

## Minutes

### RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:37 a.m., March 23, 2021

**Present:** Lucas (Chair), Moss (Vice Chair), Byrne, Joyce, Koomar, McCall, Pellet, Weiss

**Not present:** Bibb, Serrano

**Also Present:** Benford, Birdsong, Bitto, Burney, Catalusci, Caver, Coffey, Cottrell, Dangelo, Davidson, Dietrich, Ferraro, Fields, Garofoli, Gautam, Johnson, Kirkland, Manning, Mothes, Orlando, Petit, Schipper, Sutula, Talley, Togher, Walker-Minor

Rev. Lucas called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. The secretary called the roll and reported that eight (8) board 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.

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

Rev. Lucas stated that the minutes from the February 16, 2021 Board Meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed and asked whether there were any additions and/or corrections. There were no corrections. Mayor Koomar abstained. The minutes were approved by a majority of seven (7).

### Public Comments – Agenda Items (comments were submitted by form and phone)

1. Rev. Pam Pinkney – Cleveland, OH – *(she called in, but there were tech issues so I called her to receive her comments)* – She expressed her condolences to the family of George Zeller. She congratulated Rev. Lucas for being elected as the new President. She asked that there be no cuts to service and that staff work with the religious community to fill the ticket booths to collect fares.
2. Chris Stocking – Cleveland, OH - Thanks to Justin Bibb for your leadership. We are glad you are committed to appointing riders the RTA board as a Cleveland Mayoral Candidate. CPT continues to advocate fixed-route bus and rapid riders also be appointed to the RTA board to assist in material improvements. Take Reverend Lucas for example. His efforts as a paratransit rider and board member that have resulted in material improvements to paratransit riders. We look forward to his leadership as President of the RTA board. After the 2008 recession, Cleveland RTA had the largest bus service reductions in the nation, nearly 40% cut. There has been no strategy to restore these services other than fare increases and further cuts to balance the budget. The board has taken leadership on the system redesign as initially requested in Mach 2016 as an alternative to service cuts. This is a good first step. The RTA strategic plan identifies implementation of the expanded funding system redesign as a priority. It will take new revenues to make this a reality. We look forward to the RTA board leading the

way to restore the services cut since 2008 and stop the death spiral of more cuts and fare increases. It is imperative RTA board drives the bus, not cut it. Show us you can.

#### Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

There was no CAC report.

#### Ad Hoc Committee Reports

There were no Ad Hoc Committee Reports

#### Committee Reports

There were no Committee Reports

#### Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

##### New Hires:

1. Michael Burcewicz – Manager, Facilities
2. Brian Gutkoski, Associate Counsel II
3. Mitchell Wondolowski – Construction Engineer
4. Elisha Clark – Supply Chain, Contract Administrator
5. Natoya Walker Minor – Deputy General Manager of Administration and External Affairs

##### Promotions:

1. Donald Prince – Operating Instructor
2. Debra Shaw – Office Manager
3. Karen Smith – Manager of Payroll
4. Kimberly Wright – Operating Instructor
5. Bridgett Sorrell – Substation Maintainer
6. Teresa Doaty – Manager of Asset & Configuration Management

#### Introduction of Resolutions (*Reso No. 2021-30 was read first even though it is last on the reso list*)

- A. 2021-20 – Expressing appreciation to Justin M. Bibb 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 Chief McCall, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Bibb sent a farewell video since he was not able to attend the meeting in person.

- B. 2021-21 – Authorizing the exercise of an option under Contract No. 2020-046 with New Flyer of America, Inc., for the purchase and delivery of up to nine (9), five (5) door, 60-ft., articulated BRT coaches, as specified, for a price not to exceed \$8,746,054.20 (RTA Development Fund, Fleet Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Ms. Moss and approved by unanimous vote.
- C. 2021-22 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-071 with Gillig, LLC for the manufacture and delivery of twenty (20) 40-ft. CNG coaches, spare parts, tooling and training in an amount not to exceed \$11,052,060.00 with options to procure up to eighty (80) additional coaches, spare parts, tooling, and training, to be delivered over the five (5) year term of the contract (Development Fund, Fleet Management Department budget), the adoption of



which was moved by Mr. Joyce, seconded by Chief McCall and approved by unanimous vote.

