

## **TPAG Meeting Minutes August 19, 2020**

**Attendees:** Nancy Garr-Colzie; Anna Kusterski, PBSTM; Carolyn Foley, PBSTM; Sue Moriarty, MASS; Nick Burnham, CMRPC; Ethan Belding, Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging; Steve Stolberg; Mike Kennedy, CLW; Joe Bellil, Easter Seals; Bill Clark, Worcester Yellow Cab; Mark Binnall; Pamela Alvin; Mary Haroyen; Francesca Abbey.

**Meeting minutes** from June meeting were accepted as presented.

**Paratransit Report.** The office is still handling applications for certification and recertification by mail and we expect this to continue for at least a few more months. There have been some personnel changes in the paratransit office. Tess who was the Travel Trainer is now the Customer Service Supervisor and is also handling the ADA paratransit recertification process. We are now looking for a Travel Trainer. This person ideally has some work experience in education or training such as a job coach. Anna is now the Assistant General Manager for WRTAs fixed route service. Carolyn, who has been at PBSTM for 10+ years will be the interim paratransit manager.

### **Paratransit Customer Satisfaction Survey Results**

- This survey and results was discussed and is attached. It should be noted that responses to some of the questions would likely be different today due to the impacts of COVID-19.
- Paratransit staff noted that the response to the satisfaction of the complaint response is impacted by the type of complaint. For instance, if a rider complains about the policy regarding the number of bags that can be taken on the vehicle, they may not be satisfied with the response. Also, if a rider complains that the pickup was late, the confirmation that this is true will not correct the late arrival.
- Staff further commented that riders who do not have internet access are largely older riders but younger riders often have access to a computer. This was confirmed by CMAA staff.

### **Online Reservation System Overview and Survey**

On Jan 1 the online trip reservation portal was opened. It is accessible through the automated fare portal. Our goal was to have 5% of people who have access to the internet use the service. We almost made the goal before COVID but was impacted by reduced ridership overall. Since ridership is increasing again, we hope the number of people using the service will increase. There is a lot of info and instructional videos on the paratransit website on how to use the service including AFC, ORS, request, cancel, trip history etc. They are available in closed caption, several languages and descriptive language. We've heard good feedback on this. We distributed a survey in July to get feedback and will be collecting the results. This system was funded through a MassDOT grant. The Carroll Center has been a good partner for this project. One commenter suggested that a phone number should be included on the survey.

### **MassDOT Grant Awards**

- WRTA was awarded grant funding to provide shuttle service connecting Southbridge, Dudley and Webster. Service began a few weeks ago using a 12-passenger van. This will include a ¼ mile ADA paratransit buffer. This route connects the current routes from Worcester to Southbridge and Worcester to Webster. It is a flag stop service.
- WRTA was also awarded grant funding to provide service through VIA in Westborough. This is expected to begin in Sept. VIA will provide their own vehicles. Service is available to the general public and is a call ahead or app-based service.

**Paratransit Report** was read and attached. There were no questions.

**Customer Service Report** was presented for July. There were a total of 47 complaint cases of which 35 were for fixed route and 11 for paratransit. Of the 11 paratransit complaints, 4 referenced drivers behavior as the primary reason for the complaint (2 were unsubstantiated), 4 were for late pickups, 1 for missed trip, 2 other, 1 security issue at a vendor.

### **COVID-19 Related Policy Changes**

WRTA continues to suspend fare collection policy through Aug. Midday cleaning of buses has begun using fogging machines at the Hub. Daily deep cleaning of buses and vans continues. COAs are receiving cleaning supplies and often clean before each rider. Seats near the bus drivers are being roped off and paratransit service can continue to provide one-to-one service. When it is not possible to provide van service one-to-one, riders will be assigned seating to provide social distancing. Mandatory mask use continues.

### **Transportation Meeting Briefs**

- Riders Action Council (formerly Riders Advisory Committee) discussed PPE and cleaning of vehicles. The group will contact WRTA to collect data.
- Transportation Advocacy Coalition met last month to discuss on-demand service.
- AAA transportation was discussed including upcoming discussion with MBTA on The RIDE service.

**WRTA Advisory Board** has not met since June. No update available.

### **Nomination of Officers**

|            |                   |                     |
|------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Chair      | Mark Binnall      | accepted nomination |
|            | Nancy Garr-Colzie | accepted nomination |
| Vice-Chair | Mark Binnall      | accepted nomination |
| Exec Board | Joe Bellil        | accepted nomination |
|            | Mike Kennedy      | will be notified    |
|            | Mary Haroyan      | accepted nomination |
|            | Mark Binnall      | accepted nomination |
|            | Francesca Abbey   | accepted nomination |

Pamela Alvin            will be notified  
Nancy Garr-Colzie   nomination

Nominations will continue at the Sept meeting with elections in Oct.

### **Meeting Calendar**

Next meeting will be in Sept and Oct. The group should begin discussing the calendar of future meeting dates.

Although the next TPAG meeting is scheduled for Sept 16, the group voted to meet one week later than usual since the WRTA Advisory Board will be meeting on Sept 17. This will make it possible for TPAG to discuss issues brought up at the WRTA Advisory Board meeting. **The next TPAG meeting will be held virtually on Wed, Sept 23, 1:00-2:30pm.** Details to follow.