

Minutes

RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:25 a.m., February 16, 2021

Present: Clough (Chair), Lucas (Vice Chair), Bibb, Byrne, Joyce, Moss, Pellot, Serrano, Weiss

Not present: McCall

Also Present: Becker, Benford, Birdsong, Bitto, Burney, Caver, Coffey, Dangelo, Davidson, Fields, Garofoli, Gautam, Kirkland, Laule, Martin, Miller, Mothes, Peganoff, Petit, Schipper, Sutula, Talley

Mayor Clough called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. The secretary called the roll and reported that nine (9) board members were present. This meeting was conducted by teleconference for members of the Board in accordance with Sub. H.B. 404 of the 133rd 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) for staff and members of the public.

The Secretary 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

Mayor Clough stated that the minutes from the January 19, 2021 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 (comments were submitted by form and phone)

1. Senator Sandra Williams – She would like to discuss some of the budgets that are starting to move through the legislature. The FY 2022-2023 Operations Budget is supposed to be introduced in the House Finance Committee today. Due to the weather, the committee meeting was moved to tomorrow. The Transportation Budget (HB 74) will also be in House Finance. They do not have a date on the Transportation Budget (TB). The Workers Compensation Budget (HB 75) is in the House Insurance Committee. The Industrial Commission Budget (HB 76) is in the House Commerce and Labor Committee. The Ohio Senate is slated to have an informal hearing on the Transportation Budget next week if the House moves forward this week. The TB has significant pots of money from the federal government and two from State funded programs. In the Operating Budget, the Governor has cut some funding to public transit. In the last General Assembly, he provided \$70 million. In this TB, funding has been cut to \$7 million. According to the Governor's staff, because public transit systems in the state of Ohio received over \$700 million through the CARES Funding Act, they have sufficient funding to carry through the 2022-2023 Operating season. She said they will fight to change this since most of the funding was used to deal with COVID-19.

They believe that there will be additional CARES Act funding left over. That money can be carried over and can be used in place of General Revenue funding. Last General Assembly, she worked with NOACA to introduce a bill to fund transit based on vehicle mile travel. That

Bill did not make it out of the General Assembly. She spoke to the Governor's staff and the majority staff in the Ohio Senate. They will be considering that during the budget hearing. This is the first General Assembly that she is on the Transportation Committee. She is the ranking Democrat so she will be able to bring people in and talk about transit funding. They will be redrawing the Congressional lines and House and Senate lines based on the Constitutional amendment passed by the citizens several years ago. They are taking up education funding. Some of the language in that Bill may go into the Operating Budget. They are looking at changes to the HB language.

Rev. Lucas thanked her for her hard work. He asked if there is room for the expansion of the funding before it is finalized in the General Assembly. She said the finance bills start in the House. The Transportation budget has to be signed by the Governor by March 31. Hopefully the changes will be made before that. They should have the budget by the beginning of March in the Senate. There is always room for negotiation. She asked staff to send in information and letters about how this budget will impact the bottom line and to ask colleagues across the State to do the same. They will advocate as legislatures as much as they can. The letters should emphasize that the CARES Act funding was used for COVID related expenses and that the reduction to \$7 million is not sufficient. Their thought process is that the \$70 million given in the last General Assembly was not the norm. The average gift is \$7 million to \$10 million. They will have the Operating Budget in late April/early May and has to be signed by the Governor by June 30.

Mayor Clough thanked her for her support of public transit and for giving an update today. Ms. Birdsong thanked her for her support. It is important for public transit to get support. She will ensure information is sent to support these efforts. She is grateful to receive the CARES Act funds, but it should not be used to replace annual funding. We have \$500 million in unfunded Capital projects. We also are utilizing the CARES funding to support the efforts through the Pandemic. We have done several things to support events here at RTA. We want to keep passengers and employees safe as possible. Being able to maintain service and keeping employees safe is our first effort. Senator Williams added that the federal government allows states to use flex dollars available through the Transportation Budget to be used for other purposes. The State of Ohio does not allow this. She believes these dollars should be used for public transit and will recommend for amendment to the Operating Budget. She suggested this be added to the letters. There is funding left over at ODOT from CARES funding. Originally, it was said that funding would be passed on to public transit, but the State said they will keep that additional funding and use it for another purpose. She will have more answers once the budgets is discussed.