- D. 2021-23 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-180 with Quest Diagnostics Clinical Laboratories, Inc. to provide laboratory drug testing services in an amount not to exceed \$125,205.60 for a base three-year period, with two, one-year options in an amount not to exceed \$41,735.20 for each option year, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$208,676.00. (General Fund, Labor and Employee Relations Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Byrne, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- E. 2021-24 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-195 with Lake Erie Electric, Inc. for Project 60C – West 117<sup>th</sup> Street Substation Rehabilitation, as specified and as required, in an amount not to exceed \$2,221,504.00 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Chief McCall, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- F. 2021-25 – Authorizing Contract No. 2021-007 with Rush Truck Centers of Ohio, Inc., for the furnishing of Caterpillar C-9 diesel engine particulate filters, as specified and as required, for a period of one (1) year in an amount not to exceed \$323,131.16 (General Fund, Fleet Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- G. 2021-26 – Authorizing Contract No. 2021-035 with Special Counsel, Inc. to provide temporary legal services, as required, for a period of six months in an amount not to exceed \$115,000.00 (General Fund, Legal Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mayor Byrne and approved by unanimous vote.
- H. 2021-27 – Ratifying an increase and authorizing an extension to small purchase contract with Special Counsel, Inc. to provide additional temporary legal services in an amount not to exceed \$42,718.00 for a total contract amount not to exceed \$112,718.00 (General Fund, Legal Department budget), the adoption Mayor Weiss, seconded by Chief McCall and approved by unanimous vote.
- I. 2021-28 – Approving the 2021 Internal Audit Plan, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- J. 2021-29 – Authorizing the filing of requests for community project funding for the Rail Car Replacement program with members of the United States Congress for Federal Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- K. 2021-30 - Expressing deepest sympathy on the untimely death of George Zeller, long-time member of Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority's Community Advisory Committee and staunch transit advocate, and extending condolences to his family, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Chief McCall and approved by unanimous vote.

Rev. Lucas said he was passionate about what he did and kept the Board up to date about sales tax and other data. He was involved with several organizations. Ms. Birdsong expressed condolences on behalf of RTA. Chief McCall said she met George

as the appointee for the CAC. He was knowledgeable of sales tax. He supported the RTA budget and he will be missed. Rev. Lucas mentioned the mass shootings happening around the country and how life is precious.

#### Interim Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance & Administration, gave the report. The purpose of the economic conditions slide is to demonstrate that even with the lowering of the unemployment rate on a nationwide basis, historically Cuyahoga County lags the state of Ohio and nationally. Ridership for 2020 was stable from Jan-Feb. Decline began in mid-March. Ridership for 2021 compared to 2020 YTD is down 58%. Passenger fares is trending down the same YTD about 57%. Sales Tax has been fairly stable. March is down 2.6%. March 2021 sales tax categories showing the highest increase on a year to year bases include online sales up nearly 20% compared to 2020. Motor vehicles and watercraft has been strong and liquor at 66.3%. There is a three-month lag in the economic activity and when it is collected. March collections relate to December 2020 sales activity.

The 2021 Coronavirus Response & Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) is a 100% federal share with no local match. Total awarded for transit agencies was \$14 billion. The Cleveland Urbanized Area received \$74.3 million. (Includes GCRTA, Medina County Public Transit, Laketran, Akron Metro, PARTA, Geauga County). RTA received \$67.3 million. There is still a portion that needs to be allocated by NOACA. We are not aware of how the allocation will be conducted. The 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act (American Rescue Plan) \$1.9 trillion stimulus package was signed by the President Friday, March 12, 2021. We are waiting for more information regarding official guidance and allocation. Rev. Lucas asked if there is any indication of what RTA might receive. Raj said they are reviewing the language, but it is still too early. There are certain provisions included in the earlier drafts of the Act, which indicated that a certain amount, about \$20 billion was reserved for transit that was the most impacted. They expect the apportionment tables to be completed early next week.

