

**Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Meeting Minutes August 27, 2026**

**Hybrid WRTA Hub 60 Foster Street 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Worcester, MA 01608, and Zoom Webinar**

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

**2. Clerk Robert Spain called the roll**

In person Attendance: Doug Belanger – Leicester, Brian Pigeon Alt – Worcester, Stephen Rolle – Worcester, Robert Spain – Millbury, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Mark Binnall – Auburn, Heather-Lyn Haley Alt – Leicester. Remote Attendance members: Brian Bullock – Holden, Suzanne Lewandowski Alt – North Brookfield, Carol Grueneich Alt – Northborough, Kelly Bol Alt – Northbridge Stephenie Abate Alt – Grafton, Hollie Lucht- Alt-Shrewsbury, Laura Wilson Alt - Oxford, Rose Russell Alt- Auburn, John Jovan – Southbridge, Jeff Bridges – Spencer, Austin Cyganiewicz – Sutton, Karyn Clark – Clinton, Mike Kennedy CDP – Millbury, Nelly Medina RCP- Worcester. Remote attending after roll call: Robert Blair – Berlin, Mike Ward – West Boylston. Chairperson Doug Belanger asked for a motion to accept the minutes from July 16, 2026.

**3. Approval of Minutes from July 16, 2026**

**Motion: To accept the minutes for July 16, 2026. By: Robert Spain. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mark Binnall. Vote by Roll Call: (16 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 | John Jovan      | yes |
| Doug Belanger | yes | Jeff Bridges | yes | Austin Cyganiewicz  | yes | Hollie Lucht    | yes |

**4. Business from the Public**

No Business from the public.

**5. WRTA Advisory Board Intro and Advisory Board Responsibilities Presentation – Administrator**

The Administrator gave a board member introduction. The WRTA was founded in 1974 under MA General Law 161B and is one of 15 RTAs in Massachusetts serving 37 communities through a variety of public transportation methods. The WRTA operates 26 fixed routes in 16 member communities, and the majority of the services operate from the central hub. The Administrator broke down the various contracted providers for Fixed Route, COA, ADA, and on-demand micro transit services. The presentation included an overview of the fleet, facilities, and its organizational structure. The Administrator outlined the roles and activities of the advisory board members. Board activities were listed as follows.

- Approve substantial changes in service
- Approve Fare changes
- Approve property acquisitions of more than 1 year
- Receive notice of sale of real estate
- Approve extension, construction, modifications, or improvements of facilities

It was acknowledged that all advisory board meetings follow MA Open Meeting Law guidelines. The WRTA Travel Trainers offer assistance to board members should they choose to do outreach for the WRTA.

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Auburn • Barre • Berlin • Boylston • Brimfield • Brookfield • Charlton • Clinton • Douglas • Dudley  
East Brookfield • Grafton • Holden • Holland • Leicester • Millbury • New Braintree • Northborough • Northbridge  
North Brookfield • Oakham • Oxford • Paxton • Princeton • Rutland • Shrewsbury • Southbridge • Spencer  
Sturbridge • Sutton • Wales • Warren • Webster • Westborough • West Boylston • West Brookfield • Worcester

## 6. Same Day ADA and Grant Opportunities – Administrator

The Administrator reviewed same-day ADA services, providing industry and cost examples. Reviewed alternative models and applications for the WRTA and highlighted available grant opportunities as well as other considerations. The Administrator spoke about how same-day ADA service is intended to complement -not replace- traditional ADA paratransit and does not reduce an agency's existing ADA service obligations. The WRTA Administration is seeking the necessary compatible paratransit scheduling and dispatching software to consider participation in same-day ADA paratransit services. The RFP has been issued and is due September 2, 2026. The Administrator acknowledged the engagement and requests from advocacy groups and recapped the agency's role in identifying those interests. The Administrator broke out three industry examples of same-day ADA and reviewed their different fares, costs, services, and requirements. Estimated figures based on the WRTA ridership numbers that would mirror each of the three service types were calculated to be between \$9 million and \$19 million per year. Part of the gap is the service differences provided by each example given. (See presentation for more details). Other alternatives were highlighted, offering same-day call-in on a space available bases with limited hours and a shared-ride service with a 90-minute window. This type of plan can be implemented almost cost-neutral once the trip planning software has been selected and installed. The second alternative presented, "Wheel2U," would be applied to a specific geography in consideration of the City of Worcester's Mobility Action Plan. It would fall within the City of Worcester limits for same-day ADA deployment options, with the hope of being able to manage and potentially grow. However, the service area would be limited, and generally not all origins and destinations used now would be satisfied. The Administrator gave a brief overview of available grants.

