

Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes July 16, 2026 Zoom Webinar

1. Chairperson Doug Belanger called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

2. Clerk Robin Grimm called the roll

Remote Attendance members: Doug Belanger – Leicester, Brian Pigeon Alt – Worcester, Stephen Rolle – Worcester, Brian Bullock – Holden, Robert Spain – Millbury, Suzanne Lewandowski Alt – North Brookfield, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Mark Binnall – Auburn, Carol Grueneich Alt – Northborough, Kelly Bol Alt – Northbridge, Stephenie Abate Alt – Grafton, Hollie Lucht- Alt-Shrewsbury, Laura Wilson Alt - Oxford, Rose Russell Alt- Auburn, Mike Kennedy CDP – Millbury. Remote attending after roll call: Heather-Lyn Haley Alt – Leicester.

Vice- Chairperson Robert Spain asked for a motion to accept the minutes from May 21, 2026.

3. Approval of Minutes from May 21, 2026

Motion: To accept the minutes for May 21, 2026. By: Robin Grimm. 2nd: Mark Binnall. Vote by Roll Call: (11 in favor, 0 opposed) vote passed.

Stephen Rolle	yes	Robin Grimm	yes	Suzanne Lewandowski	yes	Brain Bullock	yes
Laura Wilson	yes	Robert Spain	yes	Carol Grueneich	yes	Stephenie Abate	yes
Mark Binnall	yes	Mike Kennedy	yes	Kelly Bol	yes		

4. Business from the Public

No Business from the public.

5. Nomination of WRTA Advisory Board Officers – Out of Order

The chairperson opened the floor for nominations for the FY'27 advisory board officers. Robin Grimm made a motion to nominate the following slate of officers for FY'27. Chairperson Douglas Belanger, Vice-Chairperson Robert Spain, Treasurer Brian Bullock, and Clerk Robin Grimm. The Chairperson opened the floor for discussion. A roll-call vote was taken due to the Zoom meeting.

Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board votes to appoint the following officers for FY'27: Chairperson Doug Belanger, Vice-Chairperson Robert Spain, Treasurer Brian Bullock, Clerk Robin Grimm. By: Robin Grimm. 2nd: Mark Binnall. Vote by Roll Call: (12 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.

Stephen Rolle	yes	Robin Grimm	yes	Suzanne Lewandowski	yes	Brain Bullock	yes
Laura Wilson	yes	Robert Spain	yes	Carol Grueneich	yes	Stephenie Abate	yes
Mark Binnall	yes	Mike Kennedy	yes	Kelly Bol	yes	Doug Belanger	yes

6. Overview of Routes A&B Public Meeting and Next Steps – Nick Burnham, Dir of Transit Operations & Planning

The presentation overviewed the existing service and options provided under the WRTA's study. Two primary service options were presented:

1. Eliminate Routes A and B entirely or modify service to a limited fixed route in Northbridge, resulting in reduced service (e.g., 4 days/week, 6 hours/day).
2. Integrate Grafton and Northbridge into the mobility management model for paratransit service, managed by PBSTM.

Grafton's Council on Aging (COA) already has a contract but currently uses a manual system. Northbridge is the only one of 37 communities without a formal demand-response relationship with WRTA.

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The presentation highlighted the public meeting participation and summarized public feedback from the meetings. WRTA held four in-person meetings (two in Grafton, two in Northbridge) and one virtual meeting in June to gather public feedback. Meetings were promoted via on-vehicle flyers, the website, system alerts, and push notifications through the Transit app. Feedback from Northbridge meetings included comments on fixed vs. flag stops, difficult connections at Millbury, and concerns about service gaps for those ineligible for COA services. Feedback from Grafton meetings was similar, with concerns about the lack of service to the MBTA Commuter Rail impacting new housing developments. Overall public feedback noted positive experiences with drivers, confusion about route structures and flag stops, and concerns for those relying on these routes. The Administrator commented on their willingness to keep lines of communication open regarding developers' concerns.

