

## Minutes

### RTA External & Stakeholder Relations & Advocacy Committee Meeting

9:07 a.m., December 15, 2020

**Committee Members:** McCall (Chair) Lucas (Vice Chair), Bibb, Byrne, Pellet

**Other members:** Clough, Joyce, Moss, Serrano, Weiss

**Not present:** None

**Also Present:** Becker, Benford, Birdsong, Bitto, Burney, Catalusci, Caver, Coffey, Dangelo, Davidson, Fields, Freilich, Garofoli, Gautam, Johnson, Jones, Lincoln, Mothes, Schipper, Young.

Chief McCall called the meeting to order 9:07 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 Sub. H.B. 404 of the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly, passed on November 19, 2020, signed by the Governor of the State of Ohio on November 22, 2020 and the March 9, 2020 order of the Governor of the State of Ohio declaring a public health emergency, this meeting was live-streamed on RTA's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/rideRTA](http://www.facebook.com/rideRTA)) for staff and members of the public.

#### System Redesign

Joel Freilich, Director of Service Management, made the presentation. The System Redesign process started in 2019 with the staff working with our consultant Jarrett Walker and Associates and local stakeholders. Several technical tasks and workshops were held as well as three rounds of public involvement. In 2019, the public wanted RTA to prioritize trips going to work, education and healthcare, more frequent service all day and more direct transportation with fewer transfers needed to travel on vehicles between city areas and neighborhoods and suburban areas and neighborhoods. Despite the public process conducted virtually and in-person in 2019, they did a follow up virtual engagement in 2020. From there they developed the NextGen website and comment portal, which went live October 14, 2020. They kept it open for a month and a half through November 30<sup>th</sup>. Comments were taken 24/7 on the website. Additionally, they held five virtual public hearings as Facebook Live events. In addition, for people who do not have access to the Internet, they used the Answerline to accept comments from the public. The website was effective with nearly 4,000 views.

In parallel to reaching out to residents, they reached out to community leaders and advocates. Early in the process, they spoke to the Mayors & Managers Association. Following that presentations, they conducted follow up meetings with suburban mayors and their staff upon their request. They spoke to the Cleveland City Council Transportation Committee and followed up with individual council members and their staff per their request. They spoke to Downtown Cleveland Alliance, Clevelanders for Public Transit, Cleveland Heights Advisory Committee and the RTA Citizens Advisory Committee.

They divided the county into five zones and held a virtual public hearing in each zone, but all were advertised to all residents. These were well attended with 1,000 or more views. They were pleased with the quality and quantity of the comments. The comments focused on the proposals and there were more views than comments. The proposals were vetted in 2019 the public was not surprised with the proposal. There were 19,000 minutes of minutes, 452 engagements and 593 followers. Only 70% attended the virtual hearings in real time. Thirty percent (30%) watched it later. They supported this with social media post to ensure people would know about the website. They paid for boosted posts on Facebook to raise awareness. The cost was \$336. The boosted reach was 16,841 and 462 posts. The website provided

maps, information on the current route and what was being proposed and comment options on that route. Each route had a fact sheet.

They adjusted the proposal in response to the feedback. Several links that were proposed to not exist anymore will be retained. They will retain the daytime hour's service on the #2 – E. 79<sup>th</sup> in Slavic Village and Steelyard as it does today. Service on E. 55<sup>th</sup> Street north of the Rapid will operate daytime five days a week. Service on Buckeye Road will retain the daytime portion of service. The #8 service on Prospect and Cedar will be retained 7 days a week. One trolley route will be retained downtown, which is the modified B-Line currently in operation. Many comments from #81 riders spoke on the proposed route #25, which was to capture some of the functions of the #81. They portion of the #25 proposal they liked was that it provided seven day service instead of five day service to the housing at Tremont Point. However, they were concerned that the proposed #25 would not travel via W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street getting them from Tremont to downtown the fastest route by the freeway. They decided to revise this proposal so it serves the Tremont Point housing 7 days a week and it will serve W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street. They will revise the proposed #18 to continue to provide that link between E. 55<sup>th</sup> rapid and Slavic Village/Newburgh Heights area.

