

Inside RTA

AUGUST
09

This RTA newsletter is published bi-monthly for Greater Cleveland public officials and community leaders. Its goal is to keep you informed of important transit issues and developments, both in the news and behind the scenes.

RTA moves quickly on ARRA federal stimulus projects

■ **TOTAL FUNDING:** On Feb. 17, President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. RTA qualifies for \$46 million in stimulus funds. Half of the stimulus package must be obligated by September, so “shovel-ready” projects receive priority. RTA combined the stimulus funds with \$19 million in existing capital grants, to create a total program of \$65 million.

■ **MOSTLY CAPITAL:** Originally, 100 percent of the funds were mandated for capital projects. In June, Congress amended the law to allow 10 percent of stimulus funds to be used for operating expenses. RTA officials welcome the change, which is \$10.1 million for RTA, as they work to balance the 2009 budget in a challenging economic environment.

■ **PRIORITY LIST:** A total of 19 projects were identified for possible funding, and then prioritized by readiness. In order to meet the “use it or lose it” mandate from federal officials, RTA staff worked quickly to advertise each project as “Invitation for Bid” (IFB) or “Request for Proposal” (RFP). “Without ARRA funding, none of these projects would have been started in 2009,” says RTA CEO & General Manager Joe Calabrese.

■ **LOTS OF WORK:** To date, RTA Trustees have awarded 23 contracts of more than \$100,000 each, including 3 for design work, 6 for construction, 3 for land acquisition, 3 for rail material and equipment, and 6 for work on the heavy-rail vehicle (HRV) overhaul. RTA has also awarded 68 small purchases of less than \$100,000 each.

■ **REPORT CARD:** To date, RTA has advertised 104 contracts on 13 projects worth \$42.4 million, using \$23.2 million in ARRA funds, and awarded work to 91 contractors on 12 projects worth \$41.6 million, using \$25.4 million in ARRA funds.

■ **ALTERNATIVES:** RTA will spend \$300,000 with transportation planning consultant PB Americas Inc. to perform an alternative analysis/environmental study for the Blue Line Corridor in Shaker Heights, especially around the Warrensville Center Road-Van Aken Boulevard intersection and the end of the Rapid Transit Blue Line. The study must be completed before work can receive federal New Starts funding.

■ **TRACK WORK:** RTA awarded a \$400,000 contract to the TransSystems Corp. to design a rehabilitation of the one-mile S-curve track on the Red Line between the West 98th and West 117th street stations. About 20.3 percent of the work, or \$81,211, will go to 3 DBEs. The track, built in 1955, needs to be replaced. The total project is estimated at \$7.7 million. Construction will be complete in mid-2011.

■ **EAST 55th STATION:** The Board awarded an \$8.54 million contract to the Albert M. Higley Co. of Cleveland to build a new, relocated Rapid Transit station at East 55th Street. The current station, built in 1956, serves both light rail and heavy rail at 2890 East 55th Street. The project includes a new station at a new site east of the present station. The station building will contain about 2,700 square feet, with a new canopy, stairs and elevator at track level, and an enclosed pedestrian bridge. It will be ADA compliant. About 20 percent of the work, or \$1.9 million, will be shared by 8 DBEs. Ground will be broken Aug. 26.

See Inside

From Page 1, Work continues on many stimulus projects

■ **PURITAS:** A May 27 ground-breaking ceremony began work on a new Red Line rail station at Puritas Avenue and West 150th Street in Cleveland's West Park neighborhood. More than 17 local companies share in the \$9.5 million in contracts awarded by the RTA Board of Trustees. The station – a key West Side location with direct access to I-71 and Hopkins International Airport -- will remain open throughout construction. About 900 people board there daily, and ridership is expected to increase when Inner Belt construction begins. The new station was designed by the DeWolff Partnership Architects, with strong community input from development corporations at Bellaire-Puritas and Kamm's Corners.

■ **MORE PARKING:** In June, the Board approved purchase of 6.7 acres on the east side of Columbia Road at First Street in Westlake for \$1.9 million, to expand the Westlake Park-N-Ride lot. The expansion will add 200 spaces to the current lot of 550 spaces, which is needed to meet the increased demand for transit during the Inner Belt reconstruction project.

■ **BROOKPARK STATION:** In June, RTA Trustees awarded a \$1.2 million contract to Bialosky + Partners Architects LLC of Cleveland to design a new Brookpark Rapid Station. More than 1,400 riders board there each day. Six DBEs will share about 20.6 percent of the work, or \$247,000. The station opened April 20, 1969. The design of the new facility will include replacement or reutilization of the present buildings, the drop-off area, bus loop tunnel, platform and a 1,000-car parking lot, plus improved landscaping along Brookpark Road. The 12-acre site borders the cities of Cleveland and Brook Park. The design should be completed next summer.

