

## Minutes

### RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:24 a.m. June 28, 2022

**Board Members:** Lucas (Chair), Moss (Vice Chair), Biasiotta, Duarte, Joyce, Koomar, McCall, Pellot, Weiss

**Not present:** Welch

**Staff:** Benford, Birdsong, Brown, Caver, Dangelo, Fields, Fleig, Freilich, Garofoli, Gautam, Houston, Kirkland, Miller, Orlando, Pfeiffer, Schipper, Talley, Togher, Walker-Minor, Wiehe

**Public:** Allred, Altena, Brihl-Pitorac, Brown, Cartwright, Gibbons, Loh, Miller, Pinkney-Butts, Quarles, Rodriquez

The meeting was called to order at 9:24 a.m. There were nine (9) board members present.

In accordance with the Ohio Open Meetings Act and House Bill 51, signed into law on February 17, 2022, and effective immediately through June 30, 2022, this meeting will be live-streamed on RTA's Board Page [www.RideRTA.com/board](http://www.RideRTA.com/board) via the meeting date for staff and members of the public. House Bill 51 allows Board members to participate by telephone or video and be considered present as if in person. It also allows Board members to vote and be counted for the purpose of determining a quorum while attending by telephone or video.

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 May 24, 2022, 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

1. Mr. Rodriquez – He is starting a group called One Voice for people with disabilities. He wants to bring back what other systems are doing around the country and how RTA can be better. RTA train stations need a police presence. The West Blvd./Cudell Station is not safe because of the area where it is located.
2. Rev. Pamela M. Pinkney-Butts – She asked about fixing the escalator at the Superior Station and accommodations and elevators at E. 79<sup>th</sup> Station. She asked how does the agenda help people of color. She is upset that the public was asked to leave the Board Room during the executive session. She commented on the race of people left in the room making decisions about RTA's money during the session.

3. Josiah Quarles – He is with Clevelanders for Public Transit (CPT). He works at the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless. He thanked RTA for launching EZfare. With EZfare boarding, delays can be avoided. System wide all door boarding brings benefits by speeding up trips by 20%. All buses need to have the validator equipment installed. It's a perfect pairing for the Transit Ambassador (TA) Pilot so that if someone does need assistance, the TA's can do that. He commended RTA for the TA program but requested an update.
4. Evangelist Anderson – She asked for more elevators, like the Lee Van Aken Station. Restrooms are needed at the rapid stations. The 48A bus needs to go back to the previous route. The 32 bus needs to be brought back. More security and cameras are needed at the rapid stations.
5. Dontez Taylor – Restrooms are needed for seniors and the disabled. The 48A and 15A needs to be brought back.
6. Carlita Gardner – Complaints are still coming in about the NextGen service specifically routes on the east side that have been dismantled. They include the 48A and 15A. The public concerns are being ignored.
7. Airric Stewart – RTA has a responsibility for the social and economic well-being of the community as it applies to the implementation of public transit. RTA has not met that responsibility. The suggestions he made in the past for the 15A have been ignored. His suggestions will still provide service to hospitals, schools and public libraries. He never received an update from Mr. Freilich from the June 9 CAC meeting.
8. Sherita Montgomery – She was pleased to see the ridership increases. The 15A and 48A routes should be restored to their previous routes. Ridership could be even better by adding back routes that travel through the interior of the city. She asked if the Board looked at the NextGen route changes and if they voted unanimously to approve those changes.

#### Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

#### Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

There were no reports from the CAC.

#### Ad Hoc Committee Reports

Ms. Pellot stated the next Ad Hoc Tech Committee Meeting is Thursday, July 21, 2022, at 5 p.m.

#### Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

##### New Hires:

- Marc Bazdar, Transit Police Officer
- Joshua Bazzoli, Legal Intern
- Melanie Brooks, Laborer

- Tiana Brown, Recruiter
- Shawn Burton, Operator
- Princess Bush, Operator
- Jarrell Fair, Laborer
- DevVon Hall, Laborer
- Randell Hampton, Operator
- Michael Jeter, Operator
- Monica Moddox, Assistant Contract Administrator
- Jordan Motley, Operator
- Zane Patterson, Business Analyst
- Mark Pry, Operator
- Katrena Smith, Operator
- Tina Taylor, Operator
- Frazier Tolliver, Operator

Promotions:

- Lamont Terrell, Equipment Repair Leader
- Keith Flagg, Equipment Repair Leader
- Ann Marie Prebish, Contract Administrator
- Jeammie Montalvo, Assistant Equipment Manager

President Lucas asked for an update on operator hiring. Mr. Fields said last May they were 100 operators down with several people in training. Through May of this year, they are 73 operators down from optimal service needs with 30+ operators in training. For Paratransit, last year, they were 24 operators down. Through May 2022, they were down to 9 operators with 6 in training. Every two weeks there is a training class. They track monthly those who have completed training. President Lucas said that paratransit ridership is up the highest it's ever been.

Ms. Moss asked if we have capacity to train people. Mr. Fields said we have the capacity and working on how to improve that. They have looked at the training cycle in general to determine needs. Ms. Birdsong added that a large part of how long operators are kept in the pipeline is another part of success. They have reduced that time and the timeframe they are training to diversify the driving experience and taking on additional duties.

