

Minutes

RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:02 a.m., April 20, 2021

Present: Lucas (Chair), Moss (Vice Chair), Byrne, Joyce, Koomar, McCall, Pellot, Serrano, Weiss

Not present: None

Also Present: Benford, Burney, Caver, Coffey, Cottrell, Davidson, Fields, Garofoli, Gautam, Johnson, Kirkland, Laule, Miller, Mothes, Petit, Rusnov, Schipper, Sutula, Talley, Walker-Minor

Rev. Lucas called the meeting to order at 9:02 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

Rev. Lucas stated that the minutes from the March 23, 2021 Board meeting and March 23, 2021 Annual 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. Rev. Pam Pinkney – Cleveland, OH - I want to express my congratulations to the retirees. I also want to express my opposition to Resolution #2021-35. I disagree with this resolution because it's a conflict of interest on the hiring of the new police chief for RTA. I'm also seeing a resolution on the Red Line Replacement construction and Resolution 21 and 32. And I'm asking that you would take the same passion on the Red Line to the eastside. You are doing a good job.
2. Vivian Sharp – Cleveland, OH - I just want to say I've been using paratransit lately and it's been very good for me. I enjoy the competence that's in there. I haven't been able to come to any of the meetings, I guess because you haven't had any, but I just want to compliment you on what you're doing with your new ridership and social distancing. And thank you for letting me have my voice on this meeting.

Rev. Lucas mentioned that the head of that Paratransit Department was in attendance here, and he's sure that he is glad to hear your comments about paratransit. He is a rider of paratransit, so he is glad to hear that as well.

3. Mark Pichler – Cleveland, OH - I have a question regarding the Next Gen system starting in June 1st. Looked at the routes for the west side of Cleveland, and mostly west side. It's slightly

confusing. My question is how many bus routes will be cut or re-routed? And will riders get to look at the new routes before the next Gen starts?

Dr. Caver said no routes are being cut. He added that all items are on the website on the NextGen page where the new alignment of routes that may have changed. Joel Freilich, Acting Chief of Operations added that if you don't see on the Next Gen website the number of the route you currently ride, another route may be serving those same bus stops. They will give more expanded information between now and June 13th which is the implementation date. Rev. Lucas added that there's going to be some extra announcements, and there is a program that is going to be implemented to help with the new routes. Chief McCall said this will be on the agenda for the next External Affairs Committee meeting.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

There was no CAC report. The new chair will be forthcoming.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

There were no Ad Hoc Committee Reports. Rev. Lucas thanked Ms. Pellot for taking over as chair of the Ad Hoc Technology Committee.

Committee Reports

Mr. Joyce said there were just those motions that were brought forth to the full board from his Operational Committee. Mayor Byrne is the new chair of the Organizational, Services & Performance Monitoring Committee. Chief McCall said the External and Stakeholder Relations and Advocacy Committee will meet May 11.

Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

Promotions:

1. Maria Shurik – Manager of Employee Development
2. Thomas Allen – Budget Management Analyst

New Hires:

1. Wendy Feinn – Budget Management Analyst

Introduction of Resolutions:

- A. 2021-31 – Expressing congratulations to the employees of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority who retired during the first quarter of 2021, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Ms. Moss and approved by unanimous vote.
- B. 2021-32 – Authorizing Contract No. 2021-011 Delta Railroad Construction, Inc. for Project 52V – Red Line Track Curve Replacement East 55th to Kinsman eastbound, as specified and as required, in an amount not to exceed \$1,199,522.50 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Joyce, seconded by Ms. Moss and approved by unanimous vote.
- C. 2021-33 – Authorizing Contract No. 2021-047 with Statewide Ford Lincoln, for the purchase and delivery of five (5) 2021 Ford Police Utility vehicles, equipment, and

accessories, as specified, through the State of Ohio, Department of Administrative Services, Cooperative Purchasing Program for a total price not to exceed \$251,505.00 (RTA Capital Fund, Fleet Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Serrano, seconded by Mayor Byrne and approved by unanimous vote.

- D. 2021-34 – Amending Sections 620.02 and 620.03 of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- E. 2021-35 – Amending Chapter 622 “Appointments and Promotions” of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Chief McCall.

Ms. Moss asked for clarification as to who is on the Executive Management Team. She asked for a copy of the team with their titles and contact information. She noticed that Sheryl King Benford is not on the list. Ms. Benford said the position is listed in 622.01 (b). Ms. Moss believed that this was not clear. Ms. Benford clarified that in 622.01 it lists the positions the CEO is authorized to appoint and remove from those positions. The CEO must consult with and obtain approval of the Board prior to filling the position of the General Counsel, Deputy General Manager of Legal Affairs and also needs to consult with the board regarding salary, demotion and position of that position.

After discussion, it was approved by unanimous vote.

