

Minutes

RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:25 a.m., March 24, 2020

Present: Clough (Chair), Lucas (Vice-Chair) Bibb, Byrne, Joyce, McCall, Moss, Pellot, Serrano, Weiss

Not present: None

Also Present: Anderson, Benford, Birdsong, Brooks-Williams, Burney, Caver, Dangelo, Davis, Fields, Garofoli, Gautam, Jones, Kirkland, Laule, Lewis, Pickett, Schipper, Sutula, Togher

Mayor Clough called the meeting to order at 9:25 a.m. The secretary called the roll and reported that ten (10) board members were present. This meeting was conducted by teleconference for members of the Board in accordance with the March 9, 2020 order of the Governor of the State of Ohio declaring a public health emergency and the March 17, 2020 order of the Director of the Ohio Department of Public Health prohibiting mass gatherings of fifty (50) or more persons in a single room and strongly recommending avoiding gatherings of more than ten (10) people.

The Secretary advised that notice of this meeting has been posted more than twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting, that the usual notification has been given the news media and other interested persons, and that all requirements of the Ohio Revised Code and Rules and Bylaws of this Board regarding notice of meeting have been complied with.

Minutes

Mayor Clough stated that the minutes from the February 18, 2020 Board Meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed and asked whether there were any additions and/or corrections. There were no corrections. Mayor Clough asked for the minutes to be approved. Ms. Moss asked to abstain. There were eight (8) ayes and two (2) abstentions by Ms. Moss and Ms. McCall.

Public Comments

Public comments on agenda items were accepted via email at BoardComment@gcrta.org

1. Audrey Gerlach – Ms. Gerlach emailed a letter dated March 23, 2020 on behalf of Joe Marinucci, President and CEO of the Downtown Cleveland Alliance (DCA) requesting support for Resolution No. 2020-25 for the reauthorization of the Downtown Cleveland Special Improvement District. This letter will be added to the record.
2. Sam McNulty – Mr. McNulty asked if Resolution No. 2020-23 with Carnegie Management and Development Corporation is transparent and arms-length. He also followed up on a letter he sent Jan. 7, 2019 where he expressed opposition to the development of RTA owned land adjacent to the Red Line Greenway. This letter will be added to the record.

Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

This was postponed for the next meeting in hopes that if we are past the COVID-19 situation, they can appear in person.

Introduction of Resolutions

- A. 2020-20 – Authorizing a change order to Contract No. 2014-040 with Applied Graphics, LTD. for the exercise of an option for the purchase of bus exterior graphics production and installation services for up to 25 coaches, as specified, for a price not to exceed \$108,075.00 (RTA Development Fund, Fleet Management Department budget) the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mayor Byrne and approved by unanimous vote.
- B. 2020-21 – Authorizing Contract No. 2019-144 with Michelin North America Inc. for the furnishing of tire and wheel maintenance services and for the leasing of radial tires, as specified and as required, for a period of five (5) years, at a total contract amount not to exceed \$5,410,542.00 (General Fund, Fleet Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mr. Joyce and approve by unanimous vote.
- C. 2020-22 – Authorizing Contract No. 2020-016 with Delta Railroad Construction, Inc. for Project 52S – Light Rail Track Rehabilitation - Kinsman to Buckeye-Woodhill, as specified and as required, in an amount not to exceed \$6,695,746.00 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mayor Weiss and approved by unanimous vote.
- D. 2020-23 – Authorizing the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority to execute a Development and Use agreement with Carnegie Management and Development Corporation, an Ohio Corporation, to advance the Columbus Road Transit-Oriented Development Project, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Byrne, seconded by Mr. Bibb and approved by unanimous vote.
- E. 2020-24 – To amend Resolution No. 2019-92, authorizing the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority to enter into a purchase and sale agreement, including an additional contribution for Transit-Oriented-Development, with Civic Property Development, LLC, for property located at 5508-5810 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Oh 44113, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mr. Joyce and approved by unanimous vote.
- F. 2020-25 – Authorizing the General Manager to sign a petition supporting the 2021-2025 expansion of the Downtown Cleveland Improvement District and Comprehensive Services Plan and authorizing expenditures for the Authority's assessments in an amount not to exceed \$223,946.61 for those years (Programming and Planning budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mayor Byrne. Ms. McCall asked to recuse. There were nine (9) ayes and one recuse from Ms. McCall.
- G. 2020-26 – Establishing the GCRTA 2020-2024 Affirmative Action Goals for Equal Employment Opportunity, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Ms. McCall and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Moss asked if this can be reviewed every six months. She asked if items scheduled for review can be added to the meeting agenda so they can track that items are followed up on.

