

Minutes

RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:05 a.m. January 31, 2023

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

Not present: Joyce, Koomar

Staff: Birdsong Terry, Brooks-Williams, Burney, Caver, Coffey, Dangelo, Davidson, Fields, Fleig, Freilich, Garofoli, Gautam, Jenkins, Johnson, Kirkland, Miller, Miranda, Mothes, Schipper, Talley, Walker-Minor

Public: Alan, Alvarez, Barrett, Cartwright, Clark, Dobbins, Gibbons, Loh, Martin, Wondruff

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. There were seven (7) board members present.

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 December 20, 2022 Board Meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed, and asked whether there were any additions and/or corrections. There were no corrections. The roll was called. There were seven (7) ayes and none opposed. The minutes were approved.

Public Comments – Agenda Items

1. Shelita Dobbins – The Paratransit website scheduling system is out of date and not ADA compliant. Issues include color contrast and text, screen readers and the ability to use the website without a mouse. The website was recently down and she had to call to schedule a ride. The website is not viewable from a mobile device. The website failed the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. She asked if changes can be discussed by March and updated by the end of the year. April 4 is Transit Equity Day. There will be a rally at 2 pm on Euclid at Public Square.

President Lucas asked for her to meet with Mr. Davidson after the meeting. Ms. Birdsong Terry said we are in the beta phase of revamping the website.

2. Matthew Cartwright – He is a professor at CSU's law school. He is a member of Clevelanders for Public Transit. He asked everyone to use transit for a week starting Feb. 4 for Transit Equity Day. This day is commemorated yearly on the birthday of Rosa Parks to call attention to the importance of public transit as a civil right. He teaches the concept of the grassroot scholar in his classes. The grassroot scholar's experience helps them assess potential changes at a practical level. This is the theory behind the transit challenge. The #26 bus is not reliable, so he bikes to his appointments.
3. Larry Rodriguez – The Windermere Rapid Station and elevators are not clean.
4. Airric Stewart – Mr. Stewart repeated his recommendation for the 15A. His proposal would reach several public libraries, hospitals and educational institutions. This would increase Mayor Bibb's plan to increase literacy in the city. The 48A should still run through Shaker Square to connect riders to retail.

5. Dontez Taylor – He requested the Circulators be put back in service. They were a great, viable asset to Cleveland.

Committee Reports

In Mayor Koomar's absence, Ms. Moss reminded the Board that Mr. Garofoli requested feedback for the 2023 Audit Plan.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

Ms. McCall is the Board Liaison for the CAC until she comes off the Board in March. A committee report will be made at the February Committee meeting.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

No report.

Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

New Hires:

1. Latrell Moats – Janitor
2. De'Shawndrae Williams – Janitor
3. Vanessa Hollaman – Janitor
4. Barbara Wilson – Paratransit Operator
5. Daniel Foster – Student Driver Trainee
6. Bobbie Corleone – Student Driver Trainee
7. Ava Cook – Student Driver Trainee
8. Curtis Brown – Student Driver Trainee
9. Shawn Foster – Student Driver Trainee
10. Stanley Oliver – Student Driver Trainee
11. Leon Wells – Student Driver Trainee
12. John Whitaker – Student Driver Trainee
13. Sanford Vaughn – Laborer Non-Safety Sensitive
14. Taequan Poage – Laborer Non-Safety Sensitive
15. Anita Kochevar – Telephone Operator/Information Clerk
16. Brady Burns – Laborer Safety Sensitive

Promotions:

1. Paul I. Mague – Facilities Maintenance Crew Leader
2. Arnold Shorter, Jr. – Assistant Supervisor Equipment
3. Victoria Jedlicka – Transit Ambassador
4. Brian Pitts – Supervisor – Revenue Collection
5. David Rutledge – Senior ITS Specialist
6. Ryan Peecook – Crew Chief

Introduction of Resolutions:

- A. 2023-1 – Expressing congratulations to the employees of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority who retired during the fourth quarter of 2022, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McCall, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.

President Lucas congratulated the retirees. He extended his special congratulations to Ms. Benford who served as General Counsel and Deputy General Manager of Legal for several years.