- F. 2021-36 – Amending Chapter 624 “Collective Bargaining Agreements” of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Joyce, seconded by Mayor Byrne and approved by unanimous vote.
- G. 2021-37 – Amending Section 640.06 “Charitable Activity” of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority and moving it to the Personnel Policies, the adoption of which was moved by Chief McCall, seconded by Mr. Serrano and approved by unanimous vote.
- H. 2021-38 – Authorizing the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority to enter into a purchase and sale agreement in the amount of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000.00) with Triban Investment, LLC, an Ohio Limited Liability Company, for property known as Cuyahoga County Permanent Parcel Numbers 313-21-030 and 313-21-031 and located at the northwest corner of Cordova Avenue and Madison Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio 44107, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Chief McCall and approved by unanimous vote.
- I. 2021-39 – Authorizing a lease agreement with the Downtown Cleveland Alliance for property adjacent to the Settlers Landing Rapid Transit Station located at 1199 W. Superior Avenue at Robert J. Lockwood Jr. Drive, Cleveland, Ohio, for a renewal term of two years at \$10.00 per year, with one option to extend for one year, for use as a dog park, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Joyce, seconded by Mr. Serrano and approved by unanimous vote.
- J. 2021-40 – Authorizing a lease agreement with Century Federal Credit Union for property in the Hayden District Garage located at 1661 Hayden Avenue, East Cleveland, Ohio

44112 for a renewal term of two years with one option to extend for one additional year at \$2,800 per year, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.

- K. 2021-41 – Amending employment agreement of India L. Birdsong as General Manager and Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority and authorizing the execution of the second amendment to that agreement, the adoption of which was moved by Chief McCall, seconded by Mr. Joyce.

Ms. Moss asked for a roll call. She added that the Board created an Ad Hoc Compensation Committee to discuss and create a policy around compensation. Mayor Weiss agreed to chair that committee. The roll was called. There were eight (8) ayes and one abstention from Mayor Koomar. The resolution was approved by a majority vote.

- L. 2021-42 – Agreement authorizing a one-time supplemental payment to Floun'say R. Caver, PhD. as compensation for his exemplary service as Interim Secretary-Treasurer of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Chief McCall, seconded by Ms. Moss. The roll was called. There were eight (8) ayes and one abstention from Mayor Koomar. The resolution was approved by a majority vote.
- M. 2021-43 - Appointing Rajan D. Gautam to the position of Secretary-Treasurer of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Chief McCall, seconded by Ms. Moss. The roll was called. There were eight (8) ayes and one abstention from Mayor Koomar. The resolution was approved by a majority vote.

Mayor Koomar abstained due to him being new to the Board.

Interim Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Dr. Caver presented the report. He expressed how honored he was to serve in this position, but looks forward to Rajan Gautam taking over as the S-T. Mr. Gautam said he looks forward to working with the Board in this new position.

Mayor Weiss had asked staff to provide two years of ridership information to see the pre-COVID data for comparison purposes. Today's data is pre COVID, COVID and then year to date 2021 information. As it relates to ridership last year we were in the 50% to 55% ridership drop. March we are at a 37% drop. Last year, March was half a month of regular ridership and half of the Stay at Home Order. After March and into April we'll start to see an apples to apples comparison of how ridership is performing as compared to the time periods when we have been suppressed by COVID.

RTA has been a pivotal partner within the community to help ensure that transportation is not a barrier to anyone who needs a ride to a vaccination center. Since March 16th, when the Wolstein Center opened, we've offered 1,900 total rides taking people from parking lots to Wolstein Center to get their vaccination. Rev. Lucas talked about an opportunity for us to offer rides to our most vulnerable customers, which are paratransit customers. And since March 16th, we've provided 637 free trips on paratransit to vaccination centers. The program that we have allows our paratransit customers not only to go to the Wolstein Center, but any vaccination center that may be in their community. Rev. Lucas thanked Nick Davidson and his operators for helping to get people to their vaccinations.

Ridership is the key correlate to passenger fares. March passenger fares are down approximately 35% mirroring the ridership drop. Sales tax is the number one source of revenue for the Operating Budget. Year to date sales tax is about even. Employment is a key driver to regional sales. But we have had the opportunity through federal policy, particularly those policies which provided stimulus checks related to unemployment and just in general, in a manner such that it has buttressed the economy. Although we have been in a pandemic, our major revenue source, sales tax has been fairly strong and consistent during that time for a period. When we first thought about what could happen related to the Stay at Home Orders and the like and the drop in economic activity, there was a possibility that many agencies were expected and our agency expected an upwards of 20% of a drop. So that has remained robust, which allows some financial stability, but surely allows us to see that the federal policies are working to buttress an economy and keep people working in buying.