2. Rev. Pamela Pinkney-Butts – Cleveland, OH – She has attended meeting for 20 years. She asked about Resolutions 9, 10 and 15. She is concerned that the east side is neglected. She congratulated Mayor Clough for his service. For Resolution 2021-16 for Shaker Landscaping, she has been calling about a tree outside a bus shelter on South Moreland and Drexmore that is falling on people and the street. It is outside of Dave's Supermarket. The agenda is not affective because it is not impacting people who need public transit, but for those who use it for convenience. She asked Acting Chief of Police to investigate the agenda.
3. Theresa Harrison – She asked if Paratransit service would be cut particularly in Cleveland Heights. Staff said that no service for Paratransit would be cut. Rev. Lucas added that Paratransit is point to point so there will be service in the permitted service areas.
4. Erin Gay Miyoshi – Cleveland Heights, OH -- Thank you for researching Free Fares in other cities and evaluating the annual cost for RTA to collect fares. The recently announced "Baby

on Board" program is an excellent model for how RTA is working to make public transit more accessible for expectant and new mothers in our community. I look forward to later learning about the impact of this program. I encourage RTA to consider looking at other ways to offer free fares to Cuyahoga County community members who would benefit most.

5. Dontez Taylor – He asked that service not be cut on the #2 on E. 79 and E. 55 Street buses. Dr. Caver said that there will not be any cuts for those two streets.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

There was no CAC report.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

Ad Hoc Paratransit Committee - Rev. Lucas asked if there could be a free ride day to help people get to the vaccine centers on Paratransit. Ms. Birdsong has been in preliminary discussions about this with Operations. They will consult the budget to determine what the threshold for capacity is. Most of the agencies that are doing this are smaller and have majority dial-a-ride services available. She believes we can support this, but have to determine at what level and for how long. They will review and bring this back to the Board. Mr. Bibb suggested the Cleveland Foundation Rapid Response Fund be looked into. Rev. Lucas suggested the St. Luke's Foundation.

Committee Reports

Mayor Clough said that Legal indicated that there was no need to have the full Board approve the Internal Audit report in the previous Committee Meeting based on the changes based on the Bylaws. The Audit Committee approved the 2021 Plan prior to this meeting.

Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

New Hires:

1. Donald Haradem – Vehicle Engineer
2. Tara Glazer – Office Manager
3. Mark Petit – Deputy General Manager of Innovation and Technology
4. Jamaa Bell – Security Systems Specialist

Promotions:

1. Joseph Sopko – Assistant Transportation Manager
2. Quinton Banks – Service Quality Coordinator
3. David Reynolds – Financial Accountant II
4. Christopher Hudson – Business Intelligence Process Analyst

Mayor Clough congratulated the new hires and promotions.

Introduction of Resolutions

- A. 2021-9 – Expressing appreciation to the Honorable Dennis M. Clough for his service as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority and extending best wishes for many years to come, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Byrne, seconded by Mr. Serrano and approved by unanimous vote,

Rev. Lucas thanked Mayor Clough for his level handed leadership to the Board. It has been a delight to serve as his Vice President. He wished him the best. Mr. Serrano thanked Mayor Clough for his example on leadership. He led the Board through Strategic Plans and Redesigns and stepped up in a time of crises. His demeanor, sense of purpose and calmness helped them to navigate a huge crisis and guided them to bring in new leadership. Mayor Byrne thanked Mayor Clough for his help coming on to the Board. Mr. Bibb said that Mayor Clough was a good mentor and advisor when he joined the Board. Mayor Weiss thanked him for his dedication and service to the community. Ms. Pellot echoed all of the sentiments and thanked him for his guidance.

Ms. Birdsong thanked him for his support of the staff and her being new to the city and supporting culture change and handled crises management. He looks at the facts, researches well and provide unparalleled leadership.

Dr. Caver submitted a statement: On behalf of the RTA employees, customers, and residents of Northeast Ohio, I want to congratulate you on your retirement from the RTA board and wish you continued success in your endeavors. I also want to thank the Citizens of Westlake for sharing you with us. Several years ago, during a turbulent time in our Agency's history, I had the privilege of leading the agency along with you. I admire how you stepped up and in to provide the requisite calm leadership needed to steady the ship. I will miss our bi-weekly meetings where I had the pleasure of watching your leadership on display. In particular, in this age of hot takes and reactive leadership, you taught me how access situations, think through alternatives, and develop appropriate responses. You were never overly emotive. You relied on facts; you cared about this Agency. You believed in us. As we look forward, this agency, this community and this region is better off for having had you as the Board President for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority. May you enjoy your days ahead.

