

Minutes

RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:36 a.m. April 26, 2022

Board Members: Lucas, (Chair), Moss (Vice Chair), Biasiotta, Duarte, Koomar, McCall, Pellot, Weiss

Not present: Joyce

Staff: Benford, Birdsong, Burney, Caver, Coffey, Dangelo, Ferraro, Fleig, Garofoli, Gautam, Gettings, Johnson, Kirkland, Miller, Mothes, Schipper, Talley, Walker-Minor, Young

Public: Barkley, Jenkins, Gibbons, Loh, Marquart, Pinkney-Butts, Williams-King

The meeting was called to order at 9:36 a.m. There were eight (8) board members present.

In accordance with the Ohio Open Meetings Act and House Bill 51, signed into law on February 17, 2022 and effective immediately through June 30, 2022, this meeting will be live-streamed on RTA's Board Page www.RideRTA.com/board via the meeting date for staff and members of the public. House Bill 51 allows Board members to participate by telephone or video and be considered present as if in person. It also allows Board members to vote and be counted for the purpose of determining a quorum while attending by telephone or video.

It was 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

President Lucas stated that the minutes from the March 29, 2022 Annual Meeting and March 29, 2022 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.

Public Comments – Agenda Items

1. Rev. Pamela M. Pinkney-Butts – She gave her condolences to the family of Madeline Cain. The wording of items I, J and K on the code book changes is foreign to the public. She ask that the public be given more understanding of the agenda items. She also mentioned item F.
2. Fred Barkley – He is legally blind so he is not able to review the agenda. A culture change is needed for the operators, mainly on the east side. Today, the #10 operator refused to blow the horn for the #11 operator so that a rider could get his connection.
3. Loh – She is in support of the EZfare and Micro Transit resolutions. She hoped this could have happened earlier to put RTA on the map as a public service. Some riders may not want to go along with the new technology. They prefer to use cash. Good communication is needed to educate the public about these programs.
4. Carlita – She lives in Ward 1 – She tried to attend a community meeting at a church on the east side concerning the 48A and 15/15A. There was not a notice that RTA would be there. Dr. Caver said RTA was invited to attend a Lee-Seville Community Meeting. Staff followed up

with service issues in that area. Ms. Walker-Minor added that a presentation was given to the group. The presentation was shared with all attendees.

5. Rita Montgomery – For a year, we have discussed the 48A and 15/15A changes and reaching the interior of the area and connecting them to areas of the city. They are not receiving responses about this. She has attended Ward Meetings and CAC Meetings. She ask that the public comment call-in number be listed on the website and the meetings be live streamed.
6. Name Not identified - Caller asked why the #32 on Cedar and #12 was removed. Higher fares is not an option. Times are hard. Fares should be decreased to increase ridership. Operators need to help riders make connections. Some operators are disrespectful and some are not.
7. Airric Stewart – He suggested staff contact a company in Greenville, SC that builds electric buses. The presentation at the Lee Seville Meeting was not true to the facts. He believes he was misrepresented. The #50 that replaced the #48A runs the same route from E. 177th in South Miles to E. 131st in Miles, so there was no need to change the route. The public wanted weekend service on the 48A. Now if someone wants to get on the #15, they have to walk from E. 131 Miles, wait 15 minutes for the 48A or stay on the #50 and not get to a transfer point until E. 116th Corlett. If the #48 was still in place, there would be more options to transfer to the #15 before the #50 gets to a transfer point for the #15. It takes 8 minutes to get to E.131st Kinsman from E. 131st Miles. Service was not increased. Shaker Square is a better transfer to the Blue and Green lines.
8. Chris Martin – He asked why RTA Transit Police does not have a MOU with the City of Cleveland. In 2018, the agreement was in negotiations. Now that Cleveland amended its fare evasion ordinance, he asked if RTA would fight non-payment of fares under the City ordinance and not the State statues. He asked about the status of the Civilian Complaint Review Board. He asked if the Transit Ambassadors would enforce fare enforcement. This will speed up bus trips. Why are the TAs apart of the police department instead of being civilians.
9. Chris Stocking – (WebForm comment) – Please ensure there are EZFare readers at every door on all vehicles to avoid bottle necks and lines to scan transit fare. If that cannot be done immediately, make it a priority to do this to speed up board and trip times for thousands of riders. Expand transfers to a 4-hour pass on all fare media like Detroit has done. As Jarrett Walker, transit consultant hired to do RTA's system redesign wrote in 2014 "charging for connections is insane"

Read his thoughts here:

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fhumantransit.org%2F2014%2F08%2Fcharging-for-connections-is-insane.html&data=05%7C01%7Cboardcomment%40gcrrta.org%7C05d5386e6df44fbb39cd08da271bab6c%7Cebe8e20736ec47f48cb8f5f757605f5d%7C1%7C0%7C637865297053581157%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjE1aWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sddata=%2FKS1DGYhfV3eDa%2FVirxMREDVyEOH4he21p46obpF%2Fi4%3D&reserved=0>

