



RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

July 15, 2025

MEETING MINUTES

Board Members: Ms. Welch (Vice President), Ms. Elder, Mayor Gallo, Mr. Love, Ms. McPherson, Ms. Pacetti, Mr. Sleasman, Mayor Weiss

Not Present: Mayor Koomar (President), Rev. Lucas

Staff/Other: Shawn Becker, Danielle Bennett, Nick Biggar, India Birdsong Terry, Janet Burney, Floun'say Caver, Melinda Dangelo, Nick Davidson, Wendy Feinn, George Fields, Bob Fleig, Ida Ford Marshall, Joel Freilich, Anthony Garofoli, Rajan Gautam, Fiona Gibbons, Diana Jones, Sheila Miller, Charles Morgan, Holly Mothes, Mike Schipper, Kay Sutula, Wendy Talley, John Togher, Natoya Walker-Minor, Fawntaine Walls

Public: Rhonda Eaddy, Justin K. Eaddy, Brian Gibbons, Kevin Hinkle, Loh, Chris Martin, Howard Walton, Jr.

I. Call to Order

- a. Ms. Welch, Vice President, called the meeting to order at 9:03 am.

II. Roll Call

- a. There were Eight (8) Board members present, representing a quorum.

III. Certification regarding Notice of Meeting

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

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. The minutes from June 17, 2025, Board Meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mayor Weiss and seconded by Ms. Pacetti and unanimously approved.

V. Public Comments – Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

Members of the public addressed the Board regarding both agenda and non-agenda items. Public comments submitted through the webform will appear in their original form and have not been edited for grammar or content. GCRTA reserves the right not to publish any explicit language, derogatory remarks, or personal attacks against individuals.

1. Chris Martin – Cleveland, OH (in person) – Mr. Martin urged the board to advocate for free transit on both primary and general Election Days, noting it has previously only been done during presidential elections. He framed this as a tool in the fight against rising fascism and encouraged leveraging local resources, including support from the Cleveland Foundation. While acknowledging the debate between free fares and service frequency, Mr. Martin emphasized that although transit is cheaper than car ownership, it remains inconvenient due to limited service, something the board must address. He shared a suggestion from a recent Transit Justice meeting: implement fare-free service during heat advisories and snow emergencies, as is done in Columbus. Mr. Martin concluded by warning of future funding shortfalls and called for pursuing local ballot initiatives, as state and federal funding is unlikely. He requested clarity on the board's taxing authority.
2. Kevin Hinkle – Cleveland, OH (in person) – A Cleveland resident and longtime commuter, expressed appreciation for the installation of two new bus stop signs—one at St. Clair Ave. and E. 55th Street, and another at Ridge Rd. and Ventel Ave. He also raised a concern about visibility at a bus stop on Lake Shore Blvd. near the Collinwood Recreation Center, noting that overgrown hedges obstruct the view of approaching buses and may cause them to miss waiting passengers. He requested that the hedges be trimmed for all concerned.
3. Airric Stewart – Cleveland, OH (caller) – A resident of Cleveland, expressed strong opposition to implementing daily free fares for public transit. He emphasized the importance of preserving all public comments—his own and those of others such as Chris Martin—in full, verbatim form for the historical record. Mr. Stewart reiterated that his full statement was submitted via a web form and requested that it be included in the meeting record without alteration. He raised specific concerns about inaccuracies related to route comparisons between the 50 and 48A buses, disputing claims about speed, service to Mount Pleasant and local businesses, and transfer times to other routes and rapid stations. He stated that the 48A offers superior service in several respects. Additionally, Mr. Stewart criticized the practice of disconnecting phone participants after their public comments while allowing in-person commenters to remain throughout the meeting. He requested clarification on any cost implications related to this practice. He concluded by insisting that all of his previous and current web form submissions be entered verbatim into the public record and that the agency uphold transparency and accuracy as a publicly funded entity.
4. Dontez Taylor – Cleveland, OH (caller) – A Cleveland resident and paratransit rider, voiced serious concerns about the reliability of paratransit services. He reported frequent delays of one to two hours, which often prevent riders from making important appointments such as medical visits. Mr. Taylor called for improvements to scheduling and service reliability, including hiring more paratransit drivers and reconsidering the use of third-party providers like Provide-A-Ride and GTS. He also highlighted recurring issues with the paratransit scheduling system crashing, which prevents next-day bookings—particularly problematic for those with unpredictable schedules. Mr. Taylor emphasized the need for a backup system and expressed frustration over the lack of accountability when system failures impact riders.
5. Airric Stewart – Cleveland, OH (webform) – Public comments and questions during the Board of Trustees meeting should be posted verbatim. This is part of the historical record of civic engagement. The actual statements conveyed should not be misconstrued or abbreviated. It will serve the BOT well to read this report from the Federal Reserve Bank--"Missed Connections in Cleveland: The Disconnect Between Job Access and Employment." I've been

