

Inside RTA

APRIL

08

The RTA Letter 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.

Clinic, UH, purchase 'HealthLine' naming rights

■ **NEW NAME:** The Silver Line on Euclid Avenue is now the HealthLine, courtesy of The Cleveland Clinic Foundation and University Hospitals of Cleveland. The 25-year agreement for naming rights will generate \$250,000 annually to help RTA maintain Corridor stations and planters on the median strip. The sponsorship – valued at \$6.25 million -- is believed to be a first in U.S. transit history. This figure could grow to \$18 million with individual station sponsorships.

■ **NEW SECTION OPENS:** Another section of the Euclid Corridor Transportation Project will open this month, ahead of schedule. In November, RTA opened the section of Euclid Avenue from East 17th Street to East 55th Street. This month, RTA plans to open the section from East 55th Street to East 86th Street. That means all orange barrels will be gone from East 17th Street to East 86th Street.

■ **A NEW LOOK:** In the completed areas, residents will see new pavement, transit-only lanes, special crosswalks, landscaping and boarding from stations in the center median strip. Standard RTA buses, modified with a state-of-the-art precision docking system, will provide service on the #6 route along the stretch.

■ **QUOTE:** "This is far from the finished product," says RTA CEO & General Manager Joe Calabrese. "We are still going to install many of the amenities this project offers. We are opening the roadway now for the convenience of our customers."

■ **SAFETY FIRST:** The new look of Euclid Avenue is going to take some getting used to for pedestrians, drivers and RTA customers alike. With the changes, RTA urges everyone to obey traffic signals and use the designated crosswalks adjacent to each station. Please read the Euclid Corridor safety tips at rideRTA.com.

■ **CLINIC WORK BEGINS:** After months of negotiations on proposed changes to the Project, RTA and the Cleveland Clinic have reached an agreement. A contract was signed Jan. 28, and work began immediately on the Clinic portion, from East 86th to East 105th streets.

■ **ON TIME:** The project will be completed on time. Crews have already removed pavement, relocated utilities, and installed drainage. Under the agreement, Clinic officials will pay for any added cost to reconfigure the roadway to fit their new master plan. The center median strip will be wider and arranged differently. There will be more pedestrian lights, more plantings and more landscaping. The Clinic section will still have transit-only lanes, bike lanes and general use vehicle lanes.

■ **VEHICLE UPDATE:** More and more Clevelanders are getting a chance to view the 63-foot long state-of-the-art articulated Rapid Transit Vehicle (RTV). It was on display at the recent Auto Show at the IX Center, and is making numerous appearances at special events throughout the area. RTA has ordered 21 of these hybrid-electric vehicles from New Flyer, and 15 of them, plus the prototype, have already arrived in Cleveland.

Dixon, Kelley re-elected president, vice-president

■ **GEORGE F. DIXON III:** Dixon is believed to be the longest-serving transit system Board President in Ohio history. He joined the Board in 1992, and became President in 1994. A former national chair of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), he won APTA's Outstanding Public Transportation Board Member award in 2006.

■ **EDWARD J. KELLEY:** Kelley, Mayor of Cleveland Heights since 1998, is an appointee of the Cuyahoga County Mayors and City Managers Association. He has served on the RTA Board since 2000. For the past 17 years, Kelley has been a personnel director in the Domestic Relations Division of the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas.

Senate Bill would form Task Force for transit funding

■ **S.B 300:** State Senator Capri S. Cafaro (D-32, Hubbard) has introduced a bill strongly supported by the Ohio Public Transit Association (OPTA). Senate Bill 300 would create a task force to study Ohio's public transportation funding, and issue a report by June 30. It has been assigned to the Highway and Transportation Committee, where Cafaro is a member.

■ **SUPPORT:** "We salute Senator Cafaro for introducing this bill," says Joe Calabrese, OPTA President and RTA General Manager. "Because public transit dollars come from the General Fund, we have taken far more than our share of cuts recently. Every major transit system in Ohio is either laying off employees and/or reducing service. With gas at more than \$3 a gallon, now is the time to expand public transit service, not reduce it. We need to find a dedicated funding source, and this bill will help us do just that."

■ **FUNDING CUT:** From 2001- 2006, transit funding from the State was reduced by 63 percent, while the cost of diesel fuel rose more than 400 percent. Ohio funding for public transit is less than 5 percent of the amount dedicated in neighboring states with similar populations.

