

Minutes

RTA Committee of the Whole Meeting

9:22 a.m., Tuesday, June 6, 2023

Committee Members: Lucas (Chair), Moss (Vice Chair), Joyce, Koomar, Mersmann, Sleasman, Weiss, Welch

Not Present: Biasiotta

Staff: Birdsong Terry, Burney, Catalusci, Caver, Dangelo, Davidson, Dimmick, Draper, Feke, Fesler, Fields, Fleig, Freilich, Garofoli, Gautam, Jenkins, Jones, Kirkland, Miller, Mothes, Prebish, Rusnov, Schipper, Shaffer, Talley, Tarka, Walker-Minor, Woodford

Public: Gibbons, Loh, Wright

The meeting was called to order at 9:22 p.m. There were eight (8) committee members present.

Advertising Policy

Natoya Walker Minor, Deputy General Manager, Administration and External Affairs, Sharon Jenkins, Director of Marketing and Dawn Tarka, Associate Counsel gave the presentation.

Proposed Advertising Policy

- Current advertising guidelines provide general parameters for advertising content.
 - Last updated 7/13/2021 as an Administrative Procedure.
- Proposing a policy to be adopted by the Board.
 - Policy expressly states what advertising will be permitted and prohibited.
- Advertising Policy will enable RTA to consistently manage advertising to reflect RTA's Mission and public image.

Research of Transit Agencies

All but one of these agencies have a Board advertising policy

- Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA/Cincinnati)
- Laketrans (Lake County)
- Metro (Akron/Summit County)
- Metro Bus (St. Cloud, Minnesota)
- Go Raleigh (North Carolina)
- Harbor Transit (Grand Haven, Michigan)
- Rio Metro Transit District (New Mexico)
- Transpo (South Bend, Indiana)
- Citilink (Fort Wayne, Indiana)
- Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Southern Nevada (Las Vegas)

Shelters and Transit Advertising Sales

- RTA's Shelter and Transit Advertising Sales Contract expires December 31, 2023.
- Contractor sells, produces, installs and removes advertising on GCRTA shelters (in Cleveland) and vehicles (coaches and rail cars).
- Policy will be included in the Request for Proposal package that is scheduled to go out promptly in order to make a recommendation of award to the Board this October.

Advertising Policy

- To be placed in the Code Book alongside another First Amendment provision, "Public Assembly on Authority Property."
- Adopting a policy will assist in defending a legal challenge.

Staff requests that the Committee of the Whole recommend this provision to the Board of Trustees for approval.

Ms. Moss asked for the provisions to be highlighted. Ms. Tarka said the policy will identify what types of advertising are permitted and prohibited. The permitted advertising will include commercial, advertising related to the Authorities transit operations, public service announcements and paid political advertising. The prohibited list is spelled out in proposed Chapter 1210.01(e) attachment (i.e.: advertising that discriminates based on race, color, marital status, religion, alcohol, profanity, disability, sexual orientation just to name a few). The prohibitions are intended to support RTA's mission of connecting the community and RTA's brand. Ms. Mersmann asked if this policy addresses audible advertising and how pricing is set up. Ms. Walker Minor said this policy is for visual advertising. Pricing is set up through the vendor as revenue generating. Ms. Mersmann suggested placement and design guidelines be included in the policy. Ms. Walker Minor said they have design guidelines that they discuss regularly with the vendor. Ms. Burney added that the draft Administrative Procedure mentions that RTA does determine the location of ads. The CEO/GM has the authority to adopt the AP with any suggested guidelines. Having a Board approved policy is beneficial to defending the Authority in First Amendment matters.

Ms. Birdsong Terry said the prior standards were loose and left wiggle room for interpretation. Since the mission and vision has been updated, this policy is timely. Marketing can come back to the Board with the Shelter and Transit Advertising Sales contract. The design guidelines can be reviewed to comply with safety standards. Dr. Caver said they do have design guidelines for bus wrap specs. They review the results to ensure customers can see out the bus and Transit Police can see into the bus. Ms. Birdsong Terry said there should be guidelines for social media and the digital media. Mayor Koomar added that audio should be included in the guidelines. Ms. Walker Minor said this policy will serve as the foundation for all advertising.

Ms. Burney said the policy is focused on public facing advertising or advertising that we sell. She is not aware of any audio advertising that we sell. But that can be clarified in the resolution for any future endeavors to include audio/digital ads. Mr. Sleasman asked how the policy would apply to 3rd party vendors such as paratransit subcontractors or Transit App and if paid political advertising was researched with the other transit agencies. Dr. Caver said RTA can't determine how open-source apps sell ads. If RTA was opposed to what an app sold, we'd have to move our account to another app. Ms. Tarka said there is a term in the subcontractors contracts that provides that RTA reserves ad space on the vehicles for its own use. Ms. Dangelo added that paratransit contractors must adhere to our policies and procedures.

It was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved to move this to the full Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:53 a.m.



Rajan D. Gautam
Secretary/Treasurer



Theresa A. Burrage
Executive Assistant