Introduction of Resolutions:

- A. 2022-52 – Expressing appreciation to Roberta Duarte for her 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 Ms. McCall, seconded by Mayor Biasiotta and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Duarte will be presented a resolution plaque. She will be missed. She brought a lot of zeal and information to the Board.

- B. 2022-53 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-19 with Mott MacDonald, LLC for Project 19.43 – On-Call Signal Engineering Services - 2022 in an amount not to exceed \$450,000.00 for a period of 24 months (RTA Capital and/or Development Funds, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McCall, seconded by Mr. Joyce and approved by unanimous vote.

- C. 2022-54 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-046 with Petrochoice LLC for the furnishing of antifreeze, as specified and as required, for a period of one (1) year in an amount not to exceed \$100,259.25 (General Fund, Fleet Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Biasiotta, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote.
- D. 2022-55 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-047 with Alliance National LTD., dba DeMilta Iron & Metal LTD. for the recycling of scrap metal, as required, for a period of four years (revenue generating), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Joyce, seconded by Ms. McCall and approved by unanimous vote.
- E. 2022-56 – Authorizing Contract No. 2022-071 with Johnson Controls Fire Protection, LP to provide fire and safety inspection and testing through the State of Ohio's Department of Administrative Services Cooperative Purchasing Program, in an amount not to exceed \$131,455.25 for a period of one year, and in an amount not to exceed \$131,455.25 for one option year, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$262,910.50 (General Fund, Transit Police Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote.
- F. 2022-57 – Amending Section 410.01 Procurement Policies of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Mayor Weiss and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Moss said this provision is related to a leadership title change for the General Manager, CEO.

- G. 2022-58 – Amending Section 640.04 of the Codified Rules and Regulations and Section 100.04 of the Personnel Policies Employee Responsibility for GCRTA Property; repealing Section 628.06 Service Recognition Program of the Codified Rules and Regulations; and removing Sections 644.15 Service Recognition Program and 640.01 Disclaimer of the Codified Rules and Regulations as duplicates of Personnel Policies Sections 400.15 Service Recognition Program and 100.01 Disclaimer, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Mr. Joyce and approved by unanimous vote.
- H. 2022-59 – Amending Section 640.05 Employee Communications with the Media of the Codified Rules and Regulations and Section 100.05 Employee Communications with the Media of the Personnel Policies of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Ms. McCall and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Moss said this changes the Media Relations Manager title to Public Information Officer (PIO).

- I. 2022-60 – Authorizing the filing of grant applications with the State of Ohio for State Fiscal Year 2023 financial assistance under all State of Ohio programs, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McCall, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote.
- J. 2022-61 – Authorizing the General Manager, Chief Executive Officer to enter into an agreement with Medina County to exchange operating funds for Medina County's grant

funds and to provide for Medina County to fund a portion of the cost of the Authority's 251 flyer route, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Biasiotta, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote.

### Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer gave the report. The U.S. unemployment rate was unchanged in May at 3.6%. Ohio unemployment went down from 4% in April 2022 to 3.9% for May 2022. Cuyahoga County unemployment in April was estimated at 5.5%. The County unemployment rates are not seasonally adjusted which is what caused the increase in the reported unemployment rate previously. Over the past three years, the height of the labor force was in February 2020. After the Pandemic, we are back to pre-COVID unemployment rates.

Ridership has been slowly and steadily increasing. May ridership was up 30.6% compared to May 2021. YTD ridership is 19.1% above 2021. May passenger fares was \$2.25 million or 29.9% higher than May 2021 and 25.6% than budgeted. YTD passenger fares is 23.6% higher compared to 2021. Sales tax has continued to remain strong. Sales tax is the largest unrestricted source of revenue for RTA. June 2022 sales tax is based on the economic activity in March 2022. Receipts were 6.9% higher than June 2021 and 4.8% than budgeted. Out of the sales tax base, 17 of the 23 categories were positive in June with the largest increases in motor vehicles/watercraft.

### General Manager/CEO Report

India L. Birdsong, General Manager, CEO gave the report. Ms. Walker Minor said the Community Connection Line is a customer friendly way for customers to respond via the website at [www.riderta.com/customerservice](http://www.riderta.com/customerservice), QR code or by calling 216-621-9500. They will take concerns from the line to the Traction program where they will monitor and measure the information. The Board held their retreat June 9, 2022, at the Tri-C Corporate College Conference Center. The Board explored several topics such as building trust, inclusive communication, board effectiveness, breakout sessions, etc. The facilitators were Sharon Sobol Jordan, Marty Pollock and Margaret Brooks.

RTA received close to \$600,000 to improve transit services in greater Cleveland through the Areas of Persistent Poverty Program. Mary Flannery, Mike Schipper and Maribeth Feke have kept us in the pipeline for grant funding along with our advocacy groups in Columbus and D.C. The grant provides money for planning, engineering, or financial plans to improve transit services in areas experiencing long-term economic distress. Staff will come back to explain how they will use the funds. She thanked Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) who has been a longtime supporter of public transit and continues to advocate for RTA.