President Lucas said the Transit Ambassador (TA) positions have been posted and the Civilian Review Board is in the works. Ms. Birdsong mentioned that programs are in progress. The review board is in draft form. Someone will contact the caller who wanted more information on how to connect to the meetings. The Board will discuss public comments and Board Meeting times during

their retreat. She will follow up on the comment regarding electric buses. The MOU with the City of Cleveland requires some additional discussions. The staff continues to work with the City on special events and other issues. Chief Jones stated that the Transit Ambassador program is moving along as scheduled. They have a number of applications in. They are looking to hire eight Transit Ambassadors and two social workers that will join the Transit Police staff. The Civilian Review Board's Operations Manual is in draft form and being reviewed by Legal.

Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

There were no reports from the CAC.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

Ms. Pellot said the Ad Hoc Technology Committee met last week. Mr. Lively did a presentation on the Digital Divide, current projects, short term/long term places for improving technology and EZfare. She will update the Board on the next meeting.

Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

New Hires:

1. Sierra Baker – Operator
2. Katherine Brown – Operator
3. Steve Canaly – Maintainer
4. Kevin Daniely – Laborer
5. Chermmyra Darby – Operator
6. Kraig Davis – Operator
7. Marquette Lewis – Operator
8. Luis Mendez – Operator
9. April Mitchel-Odom – Operator
10. Therrish Smith – Operator
11. Lashonya Toney – Janitor
12. Eddie Withers – Operator

Promotions:

1. Nadine DeJesus – Benefits Manager
2. Denise Hill – Electronic Equipment Technician
3. Danielle Lowrie – Material Handler Leader
4. Merissa Mercado – District HR Generalist
5. Thomas Richardson, Jr. – Material Handler Leader

Introduction of Resolutions:

- A. 2022-29 – Expressing the great sorrow of the Board of Trustees and the entire Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority at the passing of former Board of Trustees member, Madeline A. Cain, and extending condolences to her family, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McCall, seconded by Ms. Moss and approved by unanimous vote.

President Lucas asked for a moment of silence.

- B. 2022-30 – Expressing congratulations to the employees of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority who retired during the first quarter of 2022, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McCall, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote. There were 15 retirees.
- C. 2022-31 – Authorizing Contract No. 2021-053A with the Village of Mayfield and the City of Highland Heights to provide Micro Transit Program Services, for a period up to eighteen months, in an amount not to exceed \$119,197.50 (RTA Development Fund, Programming & Planning Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote.
- D. 2022-32 - Authorizing Contract No. 2021-053B with Ave Automedia, Inc., DBA Share Mobility, to provide Micro Transit Program Services, for a period up to eighteen months, in an amount not to exceed \$300,000.00 (RTA Development Fund, Programming & Planning Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McCall, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- E. 2022-33 – Authorizing Contract No. 2021-089 with Geismar North America, Inc., for the purchase of a locomotive work car in an amount not to exceed \$3,291,204.80 (RTA Development Fund, Fleet Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McCall, seconded by Ms. Moss and approved by unanimous vote.
- F. 2022-34 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-001 with the John F. Gallagher Plumbing Company for Project 19.27 – Hayden Garage HVAC Replacement, as specified and as required, in an amount not to exceed \$402,480.00 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pellot, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote.
- G. 2022-35 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-018 with Masabi LLC to provide the EZfare Mobile Ticketing Solution for an amount not to exceed \$2,700,000.00 (RTA Development Fund, Intelligent Transportation Systems Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pellot, seconded by Ms. McCall and approved by unanimous vote.
- H. 2022-36 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-031 with Kronos Incorporated to provide Kronos Annual Subscription and Support Renewal for a period of one year in an amount not to exceed \$135,800.91 (General Fund, Innovation and Technology Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pellot, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote.
- I. 2022-37 – Repealing Chapter 636 of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Ms. McCall and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Benford added that this chapter is being repealed since it is included in another chapter. This is a part of the update of the Code Book. Ms. Moss added that this chapter is related to sexual harassment. Ms. Birdsong added that RTA is governed by a lot of rules and regulations. A few items are presented each month. The plan is to get through all the updates in a year or so.

- J. 2022-38 – Amending Section 620.01 of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McCall, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote. Ms. Moss added that this is related to the Affirmative Action Plan.
- K. 2022-39 – Amending Sections 642.01, 642.02, 642.03 and 642.04 of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Birdsong said she would have Legal add the descriptions to the title so the public will know what was discussed in committees.

