

Minutes

RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:03 a.m. October 26, 2021

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

Not present: None

Staff: Benford, Birdsong, Burney, Caver, Coffey, Dangelo, Davidson, Fields, Garofoli, Gautam, Ghanem, Johnson, Kirkland, Miller, Mothes, Orlando, Rusnov, Sutula, Talley, Tarka, Togher, Walker-Minor

Public: Gibbons, Loh, Rodriquez

President Lucas called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. The secretary called the roll and reported that ten (10) board members were present.

This meeting was live-streamed on RTA's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/rideRTA) for staff and members of the public. Based on Centers for Disease Control guidance to continue to avoid large events and gatherings and Ohio Department of Public Health advice that businesses may continue to require mitigation measures, as well as RTA's interest in protecting community and employee health and safety, several measures were put in place for in-person attendance, which are spelled out on the meeting notice. The public was allowed to attend the meeting in-person.

The Secretary advised that notice of this meeting have 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.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

President Lucas recognized several members of the ADA/paratransit community who were in attendance today in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. A bus wrap is on display outside the Main Office. He expressed how he enjoys serving as the President. When he found out he would be paraplegic while in the hospital years ago, he noticed pamphlets that said he should not allow a wheelchair to define his life. He has lived his life with that motto. Framed photos of the community were passed out. A special video was shown to honor the individuals during the meeting. Ms. Natoya Walker Minor passed out the photos and thanked all of the participants. Rev. Lucas thanked the staff for their work. Chief McCall asked that this not be the last time we acknowledge this group. She commended the leadership and the leadership of President Lucas as a voice and advocate.

Minutes

President Lucas stated that the minutes from the September 28, 2021 had been previously distributed and reviewed, and asked whether there were any additions and/or corrections. There were no corrections. The minutes were approved.

Service Redesign

Joel Freilich, Director of Service Management, made the presentation. The report is in regards to concerns expressed in the last meeting about a few routes on the NextGen Redesign. After the

meeting, staff will follow up with the Councilperson where the routes are in question as well as any other individuals who requested a response. The issues raised by the public and community leaders were analyzed. One key question they advised the CEO/GM was should in fact any RTA bus trip run on Walden Avenue in Cleveland. More than 20 years ago, nearly all #15A service on Walden was removed due to low ridership. Only a few rush-hour #15A trips on Walden were retained. Those few trips had a little bit more riders than the discontinued. More than 10 years ago, RTA renamed #15A the "#15 via Walden." Next Gen was a big community conversation about rider's priorities that led to input that we needed a grid of very high frequency routes leading to jobs, education and healthcare supported by strong crosstown routes that connect those routes forming a strong grid so that when people transfer they can do so efficiently. That conversation led to a complete overhaul of the system. As a part of that, NEXT GEN removed trips via Walden (just 3 per direction) in favor of consistent, 15-minute service on Harvard serving Lee-Harvard Plaza.

The discontinued stops are 0.1 to 0.6 miles from improved #15 service. Walden lies between Kinsman and Harvard, which has improved service. Some riders can choose other improved routes (e.g., #40). RTA will maintain the NEXT GEN service as it is, due to: Low usage on Walden trips (Ward 1 boardings + alightings = 17/day) and the need for frequent service on #15 to jobs, education and health care. Another question raised in this community was should all #48 trips serve Marymount. This route like the #40 is an important North/South connector route. Pre-NEXT GEN, half of weekday daytime #48 trips split off the main route and ended at South Miles Rd instead of Marymount Hospital (these trips were labeled #48A). With NEXT GEN, all #48 trips serve Marymount (result is 30-min service). RTA will maintain the NEXT GEN #48 (all trips to Marymount) to prioritize access to health care and jobs at Marymount. Unlike Walden, all stops on the former #48A branch continue to be served by the #50. They withdrew a five-day #48 branch from the neighborhood, but they went to the same stops with the new NextGen #50. The #50 (like #48A) provides one-seat access to UH, Cleve. Clinic, CWRU, Univ. Circle, and 12 connecting routes (incl. #48, all rail lines, HealthLine) and the #50 (unlike #48A) operates 7 days a week vs. only five. In addition, many can walk to the improved #40. It does not pass through Shaker Square but meets the light rail at the E. 116th Street Rapid Station.