They will retain in their proposal the broad countywide improvements that are the feature of the NextGen system. Dramatic improvements in service frequency on weekdays, all day and not just during rush hours were made. He showed a map of current services, color-coded to show various amounts of service. On the Westside, there is nothing red (15 minute service) except the Rapid and W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street today. On the eastside, there is nothing coded red except the Rapid, Euclid Avenue and #15 today. These are the only 15 minute or better services all day. Through reallocation of resources, their proposal will provide the Westside, with frequent service on Lorain Avenue and Detroit Avenue in the city and several suburbs. On the eastside; Superior, St. Clair, Kinsman and E. 105 will have all day service. The NEXT GEN RTA reflects community priorities, including frequent service (every 15 minutes or better) all day. The number of jobs within ½ mile of frequent service will increase by 50,000 jobs or 25%. The number of residents within ½ mile of frequent service will increase by 167,000 residents or 100%. The service emphasizes key corridors in the Strategic Plan. Implementation is targeted for June 2021. There will be an extensive public outreach educational outreach program in the spring.

Chief McCall commended the team for listening to the concerns of the residents. Mr. Bibb asked what kind of outreach was done with the CDCs. He asked what the recommended strategy is on the Lakeview Terrace route. Joel said Lakeview Terrace (LT) would receive the same service they receive today. The proposed change was not made. In the proposal, LT would have had to walk to Detroit Avenue to Washington Ave. In the new proposal, they will continue to stop at the shelter at LT. They had extensive outreach to some of the CDCs. They got the CDC comments through the council members or City Planning that work with the CDCs. They work regularly with the CDCs. He does not believe they will be surprised by the proposals. Mr. Bibb said he received a number of complaints from the CDCs and recommended there be outreach to each executive director. Chief McCall suggested the councilperson copy the CDC directors or RTA can copy them. She believes they have been engaged.

Ms. Birdsong added that RTA examine the manner in which the CDCs are engaged to ensure they hear each other's comments, which can sometimes conflict. A WebEx could be scheduled for all of them to talk together. Mayor Weiss asked regarding the reallocation to increase the frequency, if the frequency dropped and where did the additional resources come from. Joel said they planned to make the Park-N-Ride buses multi purposed buses, instead of single purpose buses. That savings will be used for these changes. In addition, the primary focus to downtown be shifting from a trolley-based focus to an all buses to downtown running frequency focus. The major downtown streets will all have frequent service. They saved resources by providing frequent service on the regular bus.

Ms. Moss asked what would happen to the trolleys. Joel said they would repurpose it for a general purpose as they have in the past. Mayor Clough asked if staff has gauged the difference in commuting now that more people are working from home. Joel said they made their decision based on ridership experience pre-Pandemic. They are not expecting to stay in the Pandemic condition permanently. They

recognize that people working from home will continue. Post Pandemic more employers will offer work from home jobs and others will provide partial days at home and that will focus on downtown office workers. He forecast that in the future, the number of people traveling to the Cleveland Central Business district between 8-8:30 a.m. would be less because if it's Tuesday, some of them work from home and different workers work from home on Wednesdays. Mayor Clough asked staff to monitor this. Ms. Birdsong added that there are declines in ridership into downtown. She spoke with DCA to get real estate data regarding the vacancy rates. Elimination of the trolleys is a concern with the stakeholders. They may look at a reduced or modified service on the trolleys. They are currently operating two trolley vehicles a day. They do not foresee returning to the full service of the trolleys because of the number of people working from home. Dr. Caver added that the goal with the system redesign is to create the new base. The base will allow incremental changes after the Pandemic. The routes are reviewed each quarter. It is important to have a robust network with some frequency.

It was moved by Mr. Bibb, seconded by Ms. Pellot to approve. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.



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



Theresa A. Burrage  
Executive Secretary