

Nominations sought for GM award

Nominations for the RTA General Manager's Customer Service Award will be accepted until Jan. 31, 2009.

The award recognizes employees or employee groups for exceptional customer service. The award is given annually to a small number of recipients.

All employees or employee groups are eligible for the award. An employee group could be a task force, team, or any combination of employees who work together on a project.

External or internal customers (no self-nominations) can nominate employees. Nominators should complete the nomination form and submit it to CEO/General Manager Joe Calabrese. Nomination forms can be obtained from rideRTA.com, or by calling 216-566-5283. Calabrese will review all nominations for compliance with criteria and make the final selection of recipients.

Recipients must meet one or more of the following:

- Solving an extraordinary problem, achieving or exceeding a significantly difficult goal that serves internal and/or external customers.
- Successful implementation of an innovative customer service idea or concept where the result is identifiable and measurable.
- Outstanding act of customer service that brings positive recognition to the Authority or results in a delighted customer.

All recipients must have continued excellence in overall job performance.

The accomplishments should have been achieved within the calendar year for which the award is being given.

Recipients will be recognized at a Board of Trustee meeting, and at RTA's annual Awards Banquet.

Trolley ridership: 1,000,000 in 2008

It was probably the most surprising lunch Jessica Wilks will ever have.

Wilks, who works in the Warehouse District, took a trolley to meet friends at Tower City on Dec. 23.

As her feet touched the sidewalk, she was greeted by TV crews, two famous Radio City Rockettes, and RTA officials.

CEO Joe Calabrese offered her a handshake. "Congratulations, you are the one millionth rider on our trolleys this year."

Wilks received a downtown getaway package, tickets to the Radio City Christmas Spectacular, dinner at House of Blues, tickets to the Great Lakes Science Center, and a one-night stay at the Marriott Hotel at Key Center. All gifts were donated by the merchants.

A daily transit rider, Wilks boards the Red Line at the Triskett station. Downtown, she often uses the trolleys to get around.

"When I left the office for lunch, this is not what I expected," she laughed. "I am a little shocked. It's nice that RTA is doing this. I love the trolleys and I love the trains."

"Our trolleys have been extremely successful this year," Calabrese notes. "More than 5,000 smiling customers ride our trolleys each weekday -- greatly exceeding our expectations."

Trolley service this year is sponsored by Dollar Bank. Service was introduced in 2006.

Rider's Digest



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National ice skaters glide into Cleveland

RTA can help you get a \$5 discount on tickets to see the best ice skaters in the nation.

More than 1,500 athletes, coaches, and officials will be in Cleveland Jan. 18-25, when Quicken Loans Arena hosts the U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

To obtain the \$5 discount, just take your RTA farecard to the Box Office at the Q. The discount is good for seats at any price, for any of the 15 sessions, except the final competition in Sessions 12, 13 and 14.

Tickets are also available at ticketmaster.com, but your \$5 discount only applies to tickets sold at the Arena Box Office.

Ride the RTA Rapid to reach the event each night. Service is guaranteed for 90 minutes after the action ends. For event details, write info@cleveland2009.com, or visit Cleveland2009.com.

The event will crown 12 national champions in Ladies, Men's, Pairs, and Ice Dancing in senior, junior, and novice levels. Past champions include Scott Hamilton and Michelle Kwan.

The last time the championships were in Cleveland, the event set an attendance record. This year, officials expect an economic boost of more than \$30 million.



RTA's 2009 budget filled with many challenges

RTA's 2009 budget, approved by the Board of Trustees, marks the start of another challenging year for public transit.

"This budget does not represent where RTA wants to be, but it does reflect the current state of affairs in the public transportation industry and in today's economy," says Joe Calabrese, CEO and General Manager.

RTA's \$275 million operating budget for 2009, calls for:

- Greater efficiencies.
- Wage freezes for management and non-bargaining staff.
- The elimination of 116 positions, from 2,693 to 2,577.

Despite these management actions targeted at reducing costs, Calabrese cautions that if additional funding is not secured, more service cuts and an additional fare increase are "very likely" in September 2009.

"These service cuts could be devastating to the many employees and employers in our community who rely on public transportation," Calabrese says. "They were deferred in September 2008 by a one-year funding plan initiated by Gov. Strickland designed to buy some time, until a more permanent funding plan for public transportation can be developed."

The budget situation is not unique to RTA, but represents a truly national issue. In spite of record ridership levels, increased costs and a sluggish economy are significantly impacting the budgets of transit systems from coast to coast.

Transit systems in Ohio have been especially impacted. Under the previous governor, State funding to public transit was cut by 63 percent.

"RTA's goal remains the same," Calabrese says. "We want to provide as much high-quality service as possible, with the revenue we receive. We know today, more than ever, the important role we play

in the lives of Northeast Ohioans. We take that responsibility very seriously."

Ridership growth at RTA continues.

"We expect that 2008 will show a sixth consecutive year of ridership growth -- an accomplishment never before achieved here. The fact that this was accomplished with 500 fewer employees than in 2000 is a testimony of greater efficiencies and productivity," Calabrese says.

The future

In 2008, Governor Strickland appointed a Task Force to make recommendations about the future of Ohio's transportation system and the investment needed to assure that Ohio's residents have adequate transportation choices, including the investments needed in public transportation.

One of the key recommendations in this report is for a significant increase in investment for public transportation, to not just stabilize the 60 public transportation systems throughout Ohio, but to allow them to expand needed services.

"The support of these recommendations will be crucial in shaping the transportation future of Ohio, and the transportation options available for its residents," says Calabrese, who served as co-chair of a Task Force Committee that focused on multi-modal transit investments.

Capital Projects

- Complete the design the Stephanie Tubbs Jones East Side Transit Center at CSU, and begin construction
- Begin construction on the rail station at Puritas
- Complete the design and begin construction of a new rail station at Woodhill
- Design three ADA rail station rehab projects --University/Cedar, Mayfield/East 120 and Lee/Van Aken
- Complete the design and build improvements to the Hopkins Airport rail tunnel
- Expand the Westlake Park-N-Ride lot
- Purchase 30 new Paratransit vehicles
- Replace the Shaker Square light-rail crossings

Ride RTA to fun at Quicken Loans Arena

Keep yourself warm, and free from salt and snow. Use RTA to reach your favorite events at Quicken Loans Arena.

Park for free at many Rapid Transit stations, and ride the Rapid into Tower City. From there, the Walkway to Gateway provides direct access to the Arena.

The Walkway opens two hours before each event, and service home is guaranteed for at least 90 after the event ends.

The Q hosts the U.S. Figure Skating Championships on Jan. 18-25, as well as these other events.

Cleveland Cavaliers

Jan. 9, Boston, 8 p.m.

Jan. 16, New Orleans, 8 p.m.

Jan. 27, Sacramento, 7 p.m.

Jan. 30, Los Angeles Clippers, 7:30 p.m.

Lake Erie Monsters (ice hockey)

Jan. 10, 17 and 31, at 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 11, at 5 p.m.

Jan. 14, 7:30 p.m.

MLK events are free

Monday, Jan. 19, is a national holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

RTA will offer regular weekday service that day. Most area schools will be closed, and many area students will be traveling to attend free MLK events that day. Some of those events are:

Sunday, Jan. 18

- Free Cleveland Orchestra concert at Severance Hall

Monday, Jan. 19

- Free admission to University Circle museums
- Free admission to the Rock n Roll Hall of Fame
- Free skating at Wade Oval ice rink, noon-5 p.m.
- A free community open house at Severance Hall

For details of most University Circle events, visit universitycircle.org.