

**City of Worcester Accessibility Advisory Commission**  
**Tuesday October 25, 2022, 4:30 PM Meeting Minutes**  
**Hybrid meeting with**  
**Virtual WebEx platform**  
<http://www.worcesterma.gov/video-on-demand>  
**ASL interpreters provided**

**Attendance:**

**Members Present:** Robert Bureau, James Delage, John Finn, Jr., Elizabeth Myska, Christina Parissi, Stephen Stolberg

**Members Absent:** Darya Karuna, Jully Khattar, Linda Larrivee,

**Staff:** Jayna Turcek, Dawn E. Clark

**Guests:** Faye Rhault & Connie Mellis, Central MA Regional Planning Commission

**Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions**

Chairperson Bureau requested Director Turcek provide the technology instructions for public access to the meeting. She also introduced a new feature that includes a language choice for closed captioning. Commissioners then introduced themselves. Associate Commissioners Delage and Parissi were raised to the status of Commissioner for voting purposes at this meeting. A unanimous roll call vote was taken to start the meeting at 4:39pm.

**Approval of September 20, 2022 minutes\***

Commissioner Finn, Jr. moved to approve the August 16, 2022 minutes as written. Commissioner Myska seconded the motion. Unanimously approved by roll call.

**Conversation with Central MA Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) regarding their long range transportation plan**

The presenters were Faye Rhault specializing in bike and pedestrian planning and Connie Mellis transportation planner with emphasis on para-transit.

Ms. Rhault provided a PowerPoint to introduce the CMRPC Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). She explained that accessibility needs to be part of the

plan with appropriate steps to achieving the same and is coming to the Commission for input.

1. Since 1976 the CMMPO's role is to plan transportation projects in the region, and program federal funds for highway, transit, bridges, trails, bicycles and pedestrian infrastructure. The agency serves 40 cities and towns.

2. What is the purpose of the LRTP?

The purpose of the LRTP is to identify the multi-modal transportation needs and priorities of the southern central Massachusetts region.

MPO's must create a plan every four years.

The span of 2050 Connections covers 25 years.

3. Planning Areas include:

Safety Management

Congestion Management

Asset Management

Environment

Emerging Technologies

4. How to participate:

Survey

Community Events

Interviews

Regional Workshops

5. Group Discussion Questions

What is the most pressing ISSUE /CHALLENGE related to transportation today?

Do you have a transportation project, service or study you would like to pursue if the financial resources become available?

Do you know any best practice or example that we should look at / explore for our region?

Reponses to these questions.

Sidewalks need to be safe.

Buses are late

No transfer ability between WRTA and Metro West

Too many applications for disabled people to fill out: local, commuter etc.

State funded medical transportation venders are not always reliable- another way would be helpful.

Ms. Mellis suggested the big idea coming through is "changing the

transportation structure”.

Suggestion to make the Zero Fare policy permanent.

Find out what makes a walkability city form other cities.

Give vouchers to home health agencies to give people rides.

Walk signals do not always work – There needs to be a plan to keep them in working order.

**Request Commissioner of DPW and Chief of Transportation and Mobility to share process for installing benches and bus shelters on public sidewalks and responsible entities for their maintenance including snow and ice removal**

By consensus the Commission agreed to send this request on to Commissioner Fink and Chief Rolle.

**National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)**

Dept. of Labor website:

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/ndeam>

Public service announcement:

<https://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org/psa-campaigns/i-can-psa/>

Director Turchek said that in the past the Accessibility Office has done programs to assist employees in understanding the ways the city could assist the hiring and maintaining people with disabilities as employees. The Commission viewed one of the Public Service Announcements (PSA) produced by the Dept. of Labor about the month. Prior to CoVID the Office would post NEDAM flyers in City buildings to promote the hiring and appreciation of people with disabilities as employees. This year’s theme is Part of the Equity Equation”.

One Commissioner raised the issue of the gap between being able to make a living wage and loosing social security and other benefits that sustains people’s ability to live.

Commissioners noted in most cases ADA accommodations do not cost a lot of money. One resource for equipment when needed for blind employees is the Mass. Commission of the Blind.

Director Turchek agreed to contact the local Mass Hire Program to help the Commission understand how the gap in disability employment is addressed.

The Mayor we offering a proclamation this evening at City Council for the work Easter Seals Massachusetts does for employment for people with disabilities.