- Community Transit Grants exist as a 50/50 operational grant, and the WRTA would have to match the funds for any programs.
- Microtransit & Last-Mile Grants can support commingled ADA trips but are specific, with a defined time period and expiration. Also included in these grants is bike share as a first/last mile solution.

While long-term funding has uncertainty and fare collection for cash transactions would increase the timeline for implementation, same-day ADA will continue to be reviewed as part of the Administration's Five-Year Vision Service Prioritization Study. The Administration is working on a task timeline for identification, development, public sessions, advisory board, and other stakeholders for this plan. The plan will include budgetary considerations and be presented coinciding with the fiscal year budgeting schedule. The six objectives listed were as follows:

- Increase fixed route frequency
- Introduce cross-town services
- Same Day ADA
- Increase span of service
- Limited Stop Service
- Microtransit – introduce as a new independent service; would operate with Commingled ADA trips.

The City of Worcester was in favor of the administration being "ready" as grant opportunities present themselves. It was acknowledged that no plan for same-day is being presented at this time. However, the discussions are developing outlines for such a service option. Mike Kennedy and Nelly Medina were in favor of a same-day ADA services pilot or program. Mike Kennedy spoke about fare costs for same-day ADA services as non-prohibitive to moving forward with implementation of such a service. Other board members cautioned about a balance of choices given the use of CARES ACT monies for Fare Free vs. possible consideration for use in a pilot for same-day ADA. The Administration will outline further options under the five-year vision plan, and these will include identifiable budgeting in the coming year.

**7. FY27 Administrator Goals – Administrator – out of order**

1. Complete the Five-Year Vision Service Prioritization Study
2. Complete integration of new ITS for Demand Response Service
3. Develop and Award RFP's for:
  - Bus Stop Sign Installation
  - Tech RFPs for collision Avoidance for fixed route buses
  - Real-time infotainment and sign pilot
  - Develop Bi-Annual Metrics Report

The city asked for a goal for paratransit. The Administrator stated he would present the goals in September, and the Chairperson confirmed. No vote was taken at this time on the Administrator's goals.

**8. Administrator's Report – Josh Rickman**

**Lobby Update**

A tour of the lobby will be given after this meeting for board members. Chairperson Belanger asked members not to discuss any board business while on the tour.

**Demand Response RFP**

The Demand Response RFP is due September 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Diesel Prices**

Prices are at \$4.00 a gallon; FY27 has some funding to cover these costs and will circle back to the board once locked in.

**Other Items**

No other administrative items

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

Mark Binnall asked about improving scheduling. One of the goals we have is improved scheduling as the new procurement comes out.

**Adjourn**

**Motion: To Adjourn at 8:52 a.m. By: Robert Spain, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mark Binnall by Roll Call: All in Favor (17 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.**

|               |     |              |     |                     |     |                 |     |
|---------------|-----|--------------|-----|---------------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
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| Laura Wilson  | yes | Robert Spain | yes | Carol Grueneich     | yes | Stephenie Abate | yes |
| Mark Binnall  | yes | Mike Kennedy | yes | Kelly Bol           | yes | John Jovan      | yes |
| Nelly Medina  | yes | Jeff Bridges | yes | Austin Cyganiewicz  | yes |                 |     |
| Doug Belanger | yes | Mike Ward    | yes |                     |     |                 |     |

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on September 17, 2026, at 8:00 a.m., via Hybrid & Zoom Webinar.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R. Pokoly