

WRTA Administrator

Worcester, Massachusetts

Profile



EDWARD J. COLLINS JR. CENTER FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT
JOHN W. McCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
GLOBAL AND POLICY STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

Introduction

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) has retained the services of the Edward J. Collins Center for Public Management at the University of Massachusetts Boston to assist it in its search for an Administrator. The Center is a part of the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies. The Profile draws upon our discussions with stakeholders and describes our understanding of the organization, the challenges that lie ahead for the successful candidate and the professional and personal characteristics an ideal candidate will possess.

Background on the WRTA

The WRTA serves the City of Worcester and thirty-six towns in Central Massachusetts. Worcester is a densely populated city of approximately 182,000 inhabitants and is New England's second largest city. Worcester is home to a significant number of educational and cultural institutions.

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) is the single most important provider of fixed-route and paratransit services in Central Massachusetts. The WRTA provides service on 27 fixed-routes serving the City of Worcester and eleven surrounding communities. Service extends as far as Brookfield in the west (18 miles from Downtown Worcester) and Webster in the south (20 miles from Downtown Worcester). In addition, the WRTA also provides paratransit service in Worcester. The Towns served by WRTA range from typical suburban towns to municipalities that are distinctly rural in character.

The WRTA contracts with 10 Councils on Aging and one private non-profit agency to provide additional paratransit service to the other 36 communities. Due to the dominance of fixed route service offered in Worcester, the entire city has been blanketed with ADA level paratransit service. Outside Worcester, ADA level service is offered within a ¾ mile buffer within the hours and days of fixed route service but additional non-ADA level paratransit service is offered by local Councils on Aging. This provides an important local service to elders and people with disabilities in the towns who are typically more transit-dependent.

The WRTA has made significant strides in recent years to improve and enhance the fleet. The majority of the fleet is less than 5 years old and approximately half are hybrid. The WRTA is committed to its goal of being as environmentally friendly as possible.

A new intermodal station or "Hub" was completed in May 2013. The new hub stands adjacent to Union Station, with access to the commuter rail, Amtrak, Greyhound and Peter Pan buses, and bike paths, giving riders complete access to all modes of public transportation. It will now be the WRTA's starting and ending points for all fixed bus routes and offers riders a 14,000 square foot facility that houses the WRTA administrative offices, a customer service center, public waiting area, restroom facilities, coffee shop, ticket vending machines, covered bus bays, and eight WRTA bus slips.

A Maintenance & Operations facility is currently under construction with substantial completion expected in July 2016. The WRTA utilizes the service of a project management firm to oversee the project. The Administrator will be the key liaison to the management firm.

Organizational Design and Governance

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) was created in September 1974, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 161B of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Authority is given general responsibility to develop, finance, and contract for the operation of mass transportation facilities and services within its territory.



The day-to-day affairs of the Authority are managed by the Administrator who serves as the Chief Executive Officer. This position is appointed by the Advisory Board, which consists of:

- The City Manager of Worcester or Mayor of each city.
- The Chairman of the Board of Selectmen of each town having such board, or the Town Manager or Town Administrator of each town.

The votes of the members of the Advisory Board are weighted based on a formula that considers population, financial contribution, and other relevant factors specified in Section 5 of Chapter 161B.

The following documents are posted on the Collins Center's web site.

- Audited financial statements of the Authority as of the close of the 2015 fiscal year.
- The Authority's current organizational chart.
- The Authority's current equipment list.
- The Administrator's Position Description

Extensive information about the WRTA may be obtained from its web site www.therta.com.

Like similar agencies the operations of the Authority are carried out by contractors. The principal contractor is First Transit, Inc. which has a three (3) year contract commencing on 1/1/13 and terminating on 12/31/15 with the option of seven (7) additional one year renewal periods upon agreement of the parties. The Administrator is responsible for entering into the contract with the vendor, negotiating the terms and administering the contract.