### **White Cane Day and WPI neighborhood stroll debrief**

Commissioner Myska and her sidekick, Jack Peacock, provided a debrief of October 20, 2022 White Cane Day Event. October 15<sup>th</sup> is the actual designates day.

For the past eight years Worcester's event has celebrated by blind folding politicians, City employees and other community leaders pair them with seasoned sighted guides and go for a walk. The theme is walkability drawing on the fact that walking is good for one's health and well-being for everyone.

This year the group of eight dignitaries, their sighted guides and others met at the library and went to a predetermined place, unknown to the dignitaries for their walk into the blind world. Three pairs began their journey from the Auditorium (after being transported by cat from the library). Three pairs began for the Polar Park area. Two pairs were by Union Station. They were asked to be back at the library to provide their experience with others and pre-registered audience. Mr. Peacock taped and will be given to Director Turchek once the Captioning is completed. The dignitaries included: an architect; staff from the Department of Motor Vehicles; a Mass Department of Transportation staff; two individuals form the Lion's Organization, Known as "The Knights of the Blind"; an instructor from Mass Academy; member of the Human Rights Commission; and the Next/Now Program consultant.

Mr. Peacock reported that the dignitaries appreciated their walks and were in awe how people who are blind manage. There was commitment on their part to be aware and remember this experience as they go about doing and living their everyday work and life. Some indicated willingness to share their insights with neighbors and friends. The event was deemed successful!

**Notice: WRTA Advisory Board opening for disabled rider population (1 year appointment)**

This is a one year position and rotates among the WRTA towns for membership. The Commission thanked Commissioner Delage who served in this position this past year. Director Turchek said that a number of calls came into the office concerning transportation and having the Commissioner as a resource to respond to these concerns was very helpful. The Commissioner assured that he will continue to follow the Zero Fare policy process.

**Reminder: The WRTA has extended the suspension of fares on all fixed route, paratransit services until June 30, 2023. During this extension there will be no fares collected on the fixed route and paratransit services.**

<https://www.therta.com/fare/>

The Commission received with no action taken.

**Notice: Universal Access Skating Program- Ice Skating at Buffone Rink, Mondays 1-3:30pm, on January 16, February 27, March 20, 2023. To register email [Kristen.Rhodes@mass.gov](mailto:Kristen.Rhodes@mass.gov)**

The Commission received a flyer prior to the meeting with no action taken.

**Reminder: Election Day is Tuesday November 8, 7am-8pm**

Where do I vote:

[www.worcesterma.gov/elections/voter-assistance/where-do-i-vote](http://www.worcesterma.gov/elections/voter-assistance/where-do-i-vote)

Voter assistance for persons with disabilities:

[www.worcesterma.gov/elections/voter-assistance/persons-with-disabilities](http://www.worcesterma.gov/elections/voter-assistance/persons-with-disabilities)

Public service announcement on new accessible voting option:

<https://youtu.be/NLBbruX-bIw>

The Commission saw the video on voting for the blind and others that qualified that is on the City Clerks website. Thank you to Mary Haroyan for being the presenter.

### **Review of AAB notices and applications: No City owned properties**

- The Cove 85 Green Street Worcester (V22-162) - Notice of Action  
The Commission received with no action taken.

### **Notice: MA COVID-19 vaccine**

- **Walk-in Equity Clinics for COVID 19 vaccines Wednesdays & Saturdays at the Worcester Public Library, 3 Salem Sq.** Need an ASL Interpreter? To request interpreter/ accommodation call Michelle at 774-303-6976 or email [mortizocasio.socialwork@gmail.com](mailto:mortizocasio.socialwork@gmail.com)
- **Vaccine clinics and vaccine information:** <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine>

### **Notice: For information and the latest updates related to monkeypox, please visit [mass.gov/monkeypox](https://mass.gov/monkeypox) or [cdc.gov/monkeypox](https://cdc.gov/monkeypox)**

### **Suggestions for upcoming agenda item**

Concern about the high number of non-collapsible walkers and strollers on the buses sometimes resulting in disabled people to wait for the next bus.

### **Announcements:**

- Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting:  
November 15, 2022 - 4:30pm
- WRTA Transportation Advisory Planning Group Wednesday,  
December 21 - 1-2:30pm

### **Adjournment:**

Meeting was adjourned at 6:22pm by a roll call vote moved by Commissioner Stolberg and seconded by Commissioner Myska.

\*Material can be viewed at the Human Rights & Accessibility Office upon request.