Mayor Clough said it has been a pleasure to serve the RTA. Twenty years has gone by fast. He has enjoyed the staff and support of the Board. He could not have done the job without the continuous support, commitment and dedication from the staff and Board. It is not easy for him to leave after so long. RTA is a great organization because there are people who are passionate about public transit who devote much effort to ensure we serve the County and the riders. He has seen the quality of the service, the cleanliness of the buses, the improvements at the stations, the introduction of the HealthLine, MetroHealth Line and other improvements from the time he joined the Board. It was a challenge when he first joined the Board. The change has been remarkable in the dedication to the riders and providing a safe environment. It takes a team to make sure that happens. We've got a great team at RTA. He's been honored to be a part of the team. His calmness comes from growing up in a large family. You have to let your team do their job, advice accordingly, which enables you to make good decisions.

- B. 2021-10 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-149 with Michael Baker International, Inc. for Project 62A – Engineering Services for the Rehabilitation of the Track & Platform Bridges over W. 117th Street in an amount not to exceed \$490,211.00 (Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mayor Byrne and approved by unanimous vote.
- C. 2021-11 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-162 with Mott MacDonald, LLC for Project 12F – Engineering Services for the 515 switch return to service in an amount not to exceed \$219,284.00 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department

budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mayor Weiss and approved by unanimous vote.

- D. 2021-12 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-174 with Pirc Company Landscaping and Snowplowing, LLC for Non-Rail and Healthline Landscaping Services in an amount not to exceed \$792,995.98 for a period of three years, and in amounts not to exceed \$266,975.31 and \$269,645.07 for each option year, respectively, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$1,329,616.36 (General Fund, Service Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Joyce, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- E. 2021-13 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-193 with ADMJ Holdings LLC, DBA Advance Door Co., for overhead door repair, as specified and as required, for a three year base period not to exceed \$405,000.00, with two, one-year options not to exceed \$135,000.00 each, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$675,000.00 (General Fund, Service Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- F. 2021-14 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-196 with Railworks Track Services, Inc. for Project 52T – Light Rail Track Rehabilitation Buckeye-Woodhill to Shaker Square Station, as specified and as required, in an amount not to exceed \$7,996,000.00 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Byrne, seconded by Mayor Weiss and approved by unanimous vote.
- G. 2021-15 – Authorizing an increase in the General Manager, Chief Executive Officer's Change Order Authority under Contract 2019-001 – Project 52M Rehabilitation of Tracks 10 and 13 at Tower City Station in an amount not to exceed \$250,000.00, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mr. Joyce and approved by unanimous vote.
- H. 2021-16 – Authorizing an agreement with the City of Shaker Heights for landscape maintenance and parking lot snow removal for a period of three years in an amount not to exceed \$824,305.78 (General Fund, Rail District Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Rev. Lucas, seconded by Mr. Serrano. Mayor Weiss said he would like a roll call. There were eight (8) ayes and one (1) abstention by Mayor Weiss. It passed.
- I. 2021-17 – Approving the Authority's 2021 Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Mr. Serrano and approved by unanimous vote.
- J. 2021-18 – Amending budget appropriations for the FY 2021 capital improvement fund budget to provide for an increase of \$124,500,000, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mayor Byrne and approved by unanimous vote.
- K. 2021-19 – Amending appropriations for the current expenses and other expenditures for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, as adopted in Resolution No. 2020-101 and to provide for a \$15,000,000 transfer to the Development Fund and increasing appropriation to the Reserve Fund by \$28,000,000 for Rail Car Replacement Program, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Joyce, seconded by Ms. Moss and approved by unanimous vote.

Interim Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Dr. Caver gave the report. Starting with the micro economic conditions that affects our largest revenue source, Sales and Use tax. Since the height of the COVID-19 Stay At Home orders, the unemployment rate nationally and locally has been decreasing. The local rate is still high at 6.8%, which says there is still a lot of people without jobs, which has a negative aggregate on the community and spending ability. Northeast Ohio has some sectors that are starting to do better in particular sectors that have adjusted to new customer behavior. The trucking industry is doing better because of product movement from online retailers, such as Amazon. Sectors that are important to the community that are experiencing loss include hospitality and special events. Many employers still need employees such as Amazon, Cleveland Clinic and Giant Eagle. RTA serves both Amazon fulfillment centers in Euclid and North Randall.