■ **THE FUTURE:** In July, the Board approved \$6 million in construction contracts and public art for the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Transit Center at Cleveland State University, as well as the purchase of 50 new Paratransit vehicles for \$4.7 million. Ground-breaking for the transit center is set for Sept. 10. The design of two other major projects – the Rapid tunnel at Hopkins Airport, and the Clifton Boulevard transit enhancement – are being evaluated.

RTA actions help balance the 2009 operating budget

■ **TIME TO MOVE:** In late July, RTA officials closed the book on poor second quarter figures, and learned exactly how much public transit funding there was in the two-year State budget. A projected budget gap of \$5.2 million meant action was necessary.

■ **TOUGH ECONOMY:** "This tough economy is hurting every public-sector agency and private-sector company," says RTA CEO & GM Joe Calabrese. "RTA is not immune from what is happening to the rest of the nation. We had hoped these actions could have been avoided, but they can't. RTA is now providing more service than we can pay for. Alone, these changes will not balance the 2009 budget, but they will help, as we continue to work on various strategies to address this crisis."

■ **TWO ACTIONS:** A 25-cent (per ride) fare increase on Sept. 1 will generate an estimated \$1.5 million this year. A service reduction that begins Sept. 20 will save RTA an estimated \$1.6 million this year, and more than \$6 million annually in future years. The reduction includes the elimination of all 12 Community Circulator routes, and modifications to 15 other low-ridership routes. Both items are included in the 2009 budget that the Board adopted in December 2008. Six public hearings on these issues were held in August 2008. RTA received verbal or written comments from more than 3,000 persons.

■ **FARE INCREASE:** The cost of a single bus or Rapid trip will rise from \$2 to \$2.25, and the cost of the popular All-Day Pass will rise from \$4.50 to \$5. For a complete fare listing, go to rideRTA.com/fares.

From Page 2, Sales tax receipts drop to record low

■ **WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?:** The sales tax, a primary source of revenue, is projected to be \$18 million below 2008 receipts by the end of the year. This is about the same amount received in 1999. When adjusted for inflation, the level of sales tax collected in Cuyahoga County in the past 12 months has dropped 9.7 percent. This is the most rapid rate of decline during the last 20 years, says George Zeller, a local economic research analyst. Because of the recession, the latest two-year State budget reduced funding to public transit by an additional 33 percent.

■ **WHAT'S BEEN DONE:** Calabrese says RTA has already taken "significant steps" to balance the budget, including: \$13.7 million in cost-saving initiatives -- a hiring freeze, a salary freeze, a reduction in administrative positions, a 3 percent salary cut for all non-union employees, travel restrictions, reduced overtime, subcontracting work, and service changes. There has also been \$20.5 million in new revenue-generating items, including the fuel surcharge and various supplemental and one-time State and Federal funding initiatives.

■ **WHY THE CIRCULATORS:** RTA policy is that, if service needs to be reduced, the changes should be designed to affect the fewest number of riders. Circulator routes impact about 2.5 percent of RTA riders, and they often duplicate other RTA services. RTA believes that eliminating the Circulators will impact only about 1 percent of its riders. Informational meetings are being held in each area, so RTA staff can help Circulator customers plan their future trips.

■ **NO OPTIONS LEFT:** "Last fall, we heard from more than 3,000 customers, with many passionate pleas to keep the Circulators," Calabrese says. "We listened, and kept the service operating for another year. The last thing we want to do is cut service, but we have no other options. We can't spend money we don't have. We tried everything we could, but in the end, the economy won."

■ **OTHER NEWS:** Under RTA's Energy Risk Management Program, RTA locks in future prices for diesel fuel. That figure is \$3.17 per gallon in 2009, but falls to \$1.85 per gallon in 2010.

Big-bus service reductions effective Sept. 20

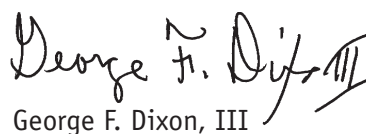
#5 Chagrin - Reduced	#49 Center Ridge - Changed	#86 Warren-Berea - Reduced
#18 W. 11th - Hinckley - Discontinued	#68 Bagley - Reduced	#87 Westwood - Discontinued
#33 Central - Discontinued	#70 Bunts - Reduced	#88 Broadway-Northfield - Reduced
#43 Lake-Wolf- Reduced	#76 Broadway-Turney - Reduced	#90F Broadway-Libby- Reduced
#46 Rocky River-Westlake- Reduced	#83 W. 130th - Reduced	#96 Butternut- Discontinued

IN CLOSING: For information about RTA, visit the automated trip planner at rideRTA.com, or call the RTAnswerline, 216-621-9500. If you would like more information on RTA, or if you have changes to the mailing list, send e-mail to jmasek@gcrta.org or call 216-566-5211.

Sincerely,



Joseph A. Calabrese
CEO/General Manager
Secretary-Treasurer



George F. Dixon, III
President
Board of Trustees

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Insider NEWS from RTA

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