

Minutes, Citizens Advisory Board July 12, 2007

Marketing Director Steve Bitto presented an update on several marketing efforts.

- “Joining the Ride” is a major marketing campaign. Its objectives are to describe the realities of driving in Cleveland, tell the human truth, and deliver a message when most appropriate to the targeted audience. RTA wants to “rally the troops,” and work with other organizations to stimulate new ridership. The campaign uses outdoor billboards, print and radio advertisements. A “test ride” kit includes brochures, referrals, new hires, seven-day flex passes, trip planner instructions, and a how-to-ride guide. It will be introduced within the next couple of weeks.
- A new “outreach bus” is being used to target students in grades 5-7. Many of them may soon be using public transportation for the first time. A visit by the bus includes an orientation to RTA, teaches students how to ride, provides them safety tips with the use of a training video, and sets a level of expectation on how they should conduct themselves. The bus first appeared during a public rally and media event in June, during Try Transit Week.
- During the coming Ingenuity Festival, the new Rapid Transit Vehicle (RTV) will be on display.
- RTA is working on the third phase of the “Moving Minds” project, placing poetry cards on all vehicles.

During a Q and A with Bitto, there was a brief discussion on:

- The Adopt-A-Shelter Program
- Establishing a business interest committee
- Changing the name of the Volunteer Action Committee (VAC).
- Adding more signage to Euclid Avenue to tell people about the progress of Corridor Project.
- Driving a Paratransit bus to the schools to educate the public about service.
- Ensuring that curbs downtown are cut out for the visually impaired.

Chairman George Zeller noted that Bitto has been very creative with a limited staff and budget, and he should be commended for a great job.

ADA Committee Chair Report

The ADA Committee did not meet in June.

Functional testing. Six weeks into the program, all is going well. Committee members would like to see either an actual test, or an employee going through the process. One out of five applicants have not been certified, which is fairly consistent with the national and state figures. There have been five appeals. The appeals panel includes staff from Legal, Medical, a member of the ADA Committee and RTA OEO officer Felicia Brooks-Williams.

The headhouse (public entrance) for the West 117th Street Station is open and the elevator is under construction. A daily status report for elevators at rail stations is available on the RTA Web site. An escalator report can be made available too.

Rail User’s Network’s (RUN) fifth International Conference will be Nov. 10-11. This organization advocates for transit, but there is a bias for rail, says Steve Albro, who will represent Paratransit.

Volunteer Action Committee (VAC) Chair Report

- The committee has been reviewing the operating guidelines. A recommendation should be ready for the group soon.
- At a future meeting, members would like to hear Danielle Willis speak about the Corridor Project. On Aug. 3, Maribeth Feke will be invited to speak about the transit waiting environment (TWE). Park Works would like to be involved in demonstration projects.

Report from General Manager Joe Calabrese

- RTA has been in the news a lot this week. A bus operator was hit in the head with a brick, and he is recovering. A passenger, doused with sulfuric acid on a bus, is also recovering.
- RTA supports the Cleveland+ program, which will market the region around the country.
- The Medical Mart issue and the proposed sales tax increase were discussed.
- RTA is making “great progress” on the Euclid Avenue construction. The first station is up, the Rapid Transit Vehicle (RTV) is here, and wires and utilities are buried. The Board will see what the stations look like in a few weeks. The Cleveland Clinic has given up on the issue with traffic circles. RTA is working with the City, with work being delayed by Cleveland Public Power (CPP). The Cleveland Athletic Club is blaming construction for a lost of business. The City will maintain Euclid Corridor right-of-ways.
- The State budget has been approved. RTA will receive \$5 million-\$6 million, up to \$ 21 million.
- Overall ridership was down in June. Bus was down 4 percent and rail was up 13-14 percent.
- OMB director Grace Gallucci has accepted a position in Chicago.
- RTA is re-organizing the Arts in Transit Committee.
- The Pass on the Pump marketing promotion received great coverage.
- RTA is reviewing its policy on biodiesel fuel, and will do some testing this year. Right now, it is more expensive than low-sulfur diesel fuel, and is not available in the quantity that RTA needs (more than five million gallons a year). RTA is working with the State to see if a station can be located here. Biodiesel works better in newer vehicles.