happening later in the day.
- **Staff Response:** Staff indicated they would look into this issue.

Joe Belil

- **Comment:** Joe expressed interest in seeing statistics about WRTA's ADA program. Specifically, the number of trips going out, the number of complaints filed and associated category, and the percentage of applicants who were granted ADA eligibility.
- **Staff Response:** Staff was receptive to this idea, and suggested they would consider adding these statistics into a future education series.

Mervyn Campbell

- **Comment:** Mervyn asked about the base being prepared for a bus loop around the MCB office, and if there were any updates about this initiative.
- **Staff Response:** Staff explained that this was an old initiative that is currently inactive because the property is not located in the public ROW. The site created challenges for fixed-route buses, but vans are more flexible to serving the property.

Kate McGrath

- **Comment:** Kate reiterated Sharon's comment about not receiving notification calls for afternoon or evening rides. She also noted that the new ADA vans are smaller and have a tighter turn between the lift and track tie-down. She wondered why the new vans were made smaller, and if this was intentional.
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that they would look into this detail and had not previously been aware of the differences.

Brian

- **Comment:** Brian added another concern about ride notifications, sharing that he sometimes gets notifications less than 10 minutes in advance of his ride. He would prefer getting notifications further in advance.



- **Staff Response:** Staff expressed that they would be looking into the current procedures for ride notifications.

Hannah

- **Comment:** Hannah expressed concerns about cab drivers giving out personal information. She recounted that she was asked to lunch and that it felt inappropriate.
- **Staff Response:** Staff expressed that they received this complaint and followed up with the driver at Yellow Cab and went through disciplinary action.

Wrap-Up and Next Meeting Date

WRTA staff concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their time and announcing future meeting dates. The next forum will be held virtually on **Thursday, September 10, 2026**, from **1:00 to 2:30 PM**. The December forum will be held on Thursday, December 3, 2026 from 1:00 to 2:30 PM.