



Paratransit Rider's Forum Meeting Summary: Thursday, September 10, 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 from 1:00 to 2:30 PM in a hybrid format in-person at the WRTA Central Hub, 3rd Floor Advisory Board Conference Room (60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608) and virtually via Zoom. It was the third quarterly Paratransit Rider's Forum and was attended by around 15 riders and/or members of the public, with most participants joining online. The following WRTA staff were in attendance:

- Nick Burnham, Director of Operations and Planning
- Josh Rickman, Administrator
- Jamie Winters, Director of Marketing & Communications
- Jagy Riesz, Travel Trainer

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 translation services.

The September 10 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, December 3, 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 2 Recap and Follow-Ups
- ADA Paratransit Education Series
 - Paratransit Ridership & Performance
 - Overview of WRTA Travel Training



- Updates on ongoing work and service improvements provided by WRTA staff
- Public participation session regarding paratransit service

Forum 2 Recap and Follow-Ups

WRTA staff gave a brief recap of Forum 2, including follow-ups on comments from participants. Staff addressed comments regarding smaller vehicle sizes by explaining that smaller vehicles were procured to mitigate issues that the previous larger paratransit vehicles would face in smaller lots (ex. medical facilities). Staff also provided an update on discussions regarding same-day ADA paratransit at the August 2026 WRTA Advisory Board meeting and linked [the presentation](#) for more information.

ADA Paratransit Education Series

WRTA staff then gave two presentations as part of the ADA Paratransit Education series started as part of Forum 2. The first topic was Paratransit Ridership & Performance, which summarized ridership & performance trends in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 (July 2025 through June 2026) compared to FY2025. Staff presented overall paratransit ridership by provider for the entirety of each fiscal year and specific performance statistics for Quarter 4 (April through June) of each fiscal year, including trips provided, trip cancellations, missed trips, no-shows, total # of ADA eligible clients, and on-time performance.

Staff expressed intent to make the paratransit ridership & performance updates a regular part of the ADA Paratransit Education series and asked participants if there were any other statistics of interest. Requests for additional statistics included tracking the number of trips converted from CMTM to Yellow Cab (and vice versa), the number of complaints received from riders, and the number of times drivers are held accountable for complaints. Staff responded that trip conversions would be difficult to report quarterly under the current software but could be evaluated as part of the new software procurement. Additionally, while rider complaints are easy to track, driver accountability is currently the responsibility of the individual service providers and is therefore not something WRTA can report on regularly.

Jagy Riesz, a travel trainer with WRTA, presented the second topic of the ADA Paratransit Education Series, an Overview of WRTA Travel Training. They introduced the Travel Training program – designed to teach individuals and groups how to safely, independently, and comfortably ride public transportation – and summarized rider resources and information available through the program. Additional information is available on the WRTA website: <https://therta.com/customer-service/travel-training/>

Ongoing Work and Service Updates

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



The Hub Lobby was officially reopened to the public on Friday, August 28, 2026. Staff shared images of the renovated lobby and highlighted accessibility and customer experience improvements, as well as remaining next steps and milestones, including a new PA announcements system. Additional information is available on the WRTA website: <https://therta.com/lobbyreno/>

WRTA released an RFP for demand response software procurement over the summer and expects to award a contract by early October. The new software will feature improved customer tools, including app features, and help to operate more efficient ADA service. Staff mentioned plans for a beta testing group of paratransit riders for the new software; interest will be gathered through various forums, including the Paratransit Forum mailing list.

One participant asked whether the new software would be accessible for screen readers, to which WRTA responded that this would be the case and is part of the procurement. WRTA staff also addressed a comment about accessing the exterior customer service window for those who are visually impaired.

Another participant asked whether the new software would include real-time road updates for drivers to re-route based on traffic conditions (similar to what Google maps does). She added that drivers have voiced frustration on no live map updates for re-routing so was wondering if the new system would allow this to occur. Staff responded that this feature will be a requirement of the new software.

Public Participation Session

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

Mark (in-person)

- **Comment:** Mark commented that paratransit trips are often scheduled very inefficiently – as an example, he was picked up for a ride in Millbury and then brought to Oxford to pick up and drop off another passengers before being dropped off at home in Auburn.
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that addressing scheduling inefficiencies is one of the primary goals of the new software procurement. WRTA is hopeful to see improvements in scheduling, as have other peers through implementing new demand response software.