Routes A and B in Grafton and Northbridge are the lowest-performing routes in the WRTA system. Future operating costs for these routes and 1.5 passengers per revenue mile make them financially unsustainable. The towns signified that their current assessments would make the present service unsustainable. The WRTA study and town outreach have concluded that the best option is to have both the Town's Council on Aging services join the WRTA's Mobility Management Model. This would thereby eliminate Routes A & B. Kelly Bol from Northbridge commented on the challenges this may bring, but also noted the benefits in a new partnership that will bring growth with the change. Kelly Bol stated that they will continue to look at growth in the future.

Some board members had specific questions regarding the area of coverage from ADA to COA. A brief explanation of the ADA vs. COA components of coverage was provided. Robert Spain commented on the additional cost of the routes and how the towns were not willing to accept the more costly options.

Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board votes to eliminate WRTA Routes A & B. By: Brian Bullock. 2nd: Robert Spain. Vote by Roll Call: (12 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.

Stephen Rolle	yes	Robin Grimm	yes	Suzanne Lewandowski	yes	Brain Bullock	yes
Laura Wilson	yes	Robert Spain	yes	Carol Grueneich	yes	Stephenie Abate	yes
Mark Binnall	yes	Mike Kennedy	yes	Kelly Bol	yes	Doug Belanger	yes

The WRTA Advisory Board voted to eliminate WRTA Routes A & B. The Administration will provide a minimum of 30-day notice that the routes would be ending with a potential line-up to the August 31st bid.

7. Brief Update on August 31, 2026 changes - Nick Burnham, Dir of Transit Operations & Planning

Route 12 (North High School): The full school schedule will resume.

Route 14 (Quinsigamond–Burncoat schools): An additional bus will be reinstated for the school year.

Route 26 (Great Brook Valley): The end of the line will be modified due to construction completion at the Tacoma Street Playground. The new turnaround will be on Constitution Avenue. A bus stop is in the process of being petitioned with the City. This change results in no significant loss of service, as Route 23 still covers nearby streets.

8. Administrator's Report – Josh Rickman

Lobby Update

- New sliding door installation will start the week of July 20, 2026.
- New wayfinding and tactile domes will be installed starting the week of July 27, 2026.
- HVAC testing will begin the week of August 3, 2026, followed by punch-list items the week of August 10, 2026.
- The target date for the grand opening is Thursday, August 27, 2026.

Your Access Advocates

On July 7, 2026, WRTA received a letter from Your Access Advocates requesting true same-day ADA paratransit service. WRTA is incorporating this request into a comprehensive service planning initiative, rather than evaluating it independently. This initiative will create a holistic 5-year vision, estimating operating costs, capital needs, and funding sources for all customer-identified priorities.

A procurement for new demand-response software was issued on July 15, 2026, which includes a microtransit module—a key step toward enabling same-day ADA service internally. The target go-live date for the new software is January 2027.

Other Administration Items

There were no other administrative items at this meeting.

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

Mike Kennedy asked about the state budget funding. The Administrator confirmed that the budget for the RTAs was \$8.5 million, and the WRTA's share has been budgeted to have no impact on service for FY'27, excluding Routes A & B. The Administrator commented on the positive working relations with state legislators. Mike Kennedy commented favorably for on-Demand Service. Mike Kennedy gave an example that highlighted the importance of True on-Demand Service.

10. Adjourn

Motion: To Adjourn at 8:50 a.m. By: Stephen Rolle, 2nd: Brian Bullock Vote by Roll Call: All in Favor (12 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.

Stephen Rolle	yes	Robin Grimm	yes	Suzanne Lewandowski	yes	Brain Bullock	yes
Laura Wilson	yes	Robert Spain	yes	Carol Grueneich	yes	Stephenie Abate	yes
Mark Binnall	yes	Mike Kennedy	yes	Kelly Bol	yes	Doug Belanger	yes

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on August 20, 2026, at 8:00 a.m., via Zoom Webinar.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R. Pokoly