

## Minutes

### RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:06 a.m. February 25, 2025

**Board Members:** Koomar (Chair), Biasiotta, Elder, Love, Lucas, McPherson, Pacetti, Sleasman, Weiss

**Not present:** Welch (Vice Chair)

**Staff:** Bailey, Birdsong Terry, Burney, Caver, Ciesla, Dangelo, Davidson, Ferraro, Fields, Fleig, Ford-Marshall, Freilich, Garofoli, Gautam, Gibbons, Jupina, Kirkland, Miller, Morgan, Mothes, Schipper, Sulik, Sutula, Togher, Walker Minor

**Public:** Gibbons, Hinkle, Loh, Martin, Sopko, Wharton

The meeting was called to order at 9:06 a.m. There were eight (8) Board members present. Rev. Lucas arrived after the roll call.

It was advised that notice of this meeting had been posted more than twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting, that the usual notification had 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 had been complied with.

## Minutes

The minutes from the January 21, 2025, Board Meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed, and the Board Chair asked whether there were any additions and/or corrections. There were no corrections. It was moved and seconded. The minutes were approved.

## Public Comments – Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

The public comment section has been consolidated to include agenda and non-agenda items.

1. Alec – Alec lives in the Westpark area and takes the RedLine from Triskett to Quincy for work. RTA's meeting time is not conducive to the public's ability to attend the board meetings. Evenings would be a better time. Alec notices a lot of unhoused people in the station. If RTA grew its ridership and assisted the unhoused it would improve perceived safety.
2. Keven Hinkle – Cleveland, OH - snow drifts affect customers getting on the vehicles. Operators need to assist customers with wayfinding questions.
3. Chris Martin – Cleveland, OH – Chris thanked RTA for putting bus lanes into the design for the W. 25 BRT. Chris asked for the cost to pay for Chief Jones to attend the Presidential Inauguration. Chris is concerned about the rise of fascism. RTA should not participate in immigration enforcement.
4. Airric Stewart – Cleveland, OH - Airric said the customer service line is still not working correctly. The line should address what customers are calling about, not just paratransit. Mayor Koomar added that the line is working as designed. Airric suggested both public comment sessions should be included. No evidence has been provided to the public that his proposals for 15A and 48A are not substantiated. Mayor Koomar said they have looked at NextGen and it is attracting ridership to key areas such as hospitals, schools, etc. Ms. Terry

agreed with Mayor Koomar. The survey is working as attended. NextGen service will continue as designed. Any disrespect from the public will result in limited time to speak. Public input will be received and reviewed.

(Webform comment)

Paul Koomar stated that my route suggestions for the 15A and 48A took away service from the key points of focus—work, school, and hospitals. There is no evidence of Koomar's statement that lines up with the truth. If he has an example that he believes to be evidence of his statement provided I want this email and the next 2 to be read out loud to the public at the February 25th Board of Trustees meeting. The public was never given a clear opportunity to study the suggestions that were provided. This was not done prior to the development period of NextGen. It was not done during the initial implementation. The agency has repeatedly misrepresented the facts of my suggestions. They should be made available through the webform in the exact way they are conveyed by me. The email, subject line, "Touchpoints for the 15A". The email, "Transfers points for the 15A and 48A" state openly in specific, direct language if you have you have evidence that these route suggestions are flawed for the pursuit of work, school, and hospital. Theresa Burrage has been sent these emails again on Monday, February 24. Post my phone number on this webform.

5. LaQueta Worley – Cleveland, OH (webform) - Are the board members seriously transit riders? Which routes are they knowledgeable about? How did they find out the routes? Describe to us their experiences of first learning how to ride (which city or town, which routes did you have to learn)? Have you ever had to teach a child? How have the routes and fares changed?
6. Bernie Oakar – Medina (webform) - We need through service returned from Strongsville to the West Side market. Need to return some service to Bridge Avenue.
7. Isaac Shimsky-Agosto – Cleveland, OH (webform) - Now that the new validators have been installed across the RTA system, I am hoping that the long promised smart cards will finally be put into use. While EZPass has certainly made using RTA far easier, I am looking forward to the convenience of having a card. A card that can just be pulled out and used, is more convenient than something that requires a login and charged battery.
8. Harley Rubin – Cleveland Hts. (webform) - I really want to eliminate stripes on the windows of buses and bus wraps. I take the bus to work every day and the darkness of these buses impacts my own mental health in the winter, and my ability to see what stop I'm at. It wouldn't be a stretch to say this is an ableist part of the bus system, and I hope you take the importance of bus patrons versus advertising money very seriously.