sending you information prior to this report on this very matter. This is a strong contributor as to why you should be compelled to implement the suggested 15A and 48A into existence. A minimum of 61 businesses at Pinecrest and 24 businesses at Shaker Square should have direct service for a population that is most likely to use it on these hourly buses in a 15- to 16-hour time period Monday through Friday and a 13- to 14-hour time period Saturday and Sunday. The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland has, in part, the responsibility to support the goals of maximizing employment in the metro area (4th Fed Reserve District). RTA has a responsibility to the socioeconomic well-being of the public through the implementation of public transit. I have sent at least 5 webform responses. Please correct your errors and post what I took the opportunity in time to type. Please do the same with all of my, at least, 48 phone calls to Board of Trustee meetings. Do not continue to allow my public record contribution to be misconstrued. Go back and make the corrections.

6. Bernie Oakar – Medina, OH (webform) – Euclid Ave Trolley bus needs to be brought back. All of the park and rides need to be brought back. Are the 51 and 51a lines being discontinued if this project becomes reality
7. Vera Didenko – Cleveland, OH (webform) – Can we fix the word “calender” to its appropriate spelling on the EZFare app for monthly disabled passes? Been requesting since April 2025. Thank you.

VI. Board Governance Committee Report

- a. No committee report

VII. Operational Planning & Infrastructure Committee Report

- a. No committee report

VIII. Organizational, Services & Performance Monitoring Committee Report

- a. No committee report

IX. Audit, Safety Compliance and Real Estate Committee Report

- a. No committee report

X. External and Stakeholder Relations and Advocacy Committee Report

- a. No committee report

XI. Committee of the Whole

- a. No committee report

XII. Civilian Oversight Committee (COC) Report

- a. Ms. Welch announced that the next Civilian Oversight Committee meeting is scheduled for July 29th at 5:00 p.m.

XIII. Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

- a. No committee report

XIV. Ad Hoc Committee Reports

- a. No committee reports.

XV. Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

Ms. Marshall, Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition reported on new hires and promotions for July, highlighting continued growth within the organization. Several new bus operators,

paratransit personnel, equipment servicers, line maintainers, and engineering co-op students were welcomed to the RTA family. The group also includes individuals in roles such as communications specialist, stock clerk, laborer, and supervisory positions. All were recognized for their commitment to RTA's mission and were wished success in their new roles.

Additionally, a number of employees were congratulated on recent promotions across departments including vehicle maintenance, equipment management, transportation, engineering, and HVAC services. Their dedication and performance were acknowledged and applauded.

The retirees from the second quarter of 2025 were honored, acknowledging their years of service and contributions to the organization. Special recognition was given to Howard Walton Jr., a bus operator with 30 years of service, and Rhonda Eaddy, a Power and Way stock clerk with 31 years, both of whom were present and celebrated with family members in attendance. Mr. Walton reflected on his time at RTA with gratitude, sharing how a follow-up call after his retirement made him feel appreciated and proud of his journey. Ms. Eaddy shared her inspiring career path, which included multiple firsts for women in her department, and emphasized the importance of recognizing and utilizing the talents of in-house staff. Both retirees expressed deep appreciation for the opportunities RTA provided and were thanked warmly for their dedication. All retirees were invited to take commemorative photos with Board leadership.

XVI. Introduction of Resolutions

- A. 2025-77 - Expressing Congratulations to the Employees of The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority Who Retired During the Second Quarter of 2025 the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Welch, seconded by Ms. McPherson and approved by majority vote.
- B. 2025-78 - Authorizing Contract No. 2025-081 with Trapeze Software Group, Inc. to Provide Paratransit Software Maintenance & Support Services for a Three-Year Period in an Amount not to Exceed \$2,005,421.00 (General Fund, Information Technology Department Budget) the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pacetti, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.
- C. 2025-79 – Authorizing Contract No. 2025-083 With Motorola Solutions, Inc. to Install a Distributed Antenna System in the Airport's Tunnel in a Total Contract Amount not to Exceed \$148,643.00 (RTA Development Fund, Information Technology Department Budget) the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Sleasman, seconded by Ms. Elder and approved by unanimous vote.
- D. 2025-80 – Authorizing The General Manager, Chief Executive Officer to Enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District for Student Fares for the 2025-2026 School Year, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Elder, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by a majority roll call vote. Ms. Welch abstained.
- E. 2025-81 – Adopting the Tax Budget of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority for the Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2026 and Submitting the Same to the Cuyahoga County Fiscal Officer, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Sleasman, seconded by Mr. Love and approved by unanimous vote.

