

TPAG Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2020

Attendees: Nancy Garr-Colzie; Kathy Huntington; Mary Haroyan; Pamela Alvin; Sharon Strzalkowski; Mark Binnall; Nona Haroyan; Sue Moriarty; Joe Bellil; Carolyn Foley, PBSTM; Sujatha Krishnan, CMRPC; Nahrin Sangkagalo, CMRPC

Meeting minutes were accepted as prepared.

Paratransit Report was presented. This report compared information from Aug 2020 to Aug 2019.

- Application Trips Requested refers to the trips for people coming to WRTA to apply for paratransit. Since this is now being done only by mail due to COVID, the number of trips is zero.
- Paratransit ridership is down about 50% from this time last year. WRTA policy right now is that trips will not be grouped, except for people travelling with a PCA or people from the same household.
- One rider noted that in his experience, health care professionals are often slow to return the paperwork needed to finalize the paratransit application. Applicants should contact their health care professional to alert them that this is needed.

Customer Service Report for Sept was shared. There were 56 complaints filed. Of the 56 complaints, 44 of them were for fixed route and 12 were for paratransit. Of the 12 paratransit complaints, 3 were for driver behavior, 3 were for missed trips and 6 were classified as 'Other'.

One rider had a question about the COVID screening questions asked when making a trip reservation. WRTA noted that each rider is asked three screening questions before they are allowed to travel. Responses are accepted using the 'honor system' and are not questioned. All phone calls are recorded and reviewed as needed. One question asked of all riders is whether the rider has been recently COVID tested. If the rider reports that they have been tested, they are asked to wait for the results. If negative, the rider can then make a reservation. No paperwork is needed or requested by WRTA. Only a verbal confirmation.

Riders Action Council has not met in a few months.

Transportation Advocacy Coalition met recently. Discussion topics included the Zero Fare group and the AAA on-demand transportation committee. Also discussed was the Via shuttle service going on in Westborough which started in Sept. This service currently has one accessible vehicle in its fleet. TAC is watching for updates to the service for possible application in Worcester. TAC is also watching as similar service model in Connecticut and another model being offered by MBTA. One other item

discussed was the issue of homeless people using the bus system as a shelter since the fare collection policy has been suspended and many buildings like the library are closed due to COVID.

WRTA Advisory Board did not meet in Oct. In Sept there was a long discussion on fare-free service and a presentation from the Zero Fare group. Presenters included the Worcester Chamber of Commerce, Dr Maddie Castile and Sen Harriette Chandler (who is a strong transit advocate). The Board will meet again in Nov and Dec. WRTA is one of a few RTAs in Massachusetts who have continued suspension of the fare collection policy. The Board briefly noted some pros and cons of reinstating fares but did not vote or discuss further.

Nancy Garr-Colzie noted that she has been serving on the Board as the disability representative for the past year. This is a one-year appointment and will be vacant for an interested person. WRTA Advisory Board needs proper representation from riders and people with disabilities. The other open position is to represent people with disabilities. Mike Kennedy has expressed interest for this position and has begun the process. These two Board positions are important so that the view of the rider is represented. Many thanks for Nancy for serving on the Board

Election of Officers

Nancy Garr-Colzie, Chair; Mark Binnall, Vice-Chair; Joe Bellil, Mary Haroyan, Mike Kennedy, Kathy Kulesza, Sharon Strzalkowski, Executive Board (5 people)

New business

The group discussed and agreed to use Zoom for the next meeting and requested to have a direct link to the call.

Next meeting is December 16, 1:00pm-2:30pm.