#### General Manager, Chief Executive Officer Report

India Birdsong, General Manager, Chief Executive Officer, gave the report. She thanked the City of Cleveland for allowing RTA to be a community partner. To touch on some of the Pandemic opportunities of partnerships and collaboration we've been afforded and the urging of Rev. Lucas newly elected President. RTA has taken a look at how to collaborate with other stakeholders to provide free rides to individuals in the community that are seeking vaccination against COVID-19. There has been a huge community effort through CSU to use their Wolstein Center as a mass vaccination site. RTA is lucky enough to partner with them and others. She turned it over to Ms. Walker-Minor who has been at the RTA for two weeks and has hit the ground running. Steve Bitto, Dr. Caver and Ms. Walker worked together on this to provide free transportation through an ODOT grant.

Ms. Walker-Minor reported that we received notice two weeks ago of a \$773,000 grant from ODOT without a match requirement for the "Rides for Community Immunity" program. The goal of the grant is equity of access to any vaccine site in Cuyahoga county, with emphasis on the Wolstein Center, which is the mass vaccination site. This program is operational for an eight-week period from March 17 – May 8. RTA will provide 10,000 All Day passes, distributed through Cuyahoga County social service agencies to people in the community. The All Day pass was used to encourage people to do other travel related activities in addition to their vaccination. People need to make a vaccination appointment to receive a pass. RTA is also providing rides from free parking lots to the site and funding third party transit providers for inner-ring suburb mobility such as Senior Transportation



Connection and free rides for existing Paratransit customers. Paratransit customers enter at Gate A and Gate B.

Mr. Davidson is tracking RTA ridership to the vaccination site. Currently, ridership is 710 for the shuttle and 131 for Paratransit. Rev. Lucas is in contact with people to encourage them to use the service to get their vaccine. He welcomed Ms. Walker-Minor to RTA and thanked her for her work. Ms. Birdsong said staff is working through evaluation to start shuttle service to RTA employees. There will be an update in April.

RTA ConnectWorks is a Micro-Transit demonstration pilot program to address the first/last mile mobility access issue. This will address companies that have moved out to the outer ring suburbs and are challenged with having public transportation to those areas. They looked in-house to see how to find data and what shift people are working that need our service, what worksite locations that are not located in the central business district and where the mismatch is between where employees live and where the jobs are available. They have worked with a taskforce in Solon to get more information. They found there is a need for a pilot. The solution is a short term pilot (6 months to a year) funded by RTA to provide a transportation connection from a RTA facility to the employer for the first/last mile. The goal is to connect the community. RTA will not provide the operators or vehicles for the service. We will offer the scheduling and marketing expertise to lead employers down the right path. We'll advertise and launch a program, organize a webinar to launch the program, provide \$200,000 (match required), provide tech assistance, marketing and guidance. At the end of the program, staff will determine if additional trips need to be added to our service plan. Proposals will be released in April, received and evaluated in May, approved and awarded contract in July and the service instituted in October.

Employee Transit Appreciation Day was March 18. RTA employees were given a free umbrella and free meal. She thanked the staff for their work. March is Women's History Month. The Elevating Women Together (EWT) group has been highlighting Cleveland's history with the group. Bios of Stephanie Tubbs Jones and Eliza Bryant was posted on social media. The Annual Report is going to an electronic format. The change started several years ago. The theme this year for the 2020 report is "You Drive Us".

#### Public comments on non-agenda items

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

1. Bob Ross – Strongsville, OH - Congratulations to Reverend Lucas and Ms. Moss. A big thank you to Mr. Justin Bibb and Mayor Clough for a job well done. Good luck to both of you in the future. With so many new faces added and new responsibilities we look for many positive changes to enhance the performance of GCRTA. With the re-design coming soon, we can expect a great improvement in service and frequency. Lower fares, Transit police, Para-Transit, Safety issues for operators and riders and other items need to be addressed. I'm sure that the new Board and with India Birdsong at the wheel, it will be exciting. I always listen to the Board meetings and can see many positive changes already. Reverend Lucas, your wisdom and humor is greatly appreciated. Thanks again for all of your efforts and dedication.
2. Chris Martin – Cleveland, OH - I want to welcome Mayor Koomar. I hope you see the importance of public transit to residents throughout Cuyahoga County even those in areas not very well-served by GCRTA. Thank you to Justin Bibb for his service on the board. Condolences to the family of George Zeller, a fierce advocate for public transit. Members of the Board, you are the boss of this agency. You must take a leading role in the agency's direction. A clear place to start, in my opinion, is the transit police department. Having recently

fired a violent, dishonest cop, the time is more than ripe for the Board of Trustees to take a deep dive on what it means to provide the riding public safety throughout the system. Members of the Board, you will soon hire a new police chief. But do you really understand what the transit police do? You must have a full understanding of what it means to provide public safety before you can decide who should lead a department that many people say is antithetical to public safety.

