

Minutes

RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:06 a.m., September 15, 2020

Present: Clough (Chair), Lucas (Vice Chair), Bibb, Byrne, Joyce, McCall, Moss, Pellot, Serrano, Weiss

Not present: None

Also Present: Anderson, Benford, Birdsong, Burney, Caver, Dangelo, Davidson, Feke, Fields, Garofoli, Gautam, Kirkland, Orlando, Penning, Rusnov, Schipper, Sutula

Mayor Clough called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. The secretary called the roll and reported that ten (10) board members were present. This meeting was conducted by teleconference for members of the Board in accordance with House Bill 197 of the 133rd General Assembly, signed by the Governor of the State of Ohio on March 27, 2020, the March 9, 2020 order of the Governor of the State of Ohio declaring a public health emergency and the April 30, 2020 order of the Director of the Ohio Department of Public Health prohibiting any gathering of ten (10) or more people. This meeting was live-streamed on RTA's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/rideRTA) for staff and members of the public.

The Secretary advised that notice of this meeting have been posted more than twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting, that the usual notification has been given the news media and other interested persons, and that all requirements of the Ohio Revised Code and Rules and Bylaws of this Board regarding notice of meeting have been complied with.

Minutes

Mayor Clough stated that the minutes from the August 25, 2020 Board Meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed and asked whether there were any additions and/or corrections. There were no corrections. The minutes were approved.

Senator Michael Skindell

Senator Michael Skindell updated the Board on what is going on with transportation at the State level. RTA needs to be aware that as they start preparing the budget for the next biennial, how funding for public transit will be impacted. The budget numbers are already being considered through the Department of Transportation and the State Office of Budget and Management. It's an important time for all the transit authorities around the State to start giving input as to the importance of the dollars that were secured to the General Revenue fund in the last budget and that those dollars need to be preserved and to secure a potential increase depending on the state of finances.

He reviewed the legislative budget office release of revenue numbers and despite the closures early in the spring, revenue dollars are generally up for the fiscal year for the budget cycle in the State. Personal income and sales tax are all up by \$300 million. The only revenue that is down is the commercial activity tax placed upon businesses. Looking into next year, absent any massive closings because of the virus, they should be stable moving into the next biennial. He met with the Department of Transportation a few months ago about the impact on gas revenue and public transit, but was not able to get an update. The transportation authorities in the State need to reach out to their legislatures to talk about how the dollars were utilized in the past biennium and communicate that there is a need for those dollars and an increase.

Mayor Clough thanked him for his advocacy and support over the last few years to ensure RTA is considered when dollars are available for transit.

Ms. Birdsong thanked him for his advocacy as we go through the TRAC funding process. She appreciates the advocacy from the legislative body as RTA just received a \$15 million BUILD grant. Rep. Skindell added that he drafted legislation to allow the TRAC to include the rail cars for consideration. He has been working to get the various groups that advocate for public transit to get behind that. Changes that RTA suggested was incorporated into the legislation. He wanted to identify a republican joint sponsor of the legislation. but the Pandemic interrupted that effort. He reviewed it with the state association that covers public transit authorities. They was supportive of it. Some local transit agencies and citizens groups supported it. He welcomed any suggestions of a Republican joint sponsor. He will do it in conjunction with RTA and other public transit systems around the state. Mayor Clough suggested Rev. Greenspan. Chief McCall asked if NOACA was looped into the draft of the legislation. He confirmed that they had.

Public Comments – Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

There was no CAC report.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

There were no Ad Hoc committee reports.

Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

Promotions

1. Darren Garlock – ITS specialist
2. Andrew Scott – Information Technology Auditor

Mayor Clough congratulated the promotions. There were no new employees to announce.

Introduction of Resolutions

- A. 2020-71 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-078 with Jadco Construction Services, Inc. for Project 18.73 – Main Office Building parking garage repairs, as specified and as required, in an amount not to exceed \$292,850.00 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Ms. Moss and approved by unanimous vote.
- B. 2020-72 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-126 with Dell Marketing, LP for the purchase of a Microsoft Enterprise License agreement through the State of Ohio, Department of Administrative Services, Cooperative Purchasing Program, as specified, in an amount NTE \$477,540.00 for 10 months and in an amount NTE \$573,048.00 for an additional

one-year for a total contract amount NTE \$1,050,588.00 for the one year and ten month period (General Fund, Information Technology, Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mr. Joyce and approved by unanimous vote.