The Safety department and Rail department participated in Safety Day at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. RTA had a table with literature on safety and interactive displays. RTA was a sponsor of the MetroHealth Juneteenth Freedom Fest June 18, 2022. Juneteenth celebrates the end of slavery on June 19, 1865, and celebrates the rich history of Cleveland's African American arts and culture. RTA also had a table for a portion of the day with giveaways for the community. RTA was present at several events that day. President Lucas attended four of the Juneteenth events. DGM of Administration and External Affairs, Natoya Walker-Minor spoke at the Midwest Regional Hispanic Leadership Summit, June 7 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She spoke about

workforce and equity. RTA was the first public transit authority to sign the Hispanic Promise this past February. Panelist were from US Bank, 3M and others.

RTA Board member Valarie J. McCall and former RTA Director of External Affairs and Acting General Manager, Taras Szmagala, Sr. were honored by the Cleveland International Hall of Fame, June 7. Both moved the needle on behalf of Cleveland with their work. George Fields, DGM of Human Resources, served on a panel on workforce development at the APTA Rail Conference, June 5-8. Staff is reaching out to CSU and the Sewer District to see how we can move the needle forward. Representatives from FTA, International Transportation Learning Center and Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority were on the panel. RTA participated in the Pride Parade. This is a celebration of equity and equality for members of this community. Thirty (30) employees participated. Operation Kid Watch fingerprinted approximately 80 children.

RTA launched its partnership with EZfare and app creator Masabi, June 22 at Public Square. EZfare will allow riders to purchase fares via app. Fares are good on several transit systems in the region. This effort opens the fare capping conversation. The public, staff and local media were in attendance. President Lucas thanked her for her hard work.

### President's Report

President Lucas attended several events mentioned in the General Manager's report. He enjoyed representing the Board at all the events. He asked for an update on the Transit Ambassador (TA) Program. Ms. Birdsong said the goal is to hire 10 ambassadors. Two will have skills in mental health and social work. The rest will have fare enforcement and assistance duties. We've received over 100 applications. Mr. Fields said they are interviewing candidates. They anticipate they will narrow down the finalist over the next few weeks and take them through background checks and testing. They should have the TAs in training by late July. Dr. Caver said they are working with HR on recruitment. They expect they will train through August and have the TA's out on the system by September.

### New Business

Mayor Koomar said the ability for Board members to attend virtually and be counted in attendance and to vote, expires June 30, 2022.

### Public Comments

1. Rev. Pamela M. Pinkney-Butts – U.S. President George Washington was the first person to free slaves in 1799. The first people to free slaves were in Haiti. She is disappointed with RTA. People of color don't just serve tables and drive buses; they have minds and make decisions. Woman of color multitask. RTA has a racist agenda. Former Board President George Dixon lost his life because he raised a complaint of discrimination. All white males are counting RTA's money, but disabled people are discriminated against. The Supreme Court made a decision on women's body so will women be arrested on public transit. RTA is not listening to the public. Otherwise, the auditors would not be here today.
2. Loh – The EZfare event was good, but the External Affairs team needs to straighten out our communication issues. People thought if they use the app, they could use across the counties. The reason this is important is that other neighboring counties have joined the

program and the app can be used to purchase tickets based on each county transit authority's fare system. That message was buried. She is happy about the Board Retreat, but the location did not have good transit access. Tri-C offers assistance in their partnership with RTA. She suggested we use the downtown campus of eastern campus. The HealthLine vehicles stop too far from the platform due to some installation that was put in at each station. This is not good for people using walkers, canes and crutches.

3. Mr. Rodriguez – He plans to write a letter to Congress about paratransit scheduling wait times. The call system is outdated, and more schedulers are needed.
4. Evangelist Anderson – More security, public restrooms and elevators are needed. The 48A, 15 and 5 needs to return to their previous schedules. It's hard for seniors to walk to the stops. The cost to ride the system needs to be lowered.
5. Airric Stewart – He referenced the Juneteenth celebration and how the truth was held back about the end of slavery for two years. RTA held back the truth from the public for a year concerning his route recommendations. He repeated his proposal for the 50 bus, which would have served more people. The 48A should have been left in place and just had weekend service added. RTA will not acknowledge the information he presented to them.
6. Sherita Montgomery – She asked if the public could get copies of the slides. The Board Administrator said the slides will be posted on the Board page. She asked when her question about the Board voting on the NextGen changes would be answered. Ms. Birdsong said the presentations will be sent to her. The Board received several presentations and information was given to the public. Due diligence has been done by the staff and Board.
7. Dontez Taylor – He requested more paratransit schedulers. There were 90 calls ahead of him one day. The operators are nice. The 15A and 48A needs to return to its old service. Look at the 50 bus. Bring the trolley/circulator service back.

President Lucas requested follow up calls be made to the public. It was discussed at the Board Retreat that there will be one afternoon meeting this year.

#### Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, July 26, 2022**, 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](http://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.



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President

Attest:



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Secretary-Treasurer