

Minutes

RTA Operational Planning & Infrastructure Committee

9:03 a.m. April 26, 2022

**Committee Members:** Duarte (Chair), Moss (Vice Chair), Pellot

**Other Board members:** Biasiotta, Koomar, Lucas, McCall, 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 9:03 a.m. There were three (3) committee 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](http://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 determining a quorum while attending by telephone or video.

Capital Improvement Program – FY 2023-2027

Mike Schipper, Deputy General Manager of Engineering and Project Management and Carolyn Young, Manager of Budget, made the presentation. The Capital Improvement Program planning started in September 2021, giving departments the opportunity to submit their Capital request for the next 5 years. In February, the Capital Program Working Group (CPWG) reviewed the submitted projects and prioritized the projects based on six criteria. In March and April, the Capital Oversight Committee finalized the projects based on the recommendations from the CPWG, funding availability and Strategic Plan of the Authority. There will be a formal Public Hearing for public comments May 10, 2022. They will ask the committee to move it to the Board for full adoption May 24, 2022.

These are the six criteria used by the Capital Working Group:

- Capital Project Ranking Criteria
  - State of Good Repair      25%
  - Health and Safety      20%
  - Government Mandates      20%
  - Ridership/Transit Oriented Development      15%
  - Operating Budget Impact      15%
  - Environmental Impact      5%

The proposed 2023 Capital Budget totals \$130.2 million. Projects are typically budgeted in eight major categories. They highlighted Rail Car Program separately to identify the funding that is associated with that project. The budget has been identified as follows:

- Bus Garages      \$3.5 M
- Bus Improvement Program      \$37.1 M  
(ongoing bus purchases)
- Equipment and Vehicles      \$9.1 M  
(non-revenue vehicles and IT upgrades)

- Facility Improvements \$21.6 M
- Other Projects \$2.6 M
- Preventive Maintenance (Operating Reimbursement) \$2.1 M
- Rail Car Replacement (Phase 1 Heavy Rail) \$35 M
- Rail Projects (track rehab, station upgrades and signals) \$23.4 M
- Transit Centers (ADA enhancements) \$300K

The five-year CIP totals \$660.5 million of which 44% of the allocation is in rail car programs and rail projects. On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the bipartisan Infrastructure Bill enacting the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). This bill authorized up to \$108 billion for public transportation, increasing the overall formula funds apportionment over the next five years. They are expecting the formula grants to increase 30% overall. Estimated roughly \$13 million. The Capital Plan was developed using revenue neutral assumptions. The Authority's capacity to support ongoing CIP depends on availability of governmental grants, local match funds and the ability to issue bonds. In prior years, we have received funding from the State of Ohio, Urban Transit Program and Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTPP). Our current policy requires us to transfer a minimum of 10% of our sales tax receipt funds to the Capital Program. Over the next five years, they expect 49.9% from the federal government, 10.3% from the State, 18.5% from the General Fund and 21.3% of unfunded projects, which have the opportunity for competitive grants.

Mike Schipper discussed the details that support the proposed budget and IIJA and indicated that they are incorporating the IIJA funding into the five-year plan. We have worked hard on the State and Federal advocacy side. Two senators worked on passing this. Senator Brown being head of the Banking Committee, which controls the funding for transit. In addition, Senator Portman led the bipartisan effort to get the bill passed. Because of their involvement, we were able to get some things into the IIJA that are advantageous to RTA. There is a formula component and competitive grant component.

Within the IIJA, there are 13 new competitive grant programs in the transportation cluster; both highway and transit. Three of the programs could bring in additional money in the new program; one for rail cars; one for stations and one for local bridges that we cannot fund under the normal formula funds. The IIJA increased significantly the amount of funding in some programs we apply for annually. The emissions grants and the Capital Investment grants (Small Starts/New Starts) have significant increases. They are structuring the Capital Plan in a way to use formula funds to fund planning & design in the first few years and then have the construction funds and implementation funds as competitive grant opportunities. They are still fine-tuning the plan.

Proposed Use of IIJA Funds:

- \$81 million in additional project funding
  - Light Rail Track Reconstruction \$ 14M
  - Bus Vehicles \$ 10M
  - Technology – IT, ERP, and Fare Systems \$ 26M  
(Electronic record management,  
Fare Equity Study items)
  - Bus/Rail Maintenance Facilities \$ 14M
  - Bridges – Viaduct, WFL, CR Access \$ 8M
  - Stations – West 25<sup>th</sup> (TOD investment) \$ 9M

The IIJA does not solve all of our capital needs. Three years ago, the unfunded projects totaled \$445 million. Through fiscal management, working with competitive grants, the IIJA and stimulus funds, they have brought these numbers down. They are still looking for grants to fill some of the funding gaps.



Unfunded CIP Needs:

- \$299 million in unfunded projects
  - Rail Vehicles \$111M
  - Rail Facility & Infrastructure \$ 25M
  - Track Rehabilitation \$ 26M
  - Bus Vehicles/MetroHealth BRT \$ 57M
  - Technical Support – Hardware/Software \$ 16M
  - Bus/Rail Maintenance Facilities & Yards \$ 55M
  - Bridges, Stations, Equipment, Other \$ 9M

Three or four years ago, our annual FTA funded program was \$75 million for the entire year. Last year, we received \$9.5 million of the ODOT funds. The hope is to get to the \$13 million level.