- C. 2020-73 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-128 with GIRO, Inc. for HASTUS software upgrade services in an amount not to exceed \$1,314,402.00 (RTA Development Fund, Intelligent Transportation Systems Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Joyce, seconded by Mayor Weiss and approved by unanimous vote.

Executive Session Requested

9:23 a.m. - Mayor Clough asked for a motion to consider the purchase of property for public purposes or the sale of property at competitive bidding. It was moved by Rev. Lucas, seconded by Ms. Moss. There were ten (10) ayes and none opposed.

9:39 a.m. - It was moved by Rev. Lucas, seconded by Mr. Joyce to come out of the executive session. There were ten (10) ayes and none opposed.

Interim Secretary-Treasurer's Report

The national unemployment rate has been steadily declining since its height of COVID-19. The State and local unemployment rates are traditionally higher. July numbers for the State are 8.9%. The county was 12.4%. We are higher than the state by 45% for July. Pre-COVID, we were averaging about 1,000 layoffs per week in the region. The current level of layoffs are double the Pre-COVID period. They have come down from their height in the Stay At Home orders. However, there is still some trepidation in the economy as more layoffs are occurring. Rev. Lucas asked where were the largest unemployment numbers. Dr. Caver said mining, retail, trade and leisure activities. Retail has the largest unemployment numbers. Average ridership during COVID has been 53%. The height was in April with declines of 72%.

Passenger fares has been in the 50% range. Since April, we have averaged 50% in fares, which is equal to ridership decline. Sales tax has been a fare anomaly, but has been holding stable. Some of the items relative to the stimulus package and unemployment has bolstered funds. Given the jobless claims, there will be some give in the sales tax moving into the future. The sales tax has rebounded in August with only a 2.2% decline compared to the previous year. RTA was awarded \$112 million from the federal government through the CARES act. We have drawn down \$91.1 million. The balance will be drawn down within the next two months. Mayor Weiss asked what period the CARES act will support the budget. Dr. Caver said those funds would allow the budget to be staple until 2022.

General Manager, Chief Executive Officer Report

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced that RTA received at \$15 million BUILD grant. That will be used to purchase rail cars and to make infrastructure upgrades on the system. We have been pushing forward to get approval for eligibility for TRAC and funds for this project. We are currently in the phase of selecting specifications and rail car consultants. We received a lot of legislative support on behalf of the Northeast Ohio Delegation. Press releases from the offices of Senators and Reps. Brown, Portman, Fudge and Kaptur have been received. This grant will purchase three rail cars. The entire project cost \$240 million. Ms. Moss asked how many rail cars RTA has operating at any given time. Dr. Caver said the fleet has 70 cars. Pull out uses 33 cars. The project will replace 50 cars to get us to a State of Good Repair.

Senator Dolan spoke to the Board at the last Board meeting. He recommended we reach out to Senator Matt Huffman from Lima, Ohio. He is serving his first term in the Ohio Senate. He represents the 12 Senate District, which includes all of Allen, Champaign, Mercer, Shelby counties and different portions of Darke, Auglaize and Logan counties. He came to Cleveland to tour the Rail Facility. Our advocacy representative, Terrence O'Donnell was also present. This will show value in the request for rail funds. Mayor Clough thanked the staff for their hard work. Employees continue to prepare PPE kits to give away with the Need a Mask, Take a Mask program through the marketing department. The masks were donated from ODOT and FEMA. Phase 1 of the program was to deliver the kits at select heavily used transit centers during busy ridership times. Phase 2 will include partnering with organizations like the Cleveland Food Bank to increase distribution. To date, over 5,500 mask have been provided to the public. Mr. Serrano asked what is in the kit. Dr. Caver said it includes a mask, hand sanitizer and mobile ticketing information.