Did Next Gen improve service in Ward 1? Yes, NEXT GEN improved frequency on many routes including routes in the Ward and beyond the Ward. NEXT GEN increased service from 5 days to 7 days at #50 (former #48A). NEXT GEN improved the linkage between Ward 1 and key locations like Tri-C East, Tri-C Metro, Cleveland State University, UH Ahuja Medical Center, Marymount Hospital, University Circle and Employment opportunities throughout the region. NEXT GEN improved access to jobs, education, and healthcare. There is no ward in the city where all jobs are only within the ward. In conclusion, RTA will maintain the new NEXT GEN service in this area.

Dr. Caver added that we looked at NextGen and knew a few years ago and knew there would be changes. The Ward 1 questions were good. Staff stayed true to what the macro community asked us to do, which was to prioritize frequency and prioritize routes that went to jobs, education and healthcare. Service increased on the #15 taking patrons to jobs, education and healthcare out east and better link to downtown on a frequent grid. In this community, no neighborhood lost service except for Walden, which was small. The 48A/50 connection was increased between the E. 116th community and south Miles area. The service is appropriate, but it does not mean that changes cannot be considered quarterly. Ms. Birdsong added that Ms. Walker Minor spoke to council members and residents to advice of changes. A written recommendation will be sent to the Board after the meeting. Service changes are never easy. Seventeen individuals were adversely affected. Every trip is important but sometimes we have to do what is best for the majority.

Ms. Moss asked what the ridership numbers are now compared to the 17 pre-COVID. Joel said in Ward 1 during rush hour, there are #55 riders on the main line in that period when half of their trips

have been pulled off into a residential street that misses the Lee-Harvard Center. Five were boarding at Lee-Road. They probably got off the #40. They would probably vote to move the service to the main line to have a consistent place to transfer. People speak through their riding habits. Ms. Birdsong said the 17 broken down to 4 in the morning, 13 in the afternoon. Mr. Joyce asked for confirmation on the discontinued stops on Walden. Joel said there were dozens of stops, but some had zero or one riders all day. At Lee Road, there were five. Dr. Caver said key characteristic to creating a robust system is linearity (the more the bus stays on a straight street, the bus can move faster and result in frequency). The community appreciates the frequency because it allows for mobility and more access to their life. Ms. Birdsong confirmed five people who spoke out against the changes. They will be contacted about the decision. Chief McCall requested staff follow-up with Mr. Stewart. President Lucas thanked the staff.

Public Comments – Agenda Items (comments were submitted in-person and by phone)

1. Dontez Taylor – he is a frequent rider. He used to ride the #15A when it went down Walden to get to the Harvard Community Center. It got him there faster. Many people ride the route, but have not called in for public comments. He loves RTA. There is no bus going to Strongsville where there are many jobs. Paratransit is a good service. The #14 is a great route. He hopes the #14 and #15 could go back to City Hall. The #8 is now every hour. However, when the #11 was on Buckeye, it had 15-20 minute service. He thanked the staff for listening.
2. Carlita – She lives in Ward 1. The 15A and 48A with the revisions Mr. Stewart suggested for the interior buses would not detract from the heavy lines. RTA is still not servicing the interior of the community by removing those lines. There is a longer walk. It is not safe. It is not due to a budget decrease and not taking away any buses to redesign the line. The line has been dummied down. She rides the 15A via Walden. It should be put back in place along with the 48A.
3. Andre White – He disagrees with the change to #15A. Twenty years ago, RTA tried to eliminate the line. It was for people going to and from work. He asked how many people is taking the new route to the hospital and Tri-C. This is not safe for people to walk 1 mile. He would like to see the ridership in six months.
4. Airric Stewart – Mr. Freilich misconstrued the facts on the #15A. It was not just Walden eliminated. E. 177, Walden, E. 154 and Bartlett were affected. Staff was given adjustments that would make the route more appealing, but they were not considered. If staff had looked at how long it would take to get from its' furthest end point east to west and back, they would see that the new route would hit retail at Harvest Square, Pinecrest, Tri-C east, Whitney Young, Adely Stevenson, Rickoff School, the Red Line at University Circle, Shaker Square, Tri-C Metro, UH, St. Vincent Hospital and end at CSU and be blocks from Playhouse Square. In reference to 48A, 15 and regular 48 there would be 45 buses. There would be better service.
5. Kevin – He called to follow up on a complaint about paratransit made on Sept. 15. He had a hard time getting home last night and filed a complaint about it. He enjoys using the service.
6. Rita Montgomery – She called regarding the #15A. Dr. Caver and Mr. Freilich indicated that it only cut service on Walden. However, it also cut service on Bartlett. RTA should look at what was done. The community needs the service. Other people are concerned about the cuts who have not called in. She said they could all come to the meeting if necessary. It is not just five people but also the entire community.