■ **DUTIES:** According to the legislation, the task force would review public transportation funding in Ohio, study its adequacy, study the need for a stable, dedicated source of funding, and evaluate state funds spent by state agencies that provide transportation services. The task force would issue a report to the Governor and General Assembly by June 30, and then disband. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), which oversees public transit in Ohio, is assembling its own task force to study the same issues.

OPTA seeks federal support for 'clean and green' plan

■ **ON CAPITOL HILL:** RTA's Joe Calabrese, who is President of the Ohio Public Transit Association (OPTA), recently spent time on Capitol Hill lobbying for transit needs, especially OPTA's five-year "clean and green" proposal. It would replace 500 buses in Ohio that are beyond their useful life with environmentally friendly buses. A delegation from RTA met with two key members of the Ohio delegation – Marcy Kaptur(D-9) of Toledo and Ralph Regula (R-16) of Canton. As a result, the following letter was sent.

■ **THE LETTER (in part):** "I am writing regarding OPTA's request on behalf of its 60 public transit members for federal funding to support its Clean and Green Bus Replacement Initiative. I ask that you place the item on the discussion agenda at the next Ohio delegation meeting. As a result of this proposal, Ohio would have the most environmentally friendly transit fleet in the nation, The buses would be distributed throughout the state, and every Ohio Congressional District would be positively impacted."

RTA adds more commuter coaches & free parking

■ **WESTLAKE EXPANSION:** With the rising costs of gas, much of RTA's ridership increase has been from the park-n-ride lots. With the help of state funding, RTA recently expanded the capacity of park-n-ride lots in Strongsville and North Olmsted. Design work is continuing on an expansion of the Westlake Park-n-Ride lot. It will add 200 spaces to the current 550 spaces.

■ **NEW RULES:** New federal regulations took effect April 30 to more clearly limit the role of public transit systems in offering charter bus service. That means that RTA can no longer accommodate individual and group trip requests. There will be no more "football flyer" bus service to Browns Stadium, or to NASA-Glenn open houses or to the Burning River Fest. Some trips for elected officials and human services organizations may be allowed, if certain criteria are met. The potential penalty for violation is the loss of all federal funding.

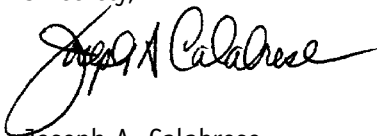
■ **OTHER NEW VEHICLES:** Later this year, RTA will spend \$2.3 million to purchase eight new Circulator vehicles. Delivered in 2009, they will replace current vehicles that need to be retired. RTA also maintains a fleet of 77 Paratransit vehicles to serve the disabled community. About 20 new replacement vehicles arrived in 2007, and 20 more are due in 2008.

■ **EMINENT DOMAIN:** Recent changes to Chapter 163 of the Ohio Revised Code may affect future use of RTA and other agencies to acquire land for public use. Under the new rules, landowners who object to RTA's use of eminent domain to take their property can send a letter of appeal to the three appointing authorities – the City of Cleveland, the Cuyahoga County Commissioners, and the Mayors and City Managers Association. If a majority of the elected officials who appoint the RTA Board of Trustees vote to veto the project, it will not proceed.

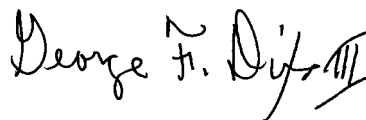
■ **COMMUTER COACHES:** RTA has added six new MCI over-the-road coaches to its fleet. The 45-foot coaches are among the largest in Ohio. They are primarily used for premium service to Park-n-Ride lots. RTA now has 32 MCI buses in its fleet. Nine coaches are 45-feet long and seat 57 passengers each. The other 23 are 40-feet long and seat 49 passengers each. RTA started its MCI fleet in 2001. The coaches feature airline-style high-back reclining seats, drop-down tray tables and reading lights for each seat, and overhead luggage storage. Each bus is air-conditioned and can accommodate two wheelchairs. The ride is smoother and quieter than a conventional bus, RTA says.

IN CLOSING: For personalized schedule information, visit rideRTA.com, or call the RTAanswerline, 216-621-9500. If you would like more information on RTA, or if you have changes to the mailing list, please send e-mail to jmasek@gcrta.org, or call 216-566-5173. Copies of *Inside RTA* are available on rideRTA.com as Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files. This newsletter is now available as an e-mail attachment. If you would like to receive this newsletter as e-mail and help reduce our costs, write to jmasek@gcrta.org.

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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