Regional Transit Authorities: Meeting the Needs of their Customers

Joshua Rickman
Worcester Regional Transit Authority
WRTA History

Founded in 1974 under MA General Law 161b

1 of 15 Massachusetts Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)

Serves 37 communities through a variety of public transportation methods:
- Fixed Route
- Demand Response
- Microtransit

Communities Served by Fixed Route:
- Auburn
- Brookfield
- Charlton
- Dudley
- East Brookfield
- Grafton
- Leicester
- Millbury
- Northbridge
- Oxford
- Shrewsbury
- Southbridge
- Spencer
- Webster
- West Boylston
- Worcester

37 Communities

26 Fixed Routes
WRTA Service Providers

**Bus**
- Central Mass Transit Management (CMTM)

**Demand Response**
- Central Mass Transit Management (CMTM)
- SCM Elderbus
- Paratransit Brokerage Services, Transit Management, Inc. (PBSTM)
- Council on Aging (10 communities)

**Microtransit**
- Via
Facilities

WRTA Central Hub, 60 Foster Street
- Opened 2013
- WRTA Administrative Office 3rd floor
- PBSTM (1st and 2nd floors)

WRTA Maintenance & Operations, 42 Quinsigamond Ave
- Opened 2016
- CMTM
No Fare? No Problem.
WRTA is Fare Free through June 2025

In March 2020, WRTA suspended fares due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

WRTA’s Advisory Board has since annually voted to cover the cost of fares with funds from the CARES Act.
WRTA Fare Policy Overview

2017 Service Cuts + increase

COVID-19 = Suspension of Fare Policy
Supported by CARES Funding

Coming out of COVID-19
CARES + Fair Share Amendment

Moving Forward
- Annual Basis
- Grant Opportunities
- Results
Building the Base Overview

Overview of previous Advisory Board discussions and internal review

Revised FY24 Budget discussion in February 2024

FY25 Budget discussion in March & April 2024

Strategic goals:
- Increase service reliability for passengers
- Improve hiring and retainment for both fixed route and demand response services
- Restore full weekday service on Fridays
# Operator Composition & Proposed Change

## Fixed Route

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Former Budget</th>
<th>New Budget</th>
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<tr>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part time</td>
<td>14</td>
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- Internal review between WRTA & CMTM
- Identified opportunities to convert part time operations to full time positions
- Existing part time staff are fully trained and have necessary credentials
- Summary of expanded list/report drivers for Fixed Route
- Summary of expanded Demand Response drivers
Rationale for Budget Changes

Existing Career path process at CMTM
• 90% start off as part time van drivers ($20/hr)
• Individuals must wait up to a year for a full time position to become available
• Offering full time employment should increase retention rate

MA State law (PFMLA) impacting operator availability
• Previous funding levels prohibited adjustments to operator roster
• Current and anticipated funding levels allow for adjustments

Position WRTA to better Cover Existing Scheduled Service
• Mitigate missed trips with the conversion of positions
• Restoring Friday service with additional coverage

Operator availability impact on supervisory coverage
• Inspectors
• Maintenance
• Management staff
Strategic Plan

Proposed Revised FY24 Budget
- WRTA proposed a revised FY24 budget at February 2024 Advisory Board Meeting

Hiring Effort
- WRTA directed CMTM to transition existing part timers to full time upon budget approval
- Incoming hires will be offered full time position
- Approval of timeline in February provides CMTM time to hire additional operators

Propose FY25 Budget
- The proposed FY25 budget was presented at March 2024 Advisory Board Meeting
- Approved at April 2024 Advisory Board meeting
- Anticipated FY25 budget for this plan is an increased cost of $1.277m

August 2024 Bid
- If the additional full time hire for fixed route are secured by August 2024
- WRTA will direct CMTM to restore Friday service to its full weekday service levels
Enhancing Reliability

How is reliability measured?
On-Time Performance

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**WEEKDAYS**

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Enhancing Reliability

What is WRTA’s on time performance goal?
80% = System Wide On Time Performance
95% = Hub Departure On Time Performance

Where are we today?
Why is this important?
Enhancing Reliability

How do we get to the 80% System Wide Goal?

- Spring 2024 Study

Study Overview

Study Timeline

- Data Analysis Spring 2024
- Internal Review May/June 2024
- Recalibration based on Feedback July 2024
- Public Engagement late summer and early fall
- Potential Implementation January 2025
Embracing Reliability

WRTA History & Overview

Building the Base

Enhancing Reliability

Tracking & Reporting
**CITY OF WORCESTER PROFILE**

**WRTA SERVICE**

**Fixed Route Service**
- Routes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 85, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 19, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 42, and Elder Shopper

**Demand Response Service**
- WRTA ADA Complementary Paratransit

**RIDERSHIP**

- Total Fixed Route: 3,400,081
- Total Demand Response: 86,103

**ANNUAL COST**

- Fixed Route Service: $18,991,421
- Demand Response Service: $3,207,710
- Community Assessment: $4,192,462

**CONTACT**

- Paratransit Brokerage Service & Transit Management
  - Tel: 508-752-1283
  - Toll Free: 877-743-3852

**ROUTE PROFILE**

**SERVICE SUMMARY**

- Departing from the Union Station Hub, Route 19 spans approximately five miles, connecting downtown Worcester to Webster Square on Weekdays, to Leicester and Spencer on Saturdays, and to Leicester on Sundays. Riders can access key points of interest, including the Federal Building, U.S. Courthouse, YMCA of Central Mass., Cost, University, Webster Square Townes, Webster Square Plaza, South High School, Leicester Walmart (Weekends), Spencer Center (Saturday).

**Category:**
- City

**Service Hours:**
- Weekdays: 9:00am - 11:00pm
- Saturdays: 6:00am - 10:00pm
- Sundays: 10:00am - 6:00pm

**Frequency (maximum/minimum):**
- Weekdays: Min: Every 60 minutes; Max: Every 3 minutes
- Saturdays & Sundays: Every 60 minutes

**Service Efficiency**
- Passengers per Revenue Hour: 36

**FINANCIALS**

- **Annual Cost:** $1,472,279
- **Cost per Passenger Trip:** $3.50
- **Route Ranking by Cost per Passenger Trip:** 2 of 26
- **Cost per Revenue Hour:** $123.31
- **Route Ranking by Cost per Revenue Hour:** 8 of 26

**POPULAR STOPS:**
- Franklin St. - City Hall
- Main St. - Curtin St.
- Main St. - Holland Rd.
- Main St. - Webster St.
- Main St. - Crystal St.