

Special Digest



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REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Q: What has RTA done to reduce costs?

RTA has done a great job on controlling expenses and operating more efficiently, says Joe Calabrese, CEO and General Manager.

In fact, moves made over the past few years are now saving taxpayers more than \$25 million a year.

- The reduction of 366 positions, largely through attrition.
- The consolidation of bus districts to reduce overhead expenses
- The elimination of 106 buses from the fleet, because of more efficient maintenance procedures.
- The integration of bus service with Maple Heights and North Olmsted, saving more than \$3 million annually.
- The increasing use of new technology to greatly increase our efficiency.

Q: What are the next steps?

Public comments will guide the staff in framing a precise fare increase proposal, which will go to the Board in May.

If the Board approves the fare increase at that meeting, new fares could take effect July 3.

RTA will use that time to communicate the changes to the public.

"It is important that RTA continue to meet the transit needs of the community, and that can only happen if adequate resources are available," says CEO & General Manager Joe Calabrese.

RTA seeks a fare increase, eight public meetings set

RTA has held the line on across-the-board fare increases since 1993 – more than 13 years, and longer than any other major transit system in the nation. A transit expert recently talked with National Public Radio and called that feat "remarkable."

RTA needs to generate at least \$8 million of additional revenue annually to offset projected deficits in the operating budgets in 2007 and 2008.

Rising fuel costs are the problem. RTA's budget for diesel fuel has increased from \$4 million in 2002, to more than \$13 million in 2006.

In recent years, State funding for transit has been cut by more than 63 percent.

RTA Trustees, as well as members of two "blue-ribbon" panels established to review the budget situation, agree that a fare increase is warranted, and that a reduction in the level of services offered is unacceptable.

In market research conducted by RTA in 2005, the overwhelming majority of customers surveyed also favored a fare increase over a reduction in services.

CEO & General Manager Joe Calabrese says RTA's has only 3 options to resolve future deficits;

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Eight hearings set to present fare proposal

RTA has scheduled eight public hearings to collect comments on a proposed fare increase. Each hearing is being held at a facility served by RTA, and each site is accessible. Written comments will be accepted through May 15. Send them to RTA's Marketing & Communication Department, 1240 W. Sixth St., Cleveland, Ohio 44113, or e-mail them to public-comment@gcrta.org

5:30 p.m. Monday, April 24

The Helen Brown Center, 16100 Euclid Ave.,
East Cleveland
Served by #28, #41A, #41C

6 p.m. Tuesday, April 25

Schaaf Community Center, 5983 W. 54th St.,
Parma
Served by #79A

6 p.m. Wednesday, April 26

Community Center, 1 Monticello Blvd.,
Cleveland Heights
Served by #7x, #9X, #40

6 p.m. Friday, April 28

Civic Center, 21016 Hilliard Road,
Rocky River
Served by #55X, #808

11 a.m. Monday, May 1

University Center Auditorium, 2121 Euclid Ave.,
Cleveland State University
Served by #6, #9, #47, #61, #51X, #55X, #75X

5:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 2

Zone Recreation Center, 6301 Lorain Ave.,
Cleveland
Served by #22, #45 and #66 - Red Line Rapid

6 p.m. Wednesday, May 3

Fatima Family Center, 6600 Lexington Ave.,
Cleveland
Served by #4, #38

5:30 p.m. Thursday, May 4

Murtis H. Taylor Family & Community Resource
Center, 13411 Union Ave., Cleveland
Served by #801

Behind the decision

(Continued from front)

cut service, raise fares, or both cut service and raise fares.

"Our customers have already told us that, after 13 years of stability, they would favor a fare increase over service cuts. Overall, they rated our service as very good, and our value as excellent. We appreciate their feedback and support."

Only 16 percent of RTA's operating budget comes from fares, while 70 percent comes from a one percent countywide sales tax. This year's projected tax income will buy \$85 million less than in 2000, *The Plain Dealer* reported.

RTA is looking at other revenue-generating options, such as adding transit advertising to bus shelters, something that is common throughout the transit industry.

Q: Will money from a fare increase go to pay for the Euclid Corridor Project?

NO. Not one penny of fare revenues goes to pay for the Euclid Corridor, or any of RTA's capital projects. RTA does receive money from the Federal government, but that can only be used to buy capital items, like buses and upgrading rail stations.

RTA has received special earmarked funding for the Euclid Corridor Transportation Project, but that can only be used for that specific project.

None of these funds can be used to cover operating expenses – such as diesel fuel, employee wages or health-care benefits.