- F. 2025-82 - License Agreement to Allow Development of a Public Park on Land Located on the Columbus Peninsula of the Flats in the City of Cleveland, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McPherson, seconded by Ms. Pacetti and approved by unanimous vote.
- G. 2025-83 – Amending Section 410.01 Procurement Policies of the Codified Rules and Regulations of The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Terry explained the amendment adjusts the change order authority thresholds for contracts, consolidating the previous three-tier structure into two categories. For contracts up to \$2.5 million, staff and the CEO retain authority to approve change orders up to \$250,000. For contracts exceeding \$2.5 million, that authority increases to \$500,000. The previously proposed third category—for contracts over \$5 million with a \$750,000 threshold—was removed following further internal review with legal, accounting, and procurement staff.

Ms. Terry stated that this adjustment is a more conservative approach, given the Authority's historically tight and well-managed change order process. The Board was assured that if inflation or market trends begin to push project costs beyond the current thresholds, staff may return to request a future amendment.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan D. Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer, presented the Secretary-Treasurer's report. The Federal Reserve has maintained the interest rate at 4.5%, with further guidance expected following their upcoming meeting. Inflation showed a modest increase from 2.3% in April to 2.4% in May 2025. Consumer confidence, after six months of decline, rose by 16.3% in June according to the University of Michigan Index. Ridership through June 2025 was down 0.7% year-to-date compared to 2024 and remains approximately 24% below pre-COVID levels (2019), equating to about 3.8 million fewer rides. Passenger fare revenues were 6.6% higher than June 2024 but down 9.3% year-to-date, largely due to timing of CMST and U-Pass collections. Sales tax revenue for June, reflecting March activity due to a three-month reporting lag, was up 4% compared to June 2024 and 3.1% higher year-to-date. Fifteen of the 22 sales tax categories posted gains, with online sales increasing 17.1%, while vehicle-related sales declined 7.1%. The Authority's long-term debt stands at \$22.3 million, with principal payments scheduled for December 2025 and two interest payments throughout the year. The average investment yield to date is 4.06%. Total cash and investments total \$357.4 million, including \$29.8 million in unrestricted general fund reserves, which exceeds the Board's one-month reserve requirement. A \$10 million transfer from the Revenue Stabilization Fund to the General Fund was completed in May as part of the approved \$50.5 million budgeted transfer for 2025.

General Manager, CEO Report

India L. Birdsong Terry, General Manager, CEO provided a comprehensive update highlighting organizational accomplishments, funding, infrastructure developments, and community engagement. She announced that RTA was awarded \$19.81 million in grant funding through the Ohio Transportation Partnership Program (OTP2) to support the purchase of four railcars and the installation of digital signage at Red Line stations. She also acknowledged RTA's participation in the 2025 Pride Parade, which led to a significant increase in ridership, including a 79% rise on heavy rail and 43% on light rail during the event.

General Manager, CEO Terry and Deputy General Manager of Human Resources, George Fields participated in a virtual interview with the APTA Leadership Program to discuss best practices in workforce recruitment and retention. Additionally, RTA hosted 38 national participants for the ENO Transportation Mid-Manager Program, offering tours and leadership engagement sessions. The agency's 50th Anniversary celebration at Settlers Landing attracted over 3,500 attendees, with community partners, elected officials, and staff contributing to the success of the event.

RTA was recognized by the National Association of Minority Contractors Northern Ohio Chapter for its continued support of female- and minority-owned construction firms. Infrastructure updates included a community meeting on the West 25th Street BRT Project and the groundbreaking ceremony for the East 79th Street Blue and Green Line Station reconstruction, attended by Congresswoman Shontel Brown and other local leaders.

Ms. Terry also shared that RTA leadership traveled to Siemens Mobility's production facility in Sacramento, CA, to inspect the first painted railcar shell as part of the agency's ongoing railcar replacement program. The visit provided an opportunity to reinforce quality control and project expectations. Additionally, RTA was honored during Tri-C Corporate College's 20th anniversary celebration, highlighting the agency's commitment to workforce development and staff advancement.

Lastly, Ms. Terry paid tribute to Ms. Marie Fratus, a founding member of the Citizens Advisory Committee, who served for over 40 years and played a key role in the passage of the 1975 countywide levy that established RTA. Ms. Fratus was remembered for her advocacy, humor, and lifelong dedication to public transit and community service.

President's Report

No President's report at this time.

Upcoming Meetings

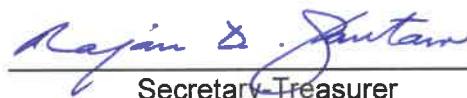
The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, August 19, 2025** in the Board Room of the Authority, Root-McBride Building, 1240 West Sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44113. This meeting will be live streamed on RTA's Board page (www.RideRTA.com/board) by selecting the meeting date. The public is welcome to attend in person.

There being no further business to bring before this Board, a motion to adjourn the meeting by Mayor Weiss and seconded by Mr. Sleasman was approved by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 am.



President

Attest:



Secretary-Treasurer