- L. 2022-40 – Authorizing the execution of a Project Grant Agreement with the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) for the FY2020 BUILD Grant award for the Rail Car Replacement Program – Phase I (RTA Development Fund – Engineering & Project Development department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- M. 2022-41 - Amending employment agreement of India L. Birdsong as General Manager and Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority and authorizing the execution of the third amendment to that agreement, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Mayor Weiss and approved by unanimous vote.

Mayor Weiss explained that this resolution and the next one address personnel and compensation for the General Manager/CEO and the Director of Internal Audit. These two positions report directly to the Board. This is the second year the Ad Hoc Compensation Committee has met to discuss the performance of each person. They look at market data and work closely with Human Resources to make a recommendation to the Board. This is the next step in the process. In keeping with staying on track with the performance reviews of the rest of the Authority, they present these to the Board. President Lucas added that Mayor Weiss has been a competent chairperson whose work is appreciated.

- N. 2022-42 - Authorizing a salary adjustment for Anthony A. Garofoli, Executive Director of Internal Audit, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer, gave the report. The U.S. unemployment rate for March 2022 was 3.6%. Ohio unemployment fell from 4.2% in February 2022 to 4.1% in March 2022. The Cuyahoga County unemployment rose from 4.1% in December 2021 to 6.1% in January 2022 and then to 6.6% in February 2022. March 2022 ridership was up 25% above March 2021 levels. YTD for 2022, ridership is 16.2% above 2021 levels. Passenger fares for March was \$2.3 million which is 19.1% higher than 2021, indicating a slow recovery. The fares reflects St. Patrick's Day ridership, one of RTA's largest ridership days. The fare revenue of \$2.15 million is 15.1% higher than the budget amount. YTD passenger fares are 41% higher than the same period in 2021.

Sales tax is the largest unrestricted source of operating revenue for RTA. April 2022 sales tax, which is based on January 2022 economic activity, is 10.1% higher compared to April 2021 and 7.9% higher than budget. Eighteen of the 23 categories that make up the sales tax base were positive. Motor vehicles and water craft was 15.6% higher. On-line sales was 33.4% higher. Regular/State wide sales was 11.3% higher.

Ms. McCall asked if the increase of 106.5% in passenger fares for February was accurate. Mr. Gautam said it is a timing issue. It could be attributed to the NBA All Star game. She asked why unemployment in Cuyahoga County is higher than the State and U.S. Mr. Gautam said that even though the Ohio job market is getting stronger, many Ohioans are still not in the job market. Participation rate is 61%. She asked how Cuyahoga County compares to other job hub centers in Columbus, Akron and Canton. He said he would provide at the next meeting. Ms. McCall mentioned George Zeller who was an economist who attended RTA Board Meetings and provided detailed jobs information. President Lucas recalled a report stating the number of jobs that have not come back to the area and the number of people who have decided to stay home. As downtown opens up more, there should be an increase in ridership. The numbers are comparable to other cities we were examining. Mayor Weiss added that this is a good reason to move forward with the micro transit program.

General Manager/CEO Report

India Birdsong, General Manager/CEO, presented the report. RTA has suspended its mask mandate at all facilities. Mask wearing is optional. The mask mandate was voided through a federal court decision on April 18. This is a suspension, not an elimination, where by individuals will acquiesce through the federal mandate. The Department of Justice is appealing the decision. Code Book Section 840.09 authorizes the CEO to offer fare incentives to promote ridership. The CEO shall report the results to the Board at least on an annual basis. For 2021, two programs had reduced passes in the amount of \$732.50. For 2020, there was one event that received discounted tickets totaling \$3,750. Mr. Gautam said the programs are from non-profits that work in the community. One was for the Homeless Stand-down, which RTA has supported in the past and will continue to support.

Traction is an internal data meeting/program. There was a call to action to quantify and codify what we do day to day and to ensure we are enacting the Strategic Plan. They meet monthly. They will report out to the Board quarterly. First quarter data is in. Staff will debrief this month through April. An update will be given to the Board in May. Customer experience surveys and deliverable metrics will be presented. These are the scorecards which uses the net promotor score. If we are meeting our deliverables, but cannot meet the need of the community, then we have more work to do. The EZfare mobile ticketing kickoff event is June 22, 11-2 pm at Public Square. Representatives from Masabi, NEOride and others will be in attendance. Coordination will be with other transit agencies.

We have one promotion and one new hire reporting to Natoya Walker-Minor in the Administrations and External Affairs department. Robert Fleig was promoted to Public Information Officer from the ICC department in Operations. He previously was the Command Specialist. He has 30 years of experience in public relations, marketing and communications. He formally worked at Swagelok and Rockwell Automation and as a Navy Specialist as an Intelligent Specialist. Sharon Jenkins is the new Director of Marketing & Communications. She comes from Lake Metroparks where she served as the Marketing Director for several years. She has over 20 years' experience in marketing; communications; facility and operations management and programming and event management. Both positions are effective May 2, 2022. Staff held a Meet & Greet with Mayor Bibb's cabinet April 12, 2022 at the RTA Main Office. They discussed operations, planning and future work. An Inclement Weather Table Top exercise was held April 14, 2022 at RTA. It was facilitated by TSA. A

table top is where you have a strategy session, planning and mock situations to prepare in an event of an emergency or special event. City of Cleveland Public Works Department and Streets Division attended.