7. Loh – Thanks for NextGen. It is hard to make everything perfect in a redesign. She is glad the public is expressing their concerns. Since she has been back in person for meetings, she has been late because it takes her 1 hour to get from CSU to RTA. The free E Line trolley was cut due to duplicate service, which is understandable. She did not have to transfer to use this route. The travel time was reasonable. Now she has to take the HL and transfer to B-Line. She missed the photo op with President Lucas because of the changes. The B Line sometimes drives past the stops. A transitional housing project in the Buckeye neighborhood lacks adequate bus service due to the changes to the #14. The last bus in the evening is 8:55 p.m. This affects the residents getting to and from work. Frequency is high on the busy lines but some routes need to be tweaked.

Committee Reports

Ms. Moss said the Audit Committee would meet tomorrow at 2:30 p.m. They will look in depth into the Internal Audit Charter and the history and how we got there. Everyone is welcome.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

Ms. Duarte said everyone knows that community engagement is critical in shaping RTA. It is underutilized in other sectors in the region. It should not be a competing priority. It is important that RTA understands the diverse community it serves if we want the region to have access to accessibility, clean bus stops, safe public transit and affordability. Although technology plays a big role in our lives, not everyone has access to it. In Cuyahoga County, 25% of residents do not have access to the internet or a computer. In Cleveland, 30% do not have internet or reliable high-speed services. We cannot expect riders and community members to build trust by scan a QR code or by website. We need boots on the ground and the support of community partners to ensure the issues people are having with transit.

In the past few weeks, she has met with public transit advocates, riders and several current/former RTA employees. She has attended community meetings and the Clevelanders for Public Transit (CPT) Mayor Candidate forum. She has a copy of their report "Ending the Transit Death Spiral: A Positive Vision for Public Transit in Greater Cleveland." She encouraged everyone to read it. Recent comments speak of more funding, more affordable service, and taxing parking to fund transit. She heard from people that are excited to hear about the Transit Ambassador Program. Jack Bracatelli, A CSU student and public transit advocate and recent RTA intern sent an email to the Board about the importance with engaging with the public throughout the city. They passed out NextGen schedules and helped them figure out their routes. He likes being out in the public, speaking to the public and answering questions. Riders were thankful for the interaction. Promoting RTA through community engagement was able to meet the needs of stakeholders. There can always be more engagements between the Main Office and the public. She thanked everyone that has met with her.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

Ms. Pellot said the Ad Hoc Tech Committee would meet Nov. 18 at 5 p.m.

Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

New Hires:

1. Steven Woldarek - Equipment Servicer
2. Sharmar Maxie – Laborer
3. Patrick Chalk – Laborer
4. Keith Winborn – Laborer

5. Leonard Cahill – Laborer
6. Lavelle Burrage – Laborer
7. LaShaun Stewart – Laborer
8. Curtis Hemphill – Operator
9. Jayla Beckwith – Operator
10. Endia Elbee – Operator
11. Brandi Taylor – Operator
12. Chartina Jones – Operator
13. Khadafi Bizzell – Operator
14. Jonathan Fletcher – Operator
15. Michael Hills – Operator
16. Andrew Carmichael – Operator
17. Griffin Bayle – Equipment Servicer
18. Wayne Chalker – Equipment Servicer
19. Joshua Dezelan – Equipment Servicer

Promotions:

1. Jacob Kabelen – Supervisor of Traction Power
2. Matthew Seegart – Talent Acquisition, Business Partner

Introduction of Resolutions:

- A. 2021-87 – Authorizing the General Manager, Chief Executive Officer to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District for student fares for the 2021-2022 school year and ratifying the issuance of tickets

This item was tabled at the September 28, 2021 Board Meeting due to a lack of a quorum. It was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Mr. Joyce to take this off the table. There were nine (9) ayes and one recuse from Mr. Serrano. The adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Mr. Joyce. There were nine (9) ayes and one recuse from Mr. Serrano. It was approved.

- B. 2021-92 – Expressing congratulations to the employees of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority who retired during the third quarter of 2021, the adoption of which was moved by Chief McCall, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approve by unanimous vote.

There were thirteen retirees. Retiree Godwin McNeal from Hayden was acknowledged for 45 years of "Accident Free" driving. He received a proclamation, plaque and framed photo. President Lucas wished him well on his retirement. Ms. Benford added that DriveCam honored him for the best operator in the country and for being the 2nd best operator in the country. Mr. McNeal thanked the RTA for the honors.

- C. 2021-93 – Authorizing Contract No. 2021-141 with Axon Enterprise, Inc. to provide Taser 7 program equipment and services in an amount not to exceed \$103,178.00 per year for a total contract amount not to exceed \$515,890.00 for a period of five years (General Fund, Transit Police Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.

- D. 2021-94 – Authorizing Contract No. 2021-147 with Giro, Inc. to provide Hastus software implementation, testing and hosting services for a period of one year in an amount not to

exceed \$275,082.00 (General Fund, Intelligent Transportation Systems Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mayor Byrne and approved by unanimous vote.

- E. 2021-95 – Authorizing Contract Co. 2021-152 with AT&T Corporation for switched Ethernet on-demand services for a period of three years in an amount not to exceed \$171,147.60 (General Fund, Innovation & Technology Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- F. 2021-96 – Authorizing the General Manager, Chief Executive Officer to enter into an updated Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for continued participation in the Multi-Jurisdictional Organized Crime Task Force, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Mayor Byrne and approved by unanimous vote.
- G. 2021-97 – Authorizing the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority to execute a Development and Use Agreement with AJAPPJR, LLC, an Ohio Limited Liability Company, to advance the Columbus Road Transit-Oriented Development Project, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Ms. Duarte. Chief McCall asked to abstain. There were nine (9) ayes and one abstention from Chief McCall.
- H. 2021-98 – Amending Section 620.04 of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Serrano, seconded by Ms. Pellot and approved by unanimous vote.
- I. 2021-99 – Enacting Chapter 288, repealing Chapters 291 and 295 and amending Section 284.01 of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Chief McCall, seconded by Ms. Moss and approved by unanimous vote.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer, gave the report. August 2021, U.S. unemployment rates dropped from 5.4% to 5.2%. Ohio's rate remained at 5.4%. Cuyahoga's rate dropped to 5.8%. The September U.S. rate dropped to 4.8%, which has been the lowest in nearly two years. Fabricated metals, machinery and transportation equipment represent the largest Northeast Ohio manufacturing drivers of the local economy. Chemicals (\$8.1 B) and primary metals (\$6.1B) represent the largest Northeast Ohio manufacturing GDP sectors.