- B. 2023-2 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-122 with Clark Transportation Consulting & Services, LLC dba Bison Rail Systems for Project 12D – Trunk Line Signal System in an amount not to exceed \$4,464,789.20 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved Ms. McCall, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- C. 2023-3 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-121 with Northeast Ohio Trenching Service, Inc. for Project 12D(a) – Bungalow Foundations for the Trunk Line Resignaling in an amount not to exceed \$347,000.00 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Welch, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- D. 2023-4 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-114 with ETC Institute to provide survey services in an amount not to exceed \$259,145.00 for a period of one year, and in amounts not to exceed \$259,145.00 for each of two option years, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$777,435.00 (General Fund, Administration and External Affairs Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pellot, seconded by Mayor Biasiotta and approved by unanimous vote.
- E. 2023-5 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-144 with Oracle America, Inc. to provide Oracle software licenses, maintenance, and support services for a period of one year in an amount not to exceed \$611,960.83 (General Fund, Innovation & Technology Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pellot, seconded by Mayor Biasiotta and approved by unanimous vote.
- F. 2023-6 – Removing Section 644.09 Prior Service Credit from the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, as duplicative of Personnel Policy 400.09 Prior Service Credit, and amending Personnel Policy 400.09, the adoption of which was moved Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mayor Biasiotta and approved by unanimous vote.
- G. 2023-7 – Approving the 2023 Title VI Program Update for submittal to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Welch, seconded by Ms. McCall and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Birdsong Terry added that representatives from Clark Transportation were present and can answer questions.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer, gave the report. The annual inflation rate in the U.S. had increased from 2.5% in Jan. 2020 to 9.1% in June 2022. Since June 2022, the inflation rate has been falling. At the end of December, the rate is down to 6.5%. It is expected to continue to fall in 2023 especially with the Federal Reserve raising interest rates in December to their highest levels in 15 years to 4.38%, in their fight against inflation.

December unemployment rate information for Cuyahoga County, Ohio, U.S. and the Ohio MSA data was not available. Updates will be provided over the next few weeks. December ridership was 15.7% higher than December 2021. YTD ridership is 18% above 2021 and 10.9% above 2020 levels. Pre-COVID 2019 ridership was 32.1 million and 2022 was 18.8% higher, which is significantly higher compared to 2020 and 2021.

December passenger fares was 39.6% above December 2021 levels as a result of timing differences in receiving cash from U-Pass agreements. We received approximately \$553,000 in U-Pass payments in December. YTD fare revenue is 33.5% above 2021 levels. In 2019, passenger fares were \$42.8 million.

It went down to \$21.5 million in 2021 and has recovered to finish 2022 at \$28.8 million. Throughout the Pandemic, sales tax has remained strong. December 2022 receipts which is based on September 2022 economic activity was 9.23% higher compared to December 2021 and 10.5% higher than budget. YTD receipts was 6.52% higher than 2021. Eleven of the 23 categories were positive in December when comparing December 2022 to December 2021. Motor vehicles and watercraft were 43.9% higher. Online sales were 31.7% higher. Regular and statewide sales were 9.3% higher. January 2023 sales tax receipts were 3.2% higher than Jan. 2022, 14.1% higher than budget and 14 of the 23 categories were positive. Motor vehicles and watercraft were 25.3% lower. Online sales were 25.9% higher. Regular and statewide sales were 6.2% higher.

General Manager/CEO Report

India L. Birdsong Terry, General Manager, CEO gave the report. The Board of Trustees attended a working session Jan. 20 in the Board Room. They discussed several topics such as Crisis Communication Training, Ethics, Procurement, P-Card, Board Governance, Travel and several project updates like Civilian Oversight Committee, microtransit, strategic plan and Transit Oriented Development. A ribbon cutting is planned for the launch of the Solon microtransit program. Project Management Training was held for three days with over 46 employees. The program was designed from FTA guidelines.

RTA was awarded \$1.9M to replace up to six (6) diesel-powered transit buses with CNG buses through the Diesel Emission Reduction Grant (DERG). Staff submitted a request to FTA for Rail Vehicle Replacement Program grant for \$130 million. FTA to award up to six grants totaling \$600M. Grant awards to be announced in April 2023. RTA received the Government Finance Officer's Association (GFOA) 2022 Award for Excellence. They were acknowledged for Creative Solutions to Common Challenges and Exceptionally Well Implemented GFOA Best Practices. In 2022, two temporary promotional programs were given discounts totaling \$7,440 which was a 50% discount. The two non-profits were the Homeless Standdown and Summer on the Cuyahoga. These are partner agencies we've supported over the years.

Mr. Fields, served as a panel participant to review TCRP F-29 Project: Mental Health, Wellness, and Resilience for Transit System Workers Jan. 11 in Washington, DC. Ms. Birdsong Terry served on a CEO Roundtable Panel Discussion and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) panel at the APTA Business Members Annual Meeting Jan. 24-27 in Honolulu, Hawaii. Ms. Birdsong Terry, Chief Jones and Ms. McCall participated in a APTA Transit Board Members Safety and Security virtual presentation Jan. 30. Topics included the new Police Chief, Civilian Oversight Committee, Progressive Policing, Crisis Intervention Specialist, Transit Ambassadors and community engagement. Ms. McCall added that bringing transit board members, CEO's and business members together is something she championed as Chair of APTA. She is happy that this practice is continuing. The relationships and connections we are making by having our staff attend these events keeps us at the table nationally.

Ms. Moss asked for more information about the Cleveland.com article about RTA working with NOACA to connect a train from the national park to downtown Cleveland. Ms. Birdsong Terry said these discussions are preliminary. RTA has not signed on to any agreements. She will see when NOACA can present once the project is in a more advanced stage. Ms. McCall added that RTA was not always brought to the table early on these projects so now RTA is being included. She suggested there be a partner presentation with NOACA, Ohio Turnpike and ODOT. She suggested we infuse our DEI into the Summer on the Cuyahoga program. Ms. Birdsong Terry said we have partnered with the Ohio Turnpike on training and hiring with Tri-C. Ms. Moss asked that other projects in the discussion stage also be brought to the Board.