Harley added on the phone that the Board should meet at a better time. It's a safety issue for the unhoused to sleep in the stations.

### Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

### Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

Ms. Marshall, Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition introduced the new employees and promotions. There were 45 new hires and 4 promotions. The operator shortage deficit is at 41. They have a recruitment event planned for March 15 at Tower City.

Executive Session

9:29 a.m. - Mayor Koomar made a motion to go into executive session, to review the negotiations concerning the compensation/terms and conditions of employment for GCRTA's (union) employees. It was seconded by Mayor Weiss. There were nine (9) ayes and none opposed.

9:43 a.m. - It was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Ms. Pacetti to come out of executive session. There were nine (9) ayes and none opposed.

Introduction of Resolutions

- A. 2025-23 - Expressing appreciation to Anthony D. Biasiotta for his service as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority and extending best wishes for many years to come, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Terry said Mayor Biasiotta brought an additional layer to his committee and he highlighted important information to the Board and public. He has been detailed and interested in the work of the RTA. Mayor Biasiotta said the real work of the Board and Staff is the lead up to the presentation. He was able to explain the agenda items to the lay person. Mobility plays a major role in people's lives, economic development, regional cohesion and overall health in the community. He acknowledged the leadership of the staff and Board. He will continue to be an advocate for the RTA.

- B. 2025-24 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-220 with GIRO, Inc. to provide HASTUS software maintenance and support services for a three-year period in a total amount not to exceed \$1,089,936.00 (General Fund, Information Technology Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Biasiotta, seconded by Mayor Koomar and approved by unanimous vote.
- C. 2025-25 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-179 with Genfare, LLC to provide farebox collection software support services for a period of one year in an amount not to exceed \$61,425.00 with two, one-year options in amounts not to exceed \$63,268.00 and \$65,166.00, respectively, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$189,859.00 (General Fund, Management Information Services Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Elder, seconded by Ms. McPherson and approved by unanimous vote.
- D. 2025-26 - Authorizing a change order to exercise an option under Contract No. 2020-046 with New Flyer of America, Inc. for the purchase and delivery of six (6) five (5) door 60-ft. articulated BRT coaches, as specified, for an amount not to exceed \$7,956,739.02 (RTA Development Fund, Fleet Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.
- E. 2025-27 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-195 with Railworks Track Services, LLC for Brookpark Yard Tracks improvements in an amount not to exceed \$2,589,826.00 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pacetti, seconded by Mayor Biasiotta and approved by unanimous vote.

- F. 2025-28 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-205 with Standard Contracting & Engineering, Inc. for Brookpark Rail Shop modifications in an amount not to exceed \$2,893,100.00 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pacetti, seconded by Ms. McPherson and approved by unanimous vote.
- G. 2025-29 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-154 with Omax Corporation for the furnishing of a waterjet cutting machine in an amount not to exceed \$174,084.00 (RTA Development Fund, Fleet Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.
- H. 2025-30 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-210 with Petroleum Traders Corporation for the furnishing of approximately 1,000,000 gallons of Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel fuel, as specified and as required, for each year of the three years contract term, at a cost of minus \$.0333 per gallon for year one, minus \$.0308 per gallon below the OPIS index for year two, and minus \$.0283 per gallon below the OPIS index for year three (General Fund, Fleet Management Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pacetti, seconded by Ms. McPherson and approved by unanimous vote.
- I. 2025-31 - Amending Resolution No. 2024-075 to remove the vendor name "Sam Schwartz Consulting, LLC" and replace it with "T.Y. Lin International", the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Sleasman, seconded by Mayor Biasiotta and approved by unanimous vote.
- J. 2025-32 - Approving the 2025 Internal Audit Plan, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Ms. Elder and approved by unanimous vote.
- K. 2025-33 - Amending Section 222.05 of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority and amending the Operating Procedures for the Civilian Oversight Committee, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pacetti, seconded by Ms. Elder and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Terry said this committee is important and has a lot of work. She thanked the staff for their work.

- L. 2025-34 - Re-appointment of David Morris and Rebecca Wharton to the Civilian Oversight Committee, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Sleasman, seconded by Ms. Elder and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Wharton and Mr. Morris thanked the Board for their reappointments.

- M. 2025-35 - Authorizing a renewal lease agreement with Downtown Cleveland, Inc. for a dog park at Settler's Landing Rapid Transit Station, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.
- N. 2026-36 - Authorizing an agreement with the City of Shaker Heights for a period of one year beginning January 1, 2025 in an amount not to exceed \$282,169.68 for landscape maintenance and parking lot snow removal (General Fund, Programming & Planning Department budget) and in an amount not to exceed \$37,894.97 for planting replacement landscaping in conjunction with the Authority's shaker boulevard shelter project (RTA Development Fund, Programming & Planning Department budget), the

adoption of which was moved by Mr. Sleasman, seconded by Ms. Elder. There was a roll call. There were eight (8) and one abstention from Mayor Weiss. It passed.

#### Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan D. Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer gave the report. The annual inflation rate back in June 2022 had gone to 9.1%, went down to 2.4% and had a slight uptick to 3% in January 2025. The FOMC has maintained rates at 4.5% effective January 29. They are scheduled to meet again March 18-19 which will determine any resulting changes.

Ridership through January 2025 compared to pre COVID levels is approximately 600,000 rides lower or roughly 24%. The January 2025 ridership compared to January 2024 was 4.3% higher. Passenger fares for January 2025 were 31.4% below January 2024 largely due to the timing of revenue collections. It should catch up over the next few months. As a result, it was 31.2% below budget. Sales and use tax for February based on November 2024 activity was 2% lower than 2024.

#### Selected Data

Total Long-Term Debt – 12/31/2024	\$22.3 million
Average Investment Yield – YTD	4.09%
Cash and Investments	
Unrestricted (General Fund)	\$29.7 million
Restricted	\$333.4 million
TOTAL CASH AND INVESTMENTS	\$363.1 million

Ms. Pacetti asked about the fare revenue decline from 2024. Mr. Gautam said the numbers are on a cash basis and are based on timing. Mayor Weiss asked if the sales tax decline is a issue. Mr. Gautam said that March collections that are based on December economic activity will act as a key to determine patterns. Also the discussion of increased inflation and international tariffs will also be somewhat incorporated into the March collections.

#### General Manager, CEO Report

India L. Birdsong Terry, General Manager, CEO gave the report. Transit Equity Day was held on February 4. It is a National Day of Action held on Rosa Parks' Birthday to elevate the message that public transit should be safe, sustainable and equitable for all people. Ohio Public Transit Association / Ohio Loves Transit Day was February 11 in Columbus, Ohio. Several staff members attended engagement meetings. Ms. Terry testified at the Ohio House Transportation Committee, February 11 to advocate for increased transit funding.

Staff attended an Executive Leadership Retreat, January 30-31 at Corporate College East. Facilitator Mike Nwankwo led the team through discussions and exercises covering RTA's Mission, Vision and the book TRACTION by Gino Wickman. RTA held a celebratory event in recognition of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at a CAVS game, February 11. Nearly 300 employees attended the event. Ms. Terry moderated a APTA podcast on workforce development and mentorship. It aired January 30. Several guests from the transit industry were guest panelists. Ms. Terry was a judge for Accelerate 2025. She is also on the Board. Accelerate is where change agents and ideas converge to improve Cleveland. Individuals across Greater Cleveland have the chance to pitch ideas and win seed money to help launch their idea to make the region a better place

Ms. Terry was honored along with other women for the CAV's Black Heritage Celebration, February 21. Staff attended the National Association of Black Journalists – Cleveland Chapter, February 21 at their Hall of Fame Induction and Awards Ceremony.

#### President's Report

Mayor Koomar thanked Mayor Biasiotta for his service. He asked the Board and staff to wish Rev. Lucas a happy birthday. Theresa Burrage, Board Support will be leaving the RTA for a new position. Ms. Terry thanked her for her time supporting the Board and RTA. A celebration will be held on her last meeting, Tuesday, March 4. A Board Retreat is scheduled this week. Rev. Lucas thanked the staff for their calls and concerns when he was not feeling well.

#### Addition of Resolution No. 2025-37

This resolution is for a three-year agreement that was reached between the ATU leadership and RTA management team. It will run from August 1, 2024 through July 31, 2027. This contract is for approximately 1,800 RTA employees. The union ratified this agreement on February 18, 2025. The contract includes an 4-3-3 increases over the term of the agreement.

It was moved by Mayor Biasiotta, seconded by Mr. Love and approved to add this resolution to the agenda for further consideration.

Resolution No. 2025-37 - Approving a new three-year Collective Bargaining Agreement Covering conditions of employment with Local 268 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Biasiotta, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.

#### Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting and Annual Meeting are scheduled for **Tuesday, March 18, 2025** in the Board Room of the Authority, Root-McBride Building, 1240 West Sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44113. This meeting will be live streamed on RTA's Board page ([www.RideRTA.com/board](http://www.RideRTA.com/board)) by selecting the meeting date. The public is welcome to attend in person.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

  
President

Attest:   
Secretary-Treasurer