The Administrator Position

The Administrator serves as the Chief Executive officer of the WRTA. He/she will determine and formulate policies and provide the overall direction of the WRTA and its contractors. The Administrator will plan, direct and coordinate transit authority activities at the highest level of management with the help of staff managers and contractor managers. The Administrator will implement the Advisory Board direction concerning budget, service and fare changes. The Administrator will:

- Serve as the face of the WRTA representing the Advisory Board, the staff and the contractors



- Supervise WRTA staff, prepare budgets and keep the Advisory Board informed of the operating issues of the organization
- Ensure contractors follow WRTA policy and provide customer friendly, convenient, comfortable, safe, reliable and cost effective services
- Oversee the public procurement process for materials, supplies and services construction and maintenance of buildings
- Negotiate and approve contracts with contractors, vendors and other entities
- Review and fulfill federal, state and local reporting requirements, guidelines and statutes
- Represent the WRTA with outside organizations such as the Massachusetts Association of Regional Transit Authorities, MassDOT, Federal Transit Administration and city or town offices

A complete job description is available on the Collins Center website.

Challenges for the Administrator

- **Sustaining the current WRTA system and building on it.** The current hub, facilities and rolling stock are in excellent condition and relations with the operator are positive. The new administrator is expected to sustain the current condition and play a key role in developing plans to sustain the current condition and engage in strategic and sustainable expansion of service. The new Administrator will be expected to take a fresh look at the current condition and help identify strategic opportunities for sustainable expansion.
- **Gaining an understanding of the Board and the communities that it represents.** The region is diverse and is dominated by a central city with 48% of the Board's voting

power. To be effective the Administrator must gain familiarity with the communities the Authority serves and the demographics of each municipality. Transportation planning for the region is carried out by the staff of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, which serves as the MPO for the region. Forging a more effective working relationship with CMRPC will be an important task for the Administrator.

- **Gaining the respect and collaboration of key opinion leaders in the public, private and non profit spheres.** The new Administrator through his/her substantive knowledge of transit, personal style and communication skills will reaffirm and strengthen the reputation of the WRTA. This is the *sine qua non* of formulating and sustaining an implementable strategic vision.
- **Maintaining and strengthening credibility with the WRTA's collaborators in transit planning and management.** Managing and planning for the region's public transit system is a collaborative enterprise that involves key officials and institutional actors at all levels of government, in the private and non profit sector and importantly citizens. The Administrator must be capable of engaging these constituencies on transportation issues that affect them.
- **Engendering among the WRTA staff, contractors and collaborators a sense of stewardship of public resources.** The Administrator needs to convey through his/her actions, demeanor and formal directives that the WRTA is a steward of important public assets that are paid for by taxpayers and riders.
- **Enhancing and Sustaining a Customer Service orientation at all levels in the Authority.** The Administrator needs to convey a sense to all staff that the Authority has a public mission and that serving residents businesses and institutions is its core mission.
- **Operating and expanding the fleet in a manner that is consistent with current and evolving environmental standards and preferences.** The WRTA has made major strides in placing emphasis on utilizing "green" alternatives to traditional sources of power for its vehicles. This trend needs to be sustained and enhanced as strategic plans are developed for the future.

The Ideal Candidate

The ideal candidate will have a Bachelor's degree in a closely related field and the knowledge typically gained through a Master's or professional degree program in a relevant field and at least seven years of progressively public management experience in a complex urban environment. Significant experience in public transit, including management of vendors, transit planning and operations is an essential prerequisite; management experience in a complex organizational environment is preferred. Experience as the public face of a progressive transit organization is essential. The successful applicant will possess a combination of technical skills, organization management skills, and leadership skill and be at home with the WRTA Board's collaborative style of decision-making.

The Selection Process

The WRTA will utilize a subcommittee to screen applications and conduct preliminary interviews. The initial application screening and preliminary interviews will be conducted in executive session. The names of finalists recommended by the subcommittee will be presented to the Advisory Board in a public session. Final interviews will be held in a public session.

Salary and Schedule

The WRTA Board contemplates a salary in the \$110,000 to \$130,000 range. The Board will negotiate a competitive employment agreement with the selected candidate.

How to Apply

Please send your resume with a cover letter addressing the job requirements to this email address: recruitment.umb@gmail.com. **WRTA** and the candidate's **last name** must be in the subject line. Applications should be submitted by December 30, 2015.

Please combine all of your documents in a single file, if possible. PDF format is preferred. Should you have any questions regarding this opportunity, or a recommendation of a colleague, please contact: Mary Aicardi, Collins Center Associate (508 215-8992)

To learn more about the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at UMASS Boston, please visit: www.umb.edu/cpm