Ridership has remained steady from May through July. It increased by 8% in August and September compared to 2020. September ridership increased by 20.9% compared to 2020. YTD ridership is still 14.6% below 2020 levels. Related to the ridership, passenger fares revenue increased in Sept. by 11.3%. YTD total PF are 15.8% lower than 2020. Sales tax remains strong. October receipts based on July activity is 16% higher than 2020. Seventeen of the 23 categories were positive. For October 2021 compared to October 2020, motor vehicles and watercraft were 14.4% higher. Online sales were 19.4%. Regular and statewide sales were 19.7% higher. This is the third consecutive month where liquor receipts were less than the previous year. YTD liquor is 16.4% compared to 2020. President Lucas asked how free fares on the east side rail during the shutdown affected the fare collection. Dr. Caver said when there is a rail shutdown; the replacement bus service is free. We lost some revenue, but it was little ridership on the buses compared to the train. We actually returned an actual increase in the passenger fares for that month.

Through August 2021, CRRSAA funds of \$67.4 million are fully drawn down. ARP funds of \$54.8 million have been drawn down leaving a balance of \$81.3 million that will be drawn down later in the year and through 2022. President Lucas asked what we could get if Congress passes the Infrastructure Bill. Mr. Gautam believes it is too early to speculate what we might receive. We have an advocacy firm working on this.

General Manager/CEO Report

India Birdsong, General Manager/CEO, presented the report. She thanked everyone that participated in National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Check out the vehicles that will be circulating through system with the photo of President Lucas and the ADA community members. RTA was recognized as Employer of the Year for accomplishments in the support of advancement of women from WTS.

Key accomplishments:

- Increased women in management by 40%
- 3 Key “Firsts”
 - India Birdsong, CEO
 - Deirdre Jones, Chief of Police
 - Teresa Muti, Director of Power & Way
- New Executive – Natoya Walker Minor
- Establishment of Elevating Women Together (EWT) Resource Group
 - Supplied speakers, tours, and support for events
 - Will be submitted for consideration at National level

President Lucas asked for an applause on behalf of these accolades.

Teresa Muti, Director of Power & Way was honored in Railway Age magazine as a 2021 “Women in Rail” honoree. They were selected from hundreds of nominees across the nation. Her staff was also highlighted in a photoshoot. Chief McCall requested she attend one of the Board Meetings and be properly recognized. She participated in the Leadership APTA program several years ago. It is a training ground for transit industry professionals. This is not a small feat. She first requested RTA submit candidates for the program. Ms. Birdsong said a photo was presented to Teresa and her team members.

RTA’s Elevating Women Together Committee collaborated with Dress for Success to host a Boutique on Wheels at the Main Office on September 15th. Another one is scheduled for today at Rail and will include male attire. Women’s professional attire, along with shoes and accessories, were displayed and available for sale – All Items were priced at \$2.00. Over fifty RTA employees participated in the event with sales totaling more than \$500! Do not miss the next event scheduled for Tuesday, October 26 at the Rail District. We received \$5.0 million of Congressional Community Project funding sponsored by Senator Brown for rail car replacement. The program now has \$189.4 million in funding commitments. We received \$8.9 million of ODOT OTP2 funding. Staff will return to the Board on a timeline to present the contract to the Board.

We have signed a MOU on October 14, 2021 with Care Alliance Health Center as a second provider to administer COVID testing and vaccines throughout the County. The first event was held October 21, 2021. They will utilize the community immunity bus for the service. It is imperative to be a part of this program. This was due to a partnership from her participation in Leadership Cleveland. She thanked Dr. Caude Jones at Care Alliance and Natoya Walker Minor who is over RTA External Affairs. Chief McCall suggested flu shots be included in the service. A lot of good feedback is coming from the community. Ms. Walker Minor said that Care Alliance suggested flu shots so they are on

board with that. They were out last week and received 110 people. She thanked Nick Biggar, Director at Hayden for his help with the vehicle. Ms. Moss asked how many shots we have received. Ms. Birdsong said we receive a monthly report. For September, it was 110-112. An update can be given to the Board Quarterly.