Joe Bellil

- **Comment:** Joe commented that TPAG in the past received ADA-related statistics in addition to the ridership and performance statistics presented in the meeting. He was wondering if it was feasible to include these stats in the quarterly forum updates. The statistics were as follows:
 - Applications Requested
 - Applications Completed



- Incomplete Applications
 - Total New Eligible
 - Total ADA Eligible
 - Total ADA Conditional Eligibility
 - No Longer Eligible
 - Total In-Eligible
 - No-Shows Excused
 - No-Shows Suspensions
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that they would evaluate which statistics could be added to the ridership and performance updates.

Kate M

- **Comment:** Kate said that she appreciated the follow-up from Forum 2 on vehicle size but wanted to reiterate that the new smaller white vans are much more difficult to navigate for wheelchair users than the previous blue vans.
- **Staff Response:** Staff noted Kate's comment.

Kate M

- **Comment:** Kate shared a safety concern regarding drivers who speed excessively beyond the 25-mph speed limit, making the ride scary and uncomfortable. She asked whether WRTA has reconsidered the model of contracting out paratransit services and not having any personnel oversight. She emphasized that she would like to see more driver accountability, as feeling unsafe discourages her from using paratransit. She also added that she realizes it may be a structure issue, as drivers have expressed that they feel pressure to complete trips quickly as new trips get added.
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that WRTA does not have direct control over the model, as their enabling legislation (Chapter 161B) legally requires WRTA to contract out services. However, staff emphasized that safety-related complaints are taken very seriously by the operations team. They also added that WRTA's contractors have a formal process for thoroughly investigating and following up on these complaints. Staff will think about how to include customer complaints in future reporting. Contractors are also in attendance at the quarterly forums, and safety training done by contractors could be a future forum topic.

Brian (in-person)

- **Comment:** Brian asked if there would be a way to set up transfer points between other regional RTAs and service providers, such as the MetroWest RTA (MWRTA).
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that there is currently no formal mechanism to connect between different service providers, although they are aware that this is of interest to riders



and may be explored through the new software. Staff also gave examples of recent efforts to align service zones between regional providers – for example, WRTA realigned its Via microtransit service zone in Shrewsbury, Northborough, and Westborough to set up a couple distinct transfer points to other providers, ex. to MWRTA service at the Solomon Pond Mall and to MBTA service in Southborough. As part of onboarding the Westborough Council on Aging as a demand response service providers, WRTA also addressed requests to use WRTA and MWRTA services to reach medical facilities in Southborough.

Sharon Strzalkowski

- **Comment:** Sharon asked for clarification on the decrease in the number of ADA-eligible clients – she noted that the number was closer to 2,000 in prior years, compared to the approximately 1,300 shown in the meeting for FY2026.
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that the statistic only accounts for ADA-eligible clients and does not take into consideration non-ADA-eligible clients who take the SCM Elderbus are within the COAs that PBSTM does the scheduling and brokerage for. Staff also noted that the statistics presented for FY2025 and FY2026 only represent clients who actually used paratransit services during the corresponding fiscal year, while previous statistics were often running totals and likely included eligible clients who did not actually use paratransit services. Ultimately, staff will track a couple key statistics for each fiscal year quarter to develop a better understanding of trends in paratransit ridership and performance.

Sharon Strzalkowski

- **Comment:** Sharon asked a follow-up question on how long riders will stay in the system once they are deemed ADA eligible.
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that the initial eligibility period is five years, although eligibility can vary case-by-case – in other words, riders will stay in the system even if they do not use the system during this five-year period. Staff thanked Sharon for the question and noted that a data dictionary going along with the paratransit statistics reporting could help riders better understand the information – this may be developed by staff for future forums.

Anonymous Zoom Participant

- **Comment:** The participant asked if there was a way to retrieve medical devices left on paratransit vehicles that get put in the Lost and Found, noting that riders may need to get the device back before the following day or two when a new ride can be scheduled.
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that the typical process is to get in touch with customer service so that they can check the Lost and Found at WRTA's maintenance facility. It may sometimes take more than a day to locate and retrieve the item as there are multiple paratransit providers, with vans returning to various facilities at the end of the day.

Cynthia Willis



- **Comment:** Cynthia shared that Shrewsbury has residents that would love to join the paratransit forum virtually but do not have access to a computer. The Shrewsbury COA wants to publish the date and time of the December forum in the Senior Edition Newsletter and to host it virtually for residents who want to attend.
- **Staff Response:** Staff responded that this is a great idea.

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 in a hybrid format on **Thursday, December 3, 2026**, from **1:00 to 2:30 PM**.