Dr. Caver summarized the federal stimulus funding:

- CARES Act funding totaling \$112 million. This was the first stimulus in COVID related funds.
- Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSAA), under which we have been allocated approximately \$67 million. We haven't drawn these funds down yet, but we are in the process of ensuring that we get all of the paperwork done so that we can begin to draw these funds down.
- We have a third set of money that has been signed into legislation on March 12, 2021. This is the American Rescue Plan under which the Cleveland Urbanized Area is going to receive \$150 million. We're estimating that RTA will receive approximately \$136 million under this grant. The legislation and the rules for receiving these funds and the allocation are not yet available.

These funds will provide stability for the Authority and the community, as well as to advance priorities that have been defined by the Strategic Plan and others in our organization.

Ms. Moss asked if the Board can have an accounting on how the money is going to be spent. Dr. Caver said they should have that in three weeks. Dr. Caver added that the Executive Team has been meeting and looking at prioritizing those funds. They are guided by the Strategic Plan that the Board approved last November. In addition, they are also talking about ways in which they can ensure transparency. Mayor Weiss thanked Dr. Caver and the team for providing additional information, particularly on the ridership with the 2019 numbers. It was helpful for him to see how we were doing in comparison to the last non-COVID impacted year.

Acting General Manager/CEO Report

Dr. Caver presented the report. RTA is collaborating with the community to provide "Rides for Community Immunity". These are rides for those who want to take the vaccination. We were originally rewarded \$770,000 from ODOT and subsequently were awarded about \$200,000 more, so about \$900,000 was awarded to RTA to ensure that transportation is never a barrier to vaccination. We've been engaged with United Way, the City Health Department, the County representatives out of the County Executive's office and the County Health Department.

We've provided up to 15,000 All Day passes that are being distributed through social service agencies and the 211 Center. You can also get passes at community libraries. The community can also use the computer to apply for the pass. We've worked with FEMA and

others in that process. The Transit Police Department is very active in the Wolstein area, providing security and maintaining traffic flow. On the height of their days, there are 6,000 people coming into the Wolstein Center a day for vaccinations and immunity.

State of Good Repair projects are continuing to advance the organization. The E. 79th Street Station was introduced March 30th with a virtual grand opening and is officially open. This was our last ADA key station. We had made a commitment to the federal government in the 1990s to retrofit all of our key stations to ensure that they were ADA assessable and so this is the last one of those commitments. The station links to our mission of Connecting the Community as this was an approximately \$8 million investment in the Opportunity Corridor Opportunity zone. Within the last few years we will have invested upwards of \$20 million in that one corridor, to be a catalytic in the economic rebounding of that particular community. There is a side entrance from the station to Orlando Bakery. RTA is playing a role in jobs and economic development using our assets to help to create better and stronger neighborhoods. Rev. Lucas commented on how nice the ramps are for people in wheelchairs and walkers, and those who have difficulty with stairs and are much better than the elevators. Dr. Caver thanked Mike Schipper and his team for the design of the ramps and saving the Authority money.

Track work in Tower City is moving along. A portion of it will be completed by April 25th, which will return the tracks in Tower City back to their normal operation. There will still be subsequent items that need to occur. We had previously done the northern tracks in Tower City, and this completes the southern tracks. Rev. Lucas added how pleased he is of the track work and how the ADA ramps are well kept during construction.

Other State of Good Repair Capital Plan projects include the Cuyahoga River Viaduct Rehabilitation and the Red Line Fiber Optic System Replacement. RTA is placing new fiber optic cable along the Red Line. The current system has fiber optics to fiber optics, which is how we communicate from the train control system to the Main Office to allow remote access to the train control system. The fiber optic is the new Information Highway and how data moves throughout the community. When this project is complete, there will be brand new fiber from East Cleveland to the Airport. And in addition there will be opportunities at each station for a tie in, so if there be a community need for fiber optic from one site to another site, the connectors will already be placed above ground at the station instead of on the track where we would normally have it. So someone can come in and tie into it very easily. This will become a tremendous asset to Northeast Ohio as fiber optics and high speed data is becoming important to economic development, schools and communities.

The Warrensville Van Aken Substation, Tower City Portal came through this Board and Triskett Garage is receiving its upgrades for CNG at that facility. At the onset of COVID-19 we immediately came up with a short term solution of placing vinyl curtains in the vehicle, which allowed for there to be a barrier between the operator and the customers. On the big bus we are now implementing new plexiglass shields. We expect that by mid-June, all of the buses will have been retrofitted with the shields. We are working on a prototype for the paratransit vehicles. The ADA office reopened April 5th. Nick Davidson and his staff use the algorithm of the system to ensure that there's never more than four customers coming into the center, for social distancing. If you need access to the ADA office, you can now come back into the Main Office. One of the key aspects of this were for people to reapply and receive their new ADA pictures on their IDs.