January Ridership and Passenger fares is down 57%. The key areas experiencing decline is from students using the U-Pass and the CMSD bus ticket purchases. The sales tax YTD variance is less than 1%. This is still positive, but joblessness suggest that this cannot stay strong. The stimulus packages is helping the sales tax. Should these benefits decrease or end, this item would not be as strong. Online sales continue to increase. Sales tax from home purchases may transfer funds that would otherwise leak out of the County. We are looking to receive approximately \$60 million from the CRRSAA Act.

General Manager, Chief Executive Officer Report

Ms. Birdsong gave the presentation. The U.S. President signed an executive order Jan. 20, 2021 calling for masks to be worn on all public transit. The executive staff and Transit Police worked together to conform to the mandate. On Feb. 1, RTA started to enforce the mandate. Customers have been requested to wear mask and signs are posted to that fact. With this mandate, if a customer does not comply, the transit operator can call dispatch and get Transit Police to intercept the vehicle. Transit Police will discuss the mask mandate. Mask are available for distribution from TP, operators and at key locations and transfer points. If the person does not comply, they will be assisted off the coach. To date, there have been 13 incidents. All of the individuals aside from one was in compliance once they were intercepted by TP or elected to leave the coach. The plan is to enforce the mandate gently to ensure a safe ride.

Mr. Bibb asked what the policy has been from TP for enforcement. Acting Chief Gettings said they want to ensure when they interact with a passenger there is de-escalation and cooperation. Their goal is to have cooperation through communication. He is directing the supervisors and officers to encourage individuals to wear a mask. They are averaging two interactions a day, but they have been minor. The individuals have chosen to put on a mask or deboard. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) asked them to report significant incidents to the Transportation Security Operations Center (TSOC). They define these incidents as anything that would rise to a level of a threat or menacing of the operator or the public. Through today, they have not had any significant incidents with the passengers. Mr. Bibb recommended the Transit Ambassador model to tackle some of these issues. A number of transit agencies like San Francisco have models we should look at.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Ohio Report card was released Feb. 11. Transit received a D. That grade reflects the long-term decline in the funding process. It also reflects the aging of the infrastructure for rail and bus fleets as far as operating past the State of Good Repair recommendations and for unfunded capital projects. This shows how we can get better funding. She served as a panelist during a release of the report card. Mike Schipper, Deputy General

Manager of Project Management and Engineering serves on the ASCE as a member and creator many of these events. It supports our need for support in the House and on the State level.

The Community Training and Development Job Hub Partnership with Tri-C is spearheaded by George Fields and the HR division. It was announced Jan 29. This partnership is the job recruitment and workforce effort with Tri-C. This will help recruit new employees in several areas and to upscale current employees through training and leadership programs. It will start in February. A media event will be scheduled in the 2nd quarter. In order to supplant this kind of workforce training, we have also worked with our Marketing team to talk about how people would come on board and to know what positions exist at RTA. They created a video that was shown during the meeting. Employees that have come through the ranks are featured in the video. The Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) program ran by the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) has responded to the social issue going on in the nation. This department was previously managed under Training and Employment. This department will fall under the new Deputy General Manager of Administration and External Affairs. Projects include an inclusive leadership program, a new website and support sessions for race relations. Moore Counseling co-hosted 11 town hall sessions held from June through August 2020.

Public comments on non-agenda items

Comments were received via web form and by dial in. Comments were limited to two minutes.