Ms. Birdsong attended the APTA CEO Seminar in Denver, CO, April 9-11. They discussed transit, buses, software, data, technology, fare collection, ridership and how it affects the CEO, executive staff and how that trickles down to the customer. The wellness of the CEO was discussed. This was on the heels of losing Jeff Parker, former CEO at MARTA, who took his life last year. We are working with Ohio Means Jobs to recruit transit ambassadors and crisis intervention specialist. We have received 33 ambassador applicants and 10 social worker applicants. Ms. McCall ask that PIOs from the City, and RTA be invited to the next Table Top. She ask that Bob be introduced to the PIOs at the City and County. Ms. Birdsong said they are planning to follow up with her suggestion.

President's Report

Rev. Lucas appreciates the hard work of the Board. He has been pushing several projects like new buses, Transit Ambassador Program and Civilian Review Board. We have not laid off any operators. He thanked the staff for their hard work. He receives good responses from the staff.

Public Comments

1. Rev. Pam Pinkney Butts – The Superior station has been down for two years. The operators have not received their retro pay. She asked why there are no people of color working in Media at RTA. She thanked staff for breaking down general barriers in that area. We have a serious problem with homelessness. Tower City employees are concerned about the homeless. People at City Council have been expressing their concerns about fare enforcement. She has expressed these concerns over the years. People are not always homeless because of mental illness or anything they have done. RTA used to give out passes. Mr. Dixon was targeted because he was doing an investigation of discrimination within RTA. The loss of Mr. Dixon and Mr. Calabrese was a big loss to her.
2. Fred Barkley – He does not like the two minute public comment limit. A #9 bus operator did not let him get on the bus without a mask. It was very cold and late at night. He works in Marketing. Operators have left him in the cold before. There needs to be a change in culture of black operators on the east side.
3. Loh – The culture issue at RTA and communication issue is connected and important. This is hurtful. RTA's image was ruined because of cuts. Stations do not have elevators or restrooms. People say RTA believes homeless people are ruining the facilities. There is some truth to this. Parts and labor to maintain these facilities is costly. We have to work on our public image through communication and continuous education. RTA should recognize that getting funding is important, but getting funding for health and human services is also important. RTA should push for funding from the State also.
4. Rita Montgomery – She repeated her concerns from earlier about the call in being posted on the website and viewing the meetings online. She supports Mr. Stewart's proposal for the #15A.
5. Airric Stewart – He left a message for Jeff Macko and Eric Johnson. The #15A, if it starts at Pinecrest, in a 16-hour period where 64 buses of #15 is running, where it should be ran every 20 minutes instead of every 15 minutes. If it runs every hour, and start it at Pinecrest for the first two miles it is in Warrensville Heights going down Harvard, we could incorporate it and still

have buses every 15 minutes for the first four miles of the route. It will make stops at public libraries and retail. The route would touch the rapid on the east side and go to CSU.

6. Carlita – She lives in Ward 1. She agrees with the recommendation of Mr. Stewart. The 15A would also connect to the Social Security office on Shaker Square and libraries. The 48A is also an interior route. Seniors need that service. They now have to walk to Kinsman or to 131st. That is a long walk.
7. Chris Martin – There is no sense of urgency at RTA. Management says that the Civilian Review Board is moving forward, but it has been a year since this was promised. PIO Officer Board Fleig told FreshWater Cleveland on Jan 27, 2022 that Transit Ambassadors would be performing proof of payment fare enforcement. He wonders if that is true. He asked why RTA only has MOUs with CSU and East Cleveland and not with Cleveland. Will Transit Police commit to only siting riders for non-payment of fares under the Cleveland ordinance and not under ORD 2917.41

Ms. Birdsong said RTA employees have to reflect the people we serve. Diversity is not just skin color, but diversity of thought and gender. Staff is committed to DEI and inclusiveness. RTA is concerned about the homeless and has started those conversations with the County and City. Mr. Ferraro stated the changes in the ATU contract language should be signed off tomorrow. The rate increases will be effective May 1. Retro payments will be made by July 8.

Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, May 24, 2022** in the Board Room of the Authority, Root-McBride Building, 1240 West Sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44113. This meeting will be live-streamed on RTA's Board page (www.RideRTA.com/board) by selecting the meeting date. The public is welcome to attend in person.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 a.m.



President

Attest: 

Secretary-Treasurer