

Minutes

RTA Organizational, Services and Performance Monitoring Committee Meeting

9:23 a.m., November 17, 2020

Committee Members: Lucas (Chair), Bibb, Byrne, Serrano, Weiss

Other members: Clough, Joyce, McCall, Moss, Pellet

Not present: None

Also Present: Becker, Benford, Birdsong, Bitto, Burney, Caver, Cottrell, Dangelo, Davidson, Fields, Freilich, Garofoli, Gautam, Ghanem, Harris, Kirkland, Laule, Mothes, Orlando, Penning, Rusnov, Schipper, Sutula, Tarka

Rev. Lucas called the meeting to order at 9:23 a.m. The secretary called the roll and reported that five (5) committee 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. The meeting was live-streamed on RTA's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/rideRTA) for staff and members of the public.

Quarterly Management Report – 3rd Quarter

India L. Birdsong, General Manager, Chief Executive Officer, gave the presentation. She will report on the 3rd quarter. The Secretary-Treasurer will report on the financials later in the meeting. Highlights for the quarter include several items that have propelled RTA into a healthier 2020 and brighter future for 2021. The Pandemic has ravaged the city as far as putting us at a standstill and having to go virtual. Although the COVID-19 Pandemic has been present in every decision made since early spring, RTA has been able to take advantage of the CARES Act funding, which is approximately \$111.9 million and successfully drawn down all the funding. Thanks to the funding, they have successfully continued serving the community at nearly normal service levels. We are currently operating at 93% of pre-COVID service levels. She is proud of that and appreciates the operations staff and union members.

They have been able to stave off furloughs or layoffs, which is unprecedented during this time in the transit industry. Without the CARES Act funding, we would likely be facing budget losses of \$25.6 million in 2020, \$52.7 million in 2021 and \$48.1 million in 2022. With the funding, we are provided with financial cover for projected deficits and losses for the next few years. This has allowed us to look at different State of Good Repair projects and Capital Funding to move forward with some key initiatives. One key initiative is Fare Equity. Prior to her tenure at RTA, the Pillar Studies were introduced to the Board. Dr. Caver as the interim CEO spearheaded that initiative with the Board. Fare Equity is one of the Pillar Study. In response to the study, the Board approved and offered customers a fare reduction in the All Day bus media, effective October 4, 2020. The Board also rescinded future fare increases previously scheduled for 2021 and 2022. This is unprecedented in the transit industry given the Pandemic.

We have moved forward with planning for future rail car replacement. In the 3rd quarter, we received a \$15 million BUILD grant from the Department of Transportation. To date, RTA has committed over \$44 million from our own Rolling Stock Reserve Fund to use for matching state and federal grants. We have solidified our commitment to rail car funding. We are on track with the consultant, LTK, which is now with Hatch and moving forward with an estimated RFP rollout at the end of December, early January 2021. A few highlighted programs under Community Planning & Programming include the Homework Hotspots program. This is free Wi-Fi at specific RTA transit centers with more to come as well as on buses and train service. The Baby on Board program distributes passes to women enrolled in the program, enabling them to attend prenatal, well baby and post-partum medical appointments. This program was funded by the Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2) via ODOT.

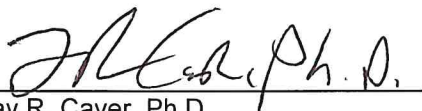
The Community Training and Development Job Hub Program with Tri-C includes the temporary CDL training and Maintenance and Mechanical Training and other workforce development programs. George Fields is working hard with Tri-C to set the stage for internships and filling positions with these programs. The program has been patterned after LA Metro under the leadership of Phil Washington. As we continue to forge ahead with a commitment to improve operations and service, we have invested in equipment and facilities. On the vehicle side, we continue to retire older fleets and purchase more fuel-efficient vehicles in accordance with the seven-year vehicle replacement plan. Nearing the end of quarter three, total expenditures were \$14.4 million of which \$11.3 million was expended for communication upgrades with an emphasis on technology, with \$3.1 million for smaller IT projects, non-revenue vehicle replacement and equipment tools. On the facilities side, at the end of quarter 3, project commitments at year-end are \$11 million for various State of Good Repair projects.

The end of the report includes the operational statistics, in-house promotions, DBE performance and Affirmative Action goals. As we move into the 4th quarter, we will continue to solidifying the goals and matrixes for 2021. They will come back to the Board to explain on how they will quantify our success and looking at it departmentally and taking ownership for those success metrics for the upcoming years. There are national searches for a few Executive Management positions. They are for the Chief of Police and Security. They will start interviewing for that position within the next week or so. The other positions include Deputy General Manager for Innovation and Technology to spearhead the technology effort on the administrative side and a Deputy General Manager of Operations and External Affairs that will work to enhance community engagement and community building.

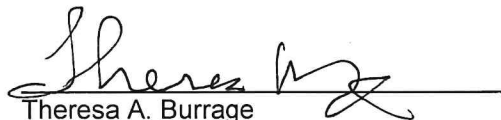
Mr. Bibb said he reviewed the Budget Hearing from last week. He asked if it would be possible to look at a free fare scenario. Passenger fares are roughly 10.3% of RTA's operating revenue. He asked what the cost is to collect that revenue. If RTA did not collect fares in a given year, how would the budget need to be readjusted to absorb the 10.3% loss in potential revenue? Ms. Birdsong said she would review the questions with the Finance Department. They looked at preliminary concepts of free fare earlier this year. We are upward over \$40 million, estimated to be able to get to a point where RTA could operate with free fares. They would have to look at contracts for fare collection equipment and fare associated positions. Mr. Gautam said they would look into these questions. Mr. Bibb said before he approves the budget, he would like to see a scenario of going to a free fare model in 2021 and if the 10.3% passenger fare revenue is worth the squeeze. He wants to look at the entire supply chain of how RTA is collecting the cost. Now is the time to embrace some radical thinking to elevate the service delivery and gain ridership moving forward. Ms. Birdsong said they would come to the Board at the end of quarter 1 or 2 with a recommendation for fare cards and smart cards, as they work on the details with the current vendor. That might have an integral piece in the conversation as far as the capabilities are technology wise.

Rev. Lucas said the report was excellent. He thanked the staff for the report. He asked when free Wi-Fi would be available on Paratransit. Mr. Davison said they would begin installing Wi-Fi on Paratransit beginning November 30.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 a.m.



Floun'say R. Caver, Ph.D.
Interim Secretary/Treasurer



Theresa A. Burrage
Executive Secretary