The Authority has named a new Chief of Police, Deirdre Jones, who comes to us with 32 years of service in the Cleveland Division of Police. In her most recent roles of a progressively

responsible career, she was the Acting Deputy Chief of Administrative Operations for the City of Cleveland and her full time role, was the Commander of the Bureau Support Services. She comes to us with a Bachelor's degree from University of Phoenix and a Masters of Public Administration from Villanova University. She will start her position on May 3rd and we will have opportunities for her to meet individual board members to talk about both your needs as well as her thoughts and strategies along with introducing her to the community in other ways. Rev. Lucas thanked Dr. Caver for his work.

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

1. Rev. Pam Pinkney Butts – Cleveland, OH - As I've stated previously, I'm in opposition to the hiring of the new police chief due to the fact that there's a conflict of interest. I am currently suing Cleveland Police for compromise with my safety, and I don't feel safe with having her as the Chief of Police for RTA. The COVID-19 is not the pandemic. The pandemic is the compromise of the lives of the people and I want to first of all, thank RTA for putting a preacher on the board. Now let's get a woman preacher on the board that can address more specifically the need of women and children.

Another concern I've been calling over a month now about a beam that has nails hanging out of it on the wires over on E. 116th St. outside the rapid on the number 8 bus line. When it falls, it is going to kill a person and destroy our buses. I've gone everywhere I've supposed to go. The Superior Rapid escalators and that component of Superior Rapid is still not satisfactory. And I congratulate you on the 79th Street Red Line. But we need elevators. People with manual wheelchairs cannot go up those ramps, as well as we need service and we need help. We need some construction down on the East 79th Street Light Rail. I thank you for listening to me. I ask that you would hear me on my concern. I have many more and when I speak to you in our meeting Acting CEO, on tomorrow. I will be bringing some more concerns for you and I ask that you don't take lightly when I sent it to you about the compromise with my safety with the CDP which cause conflict between us in the past and I'm trying to move into the future and I do not want that woman as the police chief over my safety.

I'm suing the Police Department and there are other matters and I really applaud Steve Bitto and Mary Delgado for the fine work they do at RTA and keeping the community voice alive. Dontez Taylor is concerned that disabled people are not getting fair and equal opportunity. I'm having an event May 8th and June 19th Pre Mother's Day and Pre Father's Day and I hope that RTA will work with me to honor, celebrating memorialized mothers and fathers. I have more information. I have a flyer that is available and Mary will make sure you have it. I'll be celebrating my 19-year pastorate on August 6th through the 8th. It recognizes my being pastor of at least four of my churches. God bless you all and have a great day.

2. Dontez Taylor - Paratransit is outstanding when it comes to transportation and everything else. They accommodate you and everything. It just helps in so many ways to get you where you gotta go timely and in decent and I thank you. I hope that we can get that beam off of E. 116th by the rapid down because if it falls it will fall on some buses, and trains, some kids and families and everything and God bless.

Rev. Lucas said that Mr. Davidson is in the room and he is the Director of Paratransit. He is a paratransit rider. Dr. Caver asked Rev. Pinkney to contact our office to see if there's a safety hazard with the beams that are hanging.

3. Vivian Sharp - Thank you for notifying me about this meeting. I would like to know more about when you have meetings so that I can be a part. I am a website owner and the person that works with a lot of different people that ride on paratransit and they are in the city and I'm a radio person as well, so please let me know when you have something to let other people know. My phone number is showing, but you can always email me and I think Mr. José Feliciano has my email.
4. Henry Vororsmarti – Cleveland, OH - There is no reason for the RTA police to have so much funding. It should be cut by at least 75%.
5. Erin Gay Miyoshi - Cleveland Heights, OH - In 2021, there have been two separate instances of RTA transit police using excessive force, including most recently transit police officer Patrick Rivera pushing a 68-year old rider onto the tracks. This raises serious concerns for me about the culture of RTA's transit police and the need for them. RTA has a high number of transit police officers compared to peer agencies. It employs 3 times as many transit officers as Pittsburgh's Port Authority of Allegheny County. Many cities around the country are embracing a new approach by hiring Transit Ambassadors who are non-law enforcement representatives who assist riders, remind riders of rules, and are trained in de-escalation. I strongly encourage RTA to research Transit Ambassador programs and consider new ways to make transit safe and welcoming to riders.

Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 25, 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.

Mayor Koomar added that he spoke to Rev. Lucas before the meeting. As a new Board member he is trying to get up to speed. Unfortunately for the last meeting he was out of town and missed the meeting and Executive Session where the three items he abstained on were discussed. Accordingly, he abstained for that reason.

This meeting was adjourned at 10:07 a.m.



President

Attest: Rajan D. Santam
Secretary-Treasurer