President's Report

The staff is strong. He visits the office several times a week. A few weeks ago, a train uncoupled. He thanked the staff for handling the event safely and getting customers to safety.

New Business

The proposed 2022 Board and Committee Meeting schedule was presented. Chief McCall said September 27 is Rosh Hashana and November 8 is Election Day. Therefore, those meetings may need to move. Ms. Moss asked to review her calendar before it is approved.

Public Comments – Non-Agenda Items (comments were submitted in-person and phone)

1. Brian Gibbons – Fairview Park, OH – He is a member of CPT. He is a regular rider. For CPT, they welcome the presentation made by Chief Jones regarding the Transit Ambassador Program and Civilian Review Board. These are good steps in the right direction. As Ms. Duarte mentioned, CPT held a Mayor's Candidate forum. Both candidates became aware of Chief Jones' presentation at that meeting. Both of them welcomed the step forward. Coupled with that, they both favor the idea of decriminalizing fare evasion. It is a revision of one line of the current code. RTA may hear from the new mayor about that. An ad for RTA that he saw was on target. The awards today and progress can continue to be marketed and advertised.
2. Rev. Pinkney – She is concerned about money going to the police department for the tasers. She wants funds to be reallocated for the transit system. She asked if the Red Line is still free. She ask that we refocus on vision and not violence.
3. Lennie Stover – He is with *Keep Our Greenway Green* representing neighbors and businesses near the Columbus Road development the Board just approved. He reviewed the agreement. He debates whether the agreement is the best and highest use of the property. The public, state, and federal government has determined that a trail is the best use of the property. They proved that by the \$6 M that went into building it and the rejection from the public at several meetings. One goal RTA has is economic development. However, he believes RTA is priming on in what may lead to slowing of growth by repeating mistakes in the 30's and 40's leading to overcrowding. In the RFP published August 2018, it was stated that this area has explosive growth. At least 25 real estate projects are already onboard. The agreement says the development has to meet TOD guidelines, but the guidelines call for a minimum 10% greenspace. The national average for greenspace in America is 6%. Cleveland has 2.5%. Define "significant review". He thinks RTA will have legal liabilities for misappropriating the \$3.1 million federal and state grants that were supposed to promote green space. RTA is not disclosing historic structures and understated the size of the wetlands on the site by 90%.
4. Chris Martin – Cleveland, OH – He ask the RTA Board to direct the staff to present the rational for not installing mask dispensers on buses and trains. Many transit agencies have done this. RTA should aid riders to comply with this federal mandate. Dr. Caver said that operators pass out mask to customers who do not have them. However, they have looked at dispensers as an option.

5. Dontez Taylor – He asked why some buses run every hour on Buckeye. He wishes the #25 was back in service. Many people are walking on Woodland.
6. Carlita – She believes RTA is misappropriating funds with NextGen and RTA is not satisfying their customer base. If people are left with no service, they are being disenfranchised and causing safety concerns.
7. Airric Stewart – Fifteen buses a day. The 50 bus can start at Marymount Hospital M-F and start at MH Sat-Sun, 14 buses a day each way. This bus can serve Miles west of 131st and 116 north of Miles. And this will give more people one bus service to MH and still give them service to UH and Cleveland Clinic and all points north of 116th in Miles. Fifteen buses a day for the 48. One-hour service with the 50 would have 30-minute service from MH to E.131 in Miles. Ridership will increase overall.
8. Rita Montgomery – She ask if the Board looked at the plans presented to them. Have they looked at the previous RTA routes compared to the NextGen routes related to the 15A and 48A to see the impact it has on the community.
9. Loh – Since RTA provides an important service, the fare should be free. The buses should have mask dispensers included in the design. CPT and others went to Senator Brown's office advocating for more funds for public transit.

Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 16, 2021 in the Board Room of the Authority, Root-McBride Building, and 1240 West Sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44113. This meeting will be live streamed on RTA's Facebook page for staff and members of the public at www.facebook.com/riderta the public is allowed to attend in-person.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:58 a.m.



President

Attest:


Secretary-Treasurer