Securing Additional Funding:

- FTA formula grants provide a base funding level of approximately \$71 million per year.
- SFY2023-2024 ODOT Office of Transit administers \$70 million of Ohio General Revenue and Flex Funding.
- Competitive grants at federal, state, and local level provide majority of funding beyond the base of \$71 million, including three new IIJA grants.

Last year, they brought in over \$25 million in competitive grants for the bus program. They were able to change the State law to make our rail replacement program an eligible project in the ODOT OTP2 grants. They will go back this year to get more funding.

Competitive Grant Awards in 2021:

- Bus Improvement Program
  - \$ 2.0 million OEPA VW
  - \$ 3.7 million ODOT UTP
  - \$19.5 million NOACA CMAQ (every other year award)
  - \$ 0.9 million NOACA Section 5310 (Paratransit vehicles)
- Rail Car Replacement Program
  - \$8.9 million ODOT OTP2
  - \$5.0 million Congressionally Directed Project
- Light Rail Track Replacement Program
  - \$4.3 million ODOT OTP2
- Pilot Programs
  - \$0.4 million ODOT OTP2 (Micro Transit)
  - \$0.1 million ODOT OTP2 (Baby on Board)

Because of the IIJA, they have a number of grant opportunities they are pursuing. They have integrated some things into the 5-year plan so these projects will be in the Transportation Improvement Program, State Transportation Improvement Program, and will have project identification numbers with ODOT. This shows project readiness, making our grants more competitive.

Upcoming Grant Submissions:

- Bus Improvement Program
  - \$3.7 million ODOT UTP
  - \$2.0 million OEPA VW/DERG
  - \$0.9 million NOACA Section 5310
  - \$10.0 – 15.0 million FTA Lo-No/Bus & Bus Facilities (has 4x more funding) can bring in electric vehicles.

- Rail Car Replacement Program
  - \$20.0 million USDOT RAISE (grant turned in)
  - \$ 5.0 million Community Project Funding (grant turned in)
  - \$15.5 million ODOT OTP2 (letter submitted)
  - \$90.0 - \$100.0 million FTA Rail Vehicle Replacement Program – First attempt at this program in July. It is a five-year program.
- Light Rail Track Reconstruction
  - \$30.0 million ODOT TRAC
- East 79<sup>th</sup> Light Rail Station ADA Reconstruction
  - \$8.0 million FTA All Station Accessibility Program – For non-key stations
- West 25<sup>th</sup>/MetroHealth BRT
  - \$20.0 million FTA Small Starts
  - \$12.0 million ODOT TRAC – funded the HealthLine
- Central Rail West Access Road Bridge
  - \$10.0 million USDOT Local Bridge Program – new program in July
- Pilot Programs
  - \$0.4 million ODOT OTP2 (Micro Transit)
  - \$1.0 million ODOT OTP2 (Fare Equity Technology)

Joe Shaffer, Director of Engineering and Project Development, will present for Engineering & Project Management in Mr. Schipper's place at the May 10, 2022 meeting.

Next Steps:

- May 10, 2022 – Presentation & Public Hearing - (Final FY 2023 – FY 2027 Capital Improvement Plan)
- May 24, 2022 – Board of Trustees Approval - (FY 2023 Capital Budget)

Ms. McCall commended RTA for their work. She used to chair the committee. We have come a long way by cutting the unfunded projects down. The fact that rail is on the TRAC list is huge. She asked that Ms. Birdsong send a letter along with the President thanking our congressional delegation for their hard work on the IIJA. She ask that the letter list what they have funded and include the unfunded needs. She ask that RTA look at expanding rail in the future. Ms. Birdsong added that she is happy that the projects are getting funding. Mayor Weiss thanked the staff for their work. He asked about the criteria used for the allocation. Ms. Young said the six criteria is a strict guideline used each year during the Capital Planning session. The Capital Working Group reviews the staff request, align the funding with the Strategic Plan and ranks them using the criteria.

President Lucas thanked the staff for their hard work. He asked how many new buses would be on the road this year. Mr. Schipper said there are 20 buses ready to go into service. Sixteen HealthLine vehicles and 20 CNG vehicles are on the property. Some paratransit vehicles are coming. Their goal is to bring in 35 vehicles a year. This year they will exceed that. Going forward, the \$10 million is equivalent to another 20 vehicles. President Lucas said we should be proud of that. He asked how many buses are electric. Currently none of the vehicles is electric. They are expensive. They will use the competitive program to bring in electric vehicles. The formula program is used for the bus replacement program. Mr. Schipper said we are behind other agencies with electric vehicles, but the technology is getting more robust and more reliable. Now there is an electric vehicle program for competitive grants. They will turn in an application in May to fund 10 electric buses and the charging stations. That program has funding for the next five years. Once they pilot the vehicles, they will know how aggressive to be in the future.

Ms. Pellot asked about operator training on the new vehicles. Mr. Schipper said yes, there is training for the operators, maintenance staff and maintenance planners. The vehicles have a lot of

technology. Ms. Pellot thanked the staff for their work on funding the IT projects. Ms. Moss thanked the team for their work in getting projects shovel ready.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

  
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Rajan D. Gautam  
Secretary/Treasurer

  
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Theresa A. Burrage  
Executive Assistant