Interim Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Dr. Caver gave the report. March sales tax was \$1.6 million higher than March 2019 and \$1.1 million higher than the March estimate. YTD through March was \$1.9 million or 3.5% higher than the 2020 estimate and \$3.3 million or 6% higher than the 2019 actuals through March. This number will become depressed throughout the year with social distancing and stay at home orders from the Governor. Passenger fares through February compared to budget is \$2.5 million, just slightly down about \$300,000. YTD fares were \$6.3 million or \$500,000 above expectations. Ridership declined in February by 5%. The average weekday ridership was down 8% and the average weekend ridership was down 4%. The mode with highest decline was rail, down 8%.

Immediately after the COVID-19 notification, staff was asked to look at ridership daily. For the week of March 16, bus ridership declined around 50%. Rail ridership declined between 45-50%. Park-N-Ride ridership peaked at 90% decline by the end of last week. P-N-R service was discontinued today. Paratransit ridership dropped since a lot of those customers are at a high risk for the COVID-19 virus, which resulted in a 50% decline in ridership. Normally in a week, 10,000 Paratransit trips were provided. Total system ridership was down on average 50%.

General Manager, Chief Executive Officer's Report

Ms. Birdsong gave the report. She thanked the Board, staff and customers. This is unprecedented to have this type of health crises affect the nation and Cleveland. Especially employees on the front lines. RTA provides an essential service to the public along with fire, EMS, teachers and others. RTA will follow suit as well. Park-N-Ride and downtown trolley service has been suspended effective today in response to the Governor's Stay At Home order and the decline of ridership. Staff will make sure there will not be duplication of routes. The public was asked not to attend today's meeting. The meeting is being live streamed on Facebook for their participation. Service may be pared down as needed. There is a plan for reduction of service as ridership declines. Staff has spoken to state, region and U.S. officials to determine if plans are on par with other agencies.

Management has instituted social distancing on the bus and rail. Signs were placed on every other seat and the first few rows behind the operator to create space. Rear door exiting is required with entrances flowing through the front door. Customers are asked not to approach the operator beyond the yellow line to create social distancing for the operator. All non-essential out of state travel is effective until further notice. No one is currently traveling out of the state. All in-state travel will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by her and executive management. There is a 24-hour cleaning procedure for buses and trains, which was modeled after the New York MTA. Wipes were provided to employees for their personal space. Mask are allowed to be worn by operational employees at their discretion. Guaranteed paid sick leave up to two weeks in an event a quarantine is allowed when supported by a medical document. Non front line staff have rotating or stay at home work schedules in place. IT has ordered 40-100 laptops for staff. The Main Office is not open to the public past the lobby. Transit Police is monitoring the space. Only employees or people with appointments will be allowed in the building. They are looking at ways for the ADA office to speak to customers virtually. They are looking at taking temperatures of employees. Supplies was ordered.

Mr. Bibb thanked the staff and front line workers. He requested staff get ahead of the curve as far as the financial impact to see how RTA will come out of it. He asked for weekly updates on the financials and that 3rd and 4th quarter investments be suspended. He asked that the Board get engaged with senior leadership on a coordinated lobbying effort to ensure public transit will be an important investment post COVID-19. Mr. Gautam said they are looking at the revenue. There are declines in the cash collections as well as credit card sales from the week of March 2-9, with a 13% decline. The

week of March 16, cash collections declined 34%. Times are uncertain as to the data they can base their projections on. Reports from the Federal Reserve estimated declines have changed rapidly. Second quarter GDP estimate declines were reported at 24%, 30% and 50%. They are looking at projections based on the changing estimates. Sales tax represents 76% of operating revenue, the largest revenue source. The impact on the sales tax will be available by mid-late April. Last year ended with a strong ending balance with over two months reserve. March sales tax reflects spending from the 4th quarter of 2019. Current declines will be reported in June. They will continue to monitor the expenditures and expenses. Mr. Bibb asked how much passenger revenue was lost so far. Rajan said that since March, cash collections have been \$1.3 million or 30% lower, but passenger fares is a smaller percentage of the operating revenue.

Ms. McCall asked staff to look at the paid leave COVID-19 policy to ensure periods of quarantining and post positive test results could exceed two weeks. Look at vulnerable populations self-quarantining first along with staff that can work from home. Ms. Birdsong said they will continue to monitor this. The two-week quarantine is in the event there is a note from their doctor for direction for quarantine specifically related to the virus. They are sending employees home who are ill and working with employees who are in a vulnerable population. Ms. McCall asked that staff review the Governor's Stay At Home directive. Doctor's notes should not be required. Ms. Birdsong said they have spoken to the lobbying representatives daily. She spoke to Senator Brown's staff, OPTA and Deputy General Manager of HR, George Fields, who is the designated representative, about the economic impact. There is potential legislation for funding. A letter was sent to highlight the importance of the funding for RTA.