3. Brittney Madison – Cleveland, OH – No new route cuts.
4. Loh – Cleveland, OH - Glad Rev Lucas has become the new President of GCRTA Board of Trustees to continue making GCRTA a better Public Service working for all residents in Cuyahoga County.  
However, the System Re-Design has NOT been up to riders' uses in reality out of the already limited service, Transit Police still takes out a significant portion of the limited funding GCRTA can utilize while the fare structure still NOT reflecting the true equity needs to most of the rider, so that some residents in Cuyahoga County still are unable to have any mobility through this so-called public transportation service. Please Re-Consider all these matters GCRTA made decisions only based on funding and management points of view and make Correction Accordingly!
5. Henry Vorosmarti – Cleveland, OH - \_Abolish the transit cops, fund more frequent bus service.
6. Larry Rodriguez – Cleveland, OH - I request NO Changes and NO cuts to existing RTA routes. Changes and cuts in routes will negatively affect my independence and freedom navigating through the community.
7. Karla Seese – Cleveland, OH - Requesting NO cuts and NO changes to any existing GCRTA routes. Individuals like my son, who has disabilities but is not eligible for Paratransit, depend on GCRTA bus routes, rapids, and trolleys for their independence. Changes in the routes will eliminate opportunities for employment, school functions, and medical visits.
8. Diane Howard – Cleveland, OH - I use the 38 route for medical purposes and the proposed solution will limit access for me to reach the doctors. I am requesting NO CUTS and NO CHANGES to any existing routes.
9. William Tarter Jr. – Broadview Heights, OH - The following message was submitted for the February 16th, 2021 GCRTA Board meeting but was not received and read into the record due to a logistical error. It is being re-submitted to be read for the March 23rd, 2021 meeting:  
"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, which are read aloud into the record. These methods ensure that they are heard by all individuals, as well as entered into the video record for future listening. I believe that these methods can and should be used as examples of 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 environment.
10. Robert Winn – Cleveland, OH – *(this comment came in after the comment portion of the meeting was closed)*. CPT looks forward to collaborating with Rev. Lucas, Ms. Moss and the entire board to address issues that impact transit riders. CPT also appreciates Justin Bibb's



service on the Board of Trustees. Mr. Bibb has provided meaningful engagement with riders and collaboration with CPT on issues that directly impact riders, including:

- Concerns surrounding RTA's aging fare collection system
- Boarding and fare collection issues on the HealthLine, and
- The criminalization of fare evasion

CPT also appreciates that Mr. Bibb allowed public comment at Ad Hoc Technology Committee meetings, which is a welcome change from most committee meetings. One key issue that Mr. Bibb began addressing in the Ad Hoc Technology Committee was the need for a civilian Transit Police complaint review process. Although we understand that the issue of a civilian transit police complaint review process now resides under the Audit, Safety Compliance and Real Estate Committee, we appreciate that Mr. Bibb raised this issue as part of the Ad Hoc Technology Committee. CPT thanks Mr. Bibb for his service and looks forward to collaborating with Rev. Lucas, Ms. Moss, the entire board as well as RTA staff to ensure that rider issues receive the attention that they deserve.

11. Rico Dancy – Washington, DC – *(there were tech issues with the dial in so I received his comments via phone call)*. He asked what service Transit Police is using to communicate to the deaf community.

#### Executive Session Requested

10:25 a.m. - Rev. Lucas 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 Chief McCall, seconded by Mayor Weiss. There were eight (8) ayes and none opposed.

11:13 a.m. - Rev. Lucas asked for a motion to come out of Executive Session. It was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Chief McCall. There were seven (7) ayes and none opposed. Ms. Pellot had to leave prior to the roll call.

#### Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 20, 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](http://www.facebook.com/riderta) Only Board members and required RTA staff will be allowed in the Board Room.

This meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

  
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President

Attest:   
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Interim Secretary-Treasurer