Public Comments – public transit related items

1. Chris Martin – Clevelanders for Public Transit (CPT) is challenging RTA to take public transit for a week beginning Feb. 4 at 2 pm and to participate in Public Transit Equity Day Rally and Ride Along. They believe RTA will govern better with this experience. RTA holds authority and political power to prioritize the needs of public transit riding Cleveland residents. Twenty-three percent of Cleveland households and 12% of Cuyahoga County households have no access to a car.

2. Loh – CPT is challenging RTA to support Public Transit Equity Day Rally and Ride Along Feb. 4 at 2 p.m. They invited County Council and the County Executive to the rally. This activity will show the state and federal government about the need for public transit. Bus route #26 is not reliable. Bus route #3 runs 24 hours, but it was a no show.
3. No Name Was Given - She works for the County and has taken the rapid for 26 years. The rapid has been horrendous in the last three years. There is a lot of homeless and mentally ill on the service. The Code of Conduct is not being followed. Police is needed on the service during rush hour.
4. Dontez Taylor – More paratransit operators and dispatchers are needed. The schedule wait time is long and the call back system doesn't work.
5. Airric Stewart – The #48A should be hourly and start at E. 177th in South Miles and still have weekend service. The #50 should maintain itself as hourly but start at Marymount Hospital and connect to UH and Cleveland Clinic. The #48 Marymount could go to hourly.

President Lucas added that he rides Paratransit everyday and is trying to make the service better.

6. Mark Adamcik – (Webform) - As an Introduction, my name is Mark J. Adamcik. I was, for many years, a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee, and held the position of Vice Chairman. I have been a member for many years of the Rail Users' Network, All-Aboard Ohio and the Rail Passengers' Association. I would like to take this opportunity to air my concerns over how RTA organizes public input on projects and working with rail and public transit advocacy groups.

First, I would like to air my grievance over how I was disenfranchised by RTA staff concerning two projects: 25 Connects and the in-process development of the new Standard Rail Vehicle. I found out about the 25 Connects project through the website Urbanohio.com. I contacted Maribeth Feke about this project, and she said that there was one more public meeting, but it was in Spanish. I told her that I do not have sufficient fluency in Spanish to participate in this meeting. Not once did she give me any viable alternatives to allow me to provide input on this project. Instead, the only thing I received was a copy of the report, which wasn't helpful in the least. The missing element in the BRT portion was not addressed, namely providing an off-street bus driveway to provide "front door" boarding and alighting at MetroHealth. This could be an ADA concern. (safety concerning alighting the bus and entering the hospital).

Related to the above, I have heard advertisements extolling the virtues of living and working in Shaker Heights. Not once was there any mention of the existence of the Blue and Green lines and how they serve Shaker Heights. The irony is that the mayor of Shaker Heights is on the Board of Trustees, which implies that RTA's rail service in Shaker Heights is not important.

I have noticed that the Community Advisory Committee has not met since October of 2022. I believe that the chairman, Mr. Opett, has a responsibility to explain this to the Board of Trustees. There is no excuse for this, especially since the CAC is under the jurisdiction of the Board of Trustees. When I was on the CAC, the chairmen, whether it was Bob Wiesenberger or Bruce Wilson, would have not done this. By comparison, CPT and All Aboard Ohio have done a better job representing the public.

Lastly, RTA's management and Board of Trustees would do well to establish a policy concerning bringing on board, as partners, members of groups like All Aboard Ohio and Clevelanders for Public Transit. Failure to do so will certainly erode any public trust and support of RTA.

As to the second project, the Standard Rail Vehicle, I only found out about the specifics of this project from Ken Prendergast's blog, NEOTrans Blogspot. There are features of these cars that

really show how out of touch RTA is concerning rail vehicle design. First of all, a top speed of 55MPH. Previous Red Line cars like the Pullman-Standard Airporters were capable of 70MPH. Let's keep the "Rapid" in "Rapid Transit". 60 MPH (100 Km/H) maximum speed would be good. Also, the seating arrangement shown looked like something out of a G. C. Kuhlman built Cleveland Railway streetcar from 100 years ago. A similar seating arrangement like that of the existing Breda fleet would be much better, with tip-up bench seats at the ends of the body segments for ADA compliance and bicycle storage would be better use of space.

Executive Session Requested

10:20 a.m. - President Lucas asked for a motion to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, compensation of a public employee or official. It was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mayor Biasiotta. There were seven (7) ayes and none opposed.

10:35 a.m. - It was moved by Ms. Pellot, seconded by Ms. Moss to come out of executive session. There were seven (7) ayes and none opposed.


Nominating Committee

Ms. Welch said a letter from the Nominating Committee will be sent out today to request letters of interest for anyone interested in running for President and Vice President for 2023. The letters are due by February 28, 2023.

Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, February 28, 2023**, 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 10:36 a.m.



President

Attest: 
Secretary-Treasurer