Ms. Moss said that people are being told not to go to the doctor unless they have respiratory concerns, so a doctor's note may not be possible. RTA should follow the state directives. Mr. Fields said they have reviewed the Governor's directive and have pivoted to communicate to employees that a doctor's note is not needed. Ms. Birdsong requested that staff who are ill communicate with their supervisor. They will work with that employee to ensure they can work from home. Documentation will be expected from employees who may have been exposed or saw their doctor, when they return to work. Mr. Joyce asked about employees that cannot work from home like construction and what the total capacity would be of employees eligible to work from home. Ms. Birdsong said that executive staff meets daily to discuss business decisions. Around 40%-50% by department can work from home. They reevaluated to bolster the work from home efforts, rotating schedules for social distance and reallocating workspace.

Mr. Schipper said that since his division is construction, which is an essential service, job sites are active and about 75% of his staff is essential and active. The other 25% are non-essential and on rotation. His construction inspectors and engineers are visiting job sites. They are working with the contractors as they decide whether they need to adjust their crew sizes and to ensure workers are healthy. His staff has flexibility in terms of visiting the sites and rotating between projects. Schedule flexibility will be given to contractors. Mr. Bibb requested management use this crisis to look at how working from home looks like in the future. Look at office space, technology flexibility and remote models. Ms. Birdsong said that all RTA sponsored conferences were canceled and other special events have been canceled or postponed. Business meetings over ten people were made into a virtual meeting. Administration had a conference call this weekend through an app called Zoom.

Mayor Clough thanked the staff and believes the finances will drastically change. Ms. Birdsong added that the FOP contract was ratified by the membership. The tentative agreement will come to the Board in the coming months. The vote was ratified by 79 to two (2) and was negotiated after only five (5) bargaining sessions.

Public comments on non-agenda items

Comments were received via email at BoardComment@gcrta.org until the conclusion of the meeting.

1. William Tarter submitted the following questions:
 - 1) What was 1.0% county sales tax collection to RTA from January to February?
 - 2) Governor Dewine is asking state agencies to explore cuts in spending by 20% between now and end of the year. Does that affect the public transit funding to RTA from ODOT?
 - 3) Has there been any outreach to the county regarding the opiate settlement and if transportation will be a part of any consideration of the second round of funding distribution?

The questions were forwarded to staff.

2. Clevelanders for Public Transit – CPT submitted the document, *Transit Needs Your Support During COVID-19!* The full letter will be added to the record. A few highlights of the document include the following:

INCREASE TRANSIT RIDER AND WORKER SAFETY

- GCRTA should join transit agencies around Ohio that have waived fares and institute rear door boarding on all bus and BRT routes to limit operator exposure and enable social distancing between riders.
- Permanently cease criminal enforcement of fare evasion. Reallocate enforcement resources to maintain transit service.
- Identify seats not to use to provide social distancing between passengers.
- Increased access to restrooms, with hot water and soap for hand washing as recommended by the CDC for riders transferring between buses and operators.
- Access to hand sanitizer for riders. Protective gloves and sterilizing wipes for all transit workers to wipe down work surfaces.
- Employees who believe they are high-risk or live with someone who is high-risk should stay home, with pay.
- Operator pay should be unaffected by service reductions related to the pandemic. If there aren't enough runs for operators, they should stay home, with pay.
- GCRTA must keep the public informed of operational developments and decisions during the pandemic.
- GCRTA must ensure that all Board and Committee meetings remain open to the public during the pandemic using accessible technology.

Transit riders and workers are depending on GCRTA Board members and elected officials to use their political power and influence for the benefit and protection of us all. When this crisis is over, GCRTA and elected officials must sustain today's demands for substantial increases in funding for equitable, safe, reliable and accessible public transit.

Executive Session Requested


10:10 a.m. - Mayor Clough asked for a motion to go into executive session to conduct discussions with GCRTA's General Counsel concerning disputes involving GCRTA that are the subject of pending or imminent court action, and to discuss the security arrangements and emergency response protocols for a public body or a public office. It was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mayor Weiss. There were eight (8) ayes and none opposed.

10:58 a.m. – Mayor Clough asked for a motion to come out of executive session. It was moved by Mr. Bibb, seconded by Ms. Pellot. There were eight (8) ayes and none opposed.

Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 14, 2020 in the Board Room of the Authority, Root-McBride Building, 1240 West Sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44113.

This meeting was adjourned at 10:56 a.m.



President

Attest: 

Interim Secretary-Treasurer