Ms. Bibb asked if voter registration could be included in the kits. Ms. Birdsong said she would look into it. Staff is speaking with the County on voter transportation to provide passes to assist the public with getting to the polls. Staff will look into it, but must ensure RTA remains a neutral party when it comes to voter registration. There were early conversations pre-COVID about offering free rides during Election Day. He asked for follow-up with Cleveland Votes about voter registration efforts to align them with what the county is doing. She spoke to Armond Budish's office about conversations they are having with marketing about bundle passes being distributed to the community.

The light rail trunk line between Kinsman and Buckeye-Woodland was rehabbed. Improvements will make for a smoother and safe ride. The project was completed August 8, 2020. A new initiative called Women's Employee Resource Group (WERG) is being spearheaded by ten RTA employees. This group was created to support diversity and female recruitment efforts. There will be kick-off events September 28 and 28, which will include voter registration. The group will focus on networking activities, professional development, mentoring programs, support sessions and potentially a book club.

Public comments on non-agenda items

Comments were received via email and by dial in. A few comments came in after the meeting adjourned.

1. Will Tarter – Broadview Heights, OH –

1). At the previous board meeting, a Team NEO study was cited that said that full economic recovery should not be expected until 2022. Given that study was from June, has there been any communication with Team NEO since then to find out if that date and projection are still accurate, given that the sales tax revenue losses have not been steep as expected, since the analysis in June?

The Team NEO projection for economic recovery is for Northeast Ohio. In the past 2 recessions, it has taken Northeast Ohio between 18-24 months to fully recover. This same time frame is projected for the recovery from the COVID pandemic. Ohio Office of Budget & Management stated that August GRF receipts were 1% above estimate. Non-auto sales tax, auto sales tax, and personal income tax all exceeded estimates. Ohio OBM stated in their August report that consumption fell in non-taxable goods (Recreation, accommodations, food services, and gas stations) but increased in taxable goods (building materials, home improvement, automotive parts, sporting goods, and general merchandise). The Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has seen the largest national decline since 1947. Although we are

seeing a slow decline in the unemployment rate, 7.8 million people remain unemployed, compared to February. Ohio OBM is also predicting a slow and long recovery.

2). Is there an argument that can be made by GCRTA and/or other public transit agencies to use this projection study in future funding conversations at the state level? Or do officials not expect for the schedule of a full recovery for GCRTA to correlate to the overall economic recovery projections made by Team NEO?

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3) Finally, the county announced that they will go through budget conversations during the month of November, as they deliberate distribution of \$35 million from the new HHS levy. Will RTA be participating in any of those meetings, given the importance of transportation to the overall health of the county citizens? No, RTA is not participating.

2. Loh – Cleveland, OH - Obviously, GCRTA has not received proper funding to be on the level to be capable of improving all elements missing in the organization for long time. Thus, in addition to the internal culture and the service mentality, here are actions to be taken in order to make ends meet as a public service organization:

1. "FREE Fare" is a way to rebuild ridership for people and the economy in this county, to eliminate the possibility to be trapped in another long-term Unfulfilled contract or more, and to decrease the needs of constantly changing expensive technologies related to Fare Boxes, All-Door Boarding, and Even public health & public safety issues with or without COVID-19 Pandemic which have made some of GCRTA's efforts Counter-Productive.

2. De-Funding, at least, 50% of GCRTA Transit Police does Not Only help to re-direct the fund into services But Also Further Decrease the Crimes and Crime Rates produced by GCRTA Transit Police, eg sexual harassment to Female riders.

At least, the technologies to conduct virtual meetings to Communicate within the organization & with the general public, and technologies for direct service and financial Needs are More important and should be met First to re-establish GCRTA's standing in the community.

Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 27, 2020 in the Board Room of the Authority, Root-McBride Building, and 1240 West Sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44113. This meeting will be live streamed on RTA's Facebook page for staff and members of the public. Only Board members and required RTA staff will be allowed in the Board Room.

This meeting was adjourned at 9:59 a.m.

Attest: Maury Ph.D.
Interim Secretary-Treasurer

Demetrius M. Clough
President