1. Rev. Pamela M. Pinkney – Cleveland, OH – She said she disagrees with everything that was said today. The transportation system is in bad condition. The escalators at Windermere and Superior have been down for over a year. We don't listen to the public. She requested the Acting Chief of Police to contact her. She feels discriminated against. She doesn't appreciate Senator Williams speaking today. She has been trying to reach her. She wants the Chief to do an investigation into why Mayor Welo and Mayor Clough have decided to leave the Board now that George Dixon's reputation has been destroyed due to false allegations. She asked the Chief to investigate her concerns about RTA.
2. Chris Martin – Cleveland, OH – He requested everyone keep his or her mask on while speaking during the Board Meeting.
3. Victoria Neenan – Cleveland, OH - RTA should hire a police chief who supports transit ambassadors. RTA spends \$1.8 million dollars every year on 30 fare enforcement officers. In October 2017, a municipal court ruling that proof-of-payment fare enforcement by transit police was unconstitutional. Transit ambassadors employed by RTA were recommended as a constitutional alternative. Use this \$1.8 million on a transit ambassador program. Ambassadors help riders get where they are going, not criminalize them. Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) recently hired a police chief who is focused on equity. He has supported using transit police dollars to hire transit ambassadors and social workers. Please follow BART's lead and implement a transit ambassador program. Hire a police chief focused on equity and make riding RTA a safe experience for ALL riders.
4. Morgan – Cleveland, OH - On Gov. DeWine's proposed cuts to transit: I and many others rely on the services RTA provides. I feel so lucky to be in one of the few cities in the US that has public infrastructure at this scale, and try to get the most out of this service. Cuts to RTA will be devastating for the working people of Cleveland, as the city is already extremely car oriented, and cuts to service and branch lines will only exacerbate this issue. There are many other sources of revenue that could solve this budget problem. Taxing wealthy residents, closing jails, prisons, and ICE contracts, and divesting from police departments (particularly transit police), will solve these issues and allow for communities to design their own forms of

effective public safety, as well as allow for the funding of community programs and local public education. This solves many crises faced by the working people of Cleveland, particularly those who face police brutality and state violence. Please also think of those without homes, and the role that RTA serves in their life. Cuts to services means they will be forced into the cold, possibly to their deaths, and restricts mobility and job opportunities. Closing transit services is a form of class warfare, and should not be tolerated.

5. Chris Stocking – Cleveland, OH - Good morning. It's 12:30am Tuesday and just finished writing a mass email that will go out to thousands of transit riders to contact members of the Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation, House Finance Committee leadership, Ohio Senate Finance leadership for more funding for RTA. I'm tired. We may bring up different concerns at board meetings but it's all connected to equitable transit. We do this because we care. In 2017 Judge Emanuella Groves rules that fare enforcement by transit police is unconstitutional. Yet RTA continues to spend \$1.8 million dollars every year and fare enforcement. Thousands of citations are now a few dozen citations per year. This does not make sense. The RTA Board needs to hire a transit police chief that understands the implications of this court ruling and understands equity. It's time to start a transit ambassador program that can bring proof-of-payment back to the HealthLine. There is no other constitutional way. Bay Area Rapid Transit is hiring social workers to deal with homeless riders, not cops. There are alternatives, show us you have the political will to make them happen.
6. Will Tarter – Broadview Heights, OH - Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the GCRTA Board, this comment is as a private citizen and not representative of my employer. As I have been listening to the meeting today, I just wanted to take a moment to acknowledge GCRTA Board members and staff for the efforts to receive public comment in this virtual environment. I think it is important to acknowledge the efforts that GCRTA had made to provide a method to accept public comment by phone, as well as accepting written comments before and during the meetings, that are read aloud into the record. I believe that these methods can and should be used as examples for how other public bodies can ensure that public voices are heard by officials and other members of the public during general body meetings, even in a virtual

New Business

Mr. Serrano stated that he is Chair for this year's Nominating Committee. Members include Mayor Weiss, Ms. Pellot and Mr. Bibb. A letter was sent out to the Board requesting letters of interest in serving as the President and Vice-President of the Board. The letters are due Feb. 26. A slate of candidates will be presented for both offices at the March 23 Annual Meeting.

Executive Session Requested

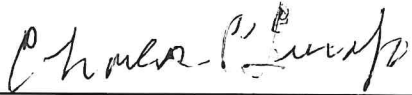
10:41 a.m. - Mayor Clough asked for a motion to go into Executive Session to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, or compensation of a public employee or official. It was moved by Rev. Lucas, seconded by Mr. Serrano. There were nine (9) ayes and none opposed. There will not be any action taken after the Executive Session.

11:03 a.m. - It was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Rev. Lucas to come out of Executive Session. There was eight (8) ayes and none opposed. Mr. Bibb had to leave the call.

Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting and Annual Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 23, 2021 in the Board Room of the Authority, Root-McBride Building, and 1240 West Sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44113. This meeting will be live streamed on RTA's Facebook page for staff and members of the public at www.facebook.com/riderta Only Board members and required RTA staff will be allowed in the Board Room.

This meeting was adjourned at 11:04 a.m.



President

Attest: 

Interim Secretary-Treasurer