



RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

October 21, 2025

MEETING MINUTES

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

Not Present: Rev. Lucas

Staff/Other: Shawn Becker, Nick Biggar, India Birdsong Terry, Janet Burney, Floun'say Caver, Nick Davidson, George Fields, Bob Fleig, Ida Ford Marshall, Joel Freilich, Anthony Garofoli, Rajan Gautam, Fiona Gibbons, Lawrence Jupina, Carl Kirkland, Sheila Miller, Charles Morgan, Holly Mothes, Tariq Muhammed, Mike Schipper, Kay Sutula, John Togher, Carolyn Young

Public: Kevin Hinkle, Adam Rossi, Leslie Smith, Eme Torlai, Carren Woods

I. Call to Order

Mayor Koomar called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

II. Roll Call

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

III. Certification regarding Notice of Meeting

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

Mr. Sleasman moved, and Ms. Elder seconded to approve the minutes of the September 23, 2025, Board Meeting. The motion was 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. Kevin Hinkle – Cleveland (in person)

Mr. Hinkle stated that he was a long-time resident and that sometimes the GPS system on coaches is too loud when calling out stops and requested changing the volume, if possible. He also advised that the stop requests are not working on some buses. The operator should place some kind of sign to let commuters know that the stop request signal is out of order.

2. Carren Woods -- Cleveland (in-person)

Ms. Woods thanked GCRTA for their service and stated that she appreciated the kindness paratransit staff showed her.

3. Adam Rossi -- Cleveland Heights (in-person)

Mr. Rossi thanked GCRTA for providing a tremendous service to the community. He was also appreciative of the vision of a Cleveland area that is more connected by public transit. Specifically, he was excited about the bus rapid transit improvements on West 25th Street through Ohio City. He thinks GCRTA can be even better in the next 50 years and provided staff with an executive report regarding bus rapid transit from a study in New York City.

4. Airric Stewart – Cleveland, OH (caller) –

Mr. Stewart suggested adding a shelter between the blocks of East 153rd and East 154th Streets and Bartlett on the north side of the street, closer to East 153rd and East 154th Streets.

Mr. Stewart stated that he had raised a number of issues and gotten no response from GCRTA staff. He stated that RTA is a taxpayer-funded agency for the well-being of the public and the lack of a response to his questions is concerning.

5. Airric Stewart – Cleveland (webform)

Post this verbatim. This is in reference to CEO Terry's response to my public phone comment 8-19.

1. Disparage--to belittle the importance or value of (someone or something).
2. Expletive--an exclamatory word or phrase especially one that is obscene or profane.
3. Respect--high or special regard: esteem
4. Imagery--mental images: especially the products of imagination

Your statement implied that I was being disparaging and disrespectful. My suggestion that your salary be reduced by \$100,000 would still secure you 6 figures twice over. This can make space for more bus, rail, and shelter cleaners to be hired. I have a healthy appreciation for the existence of RTA. The fact that it has not reached the level of respect for leadership does not mean that I'm being disrespectful. A healthy appreciation is fair since you have not proven yourselves to earn my respect. I never used an expletive against RTA. This is an example of you leading through imagery while misleading the public. RTA is responsible for the socioeconomic well-being of the public through the implementation of public transit. Respect the accurate assessment of the facts--correct your errors.

I have posed questions in multiple webform responses. I've also posed questions to the BOT

and CAC through email multiple times. I have posed questions through my phone appearances at BOT meetings. They have all been directly related to services you are duty-bound to provide. Little to no respectful responses from RTA.

6. Daniel Kirchner – Cleveland (webform)

Mr. Kirchner stated that I am an Ohio City resident and homeowner (1435 W. 38th St.) and I am strongly in favor of the proposed W. 25th BRT project INCLUDING dedicated bus lanes through the W. 25th business corridor.

I see only positives:

- increased transit accessibility and use
- increased pedestrian traffic
- little to no impact on parking (large surface parking behind West Side Market, distributed street parking across neighborhood)
- better streetscaping and pedestrian/bike safety and accessibility.

Again, I am an Ohio City resident and homeowner and I very strongly support the full scope of this project and the benefits it will bring to my neighborhood and city. Thank you.

7. La Queta Worley (webform)

I wanna know how is going with the rapid repairs and how soon will it be for the upgrade of rail cars? I am really looking forward to it all

Who did RTA get to help sponsor this funding since I have always heard we need additional funds

It's also really interesting to see and hear on both sides of the spectrum Plus I really hope this process isn't caught up with the government shutdown

8. Micah Ely (webform)

We should extend the Cuyahoga valley scenic railroad to downtown Cleveland at bedrocks riverfront development. GCRTA should be the project sponsor. this would better connect Akron to Cleveland with passenger rail. NOACA did a feasibility study for extending the Cuyahoga valley scenic railroad north to downtown Cleveland. GCRTA should become the project sponsor for this project. This would be good for the Cleveland region.

Responding to the public comment, CEO Terry stated that for the record, GCRTA is on schedule with the rail car replacement program, and the first cars are expected to arrive in late summer 2026. The program will continue for the next couple years.

VI. Board Governance Committee Report

Mayor Koomar stated that this Committee intends to meet on a quarterly basis.

VII. Operational Planning & Infrastructure Committee Report

No report

VIII. Organizational, Services & Performance Monitoring Committee Report

No committee report

IX. Audit, Safety Compliance and Real Estate Committee Report

The Committee plans to work on final changes to the Internal Audit Charter and complete it before the end of the year. The next meeting will take place on November 12, 2025.

X. External and Stakeholder Relations and Advocacy Committee Report

No committee report

XI. Committee of the Whole

No committee report

XII. Civilian Oversight Committee (COC) Report

No committee report

XIII. Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

No committee report

XIV. Ad Hoc Committee Reports

- a. No committee reports.
- b. Ad-Hoc Compensation Committee
- c. Ad-Hoc Nominating Committee

Mr. Love advised that the committee received one letter expressing interest in the position of Vice President from Trustee Pacetti.

Ms. Pacetti stated that she thought this was a great opportunity to build on Trustee Koomar and Trustee Welch's leadership and continue working on communication both as a Board and agency. She looks forward to continuing to focus on keeping the Board aware of short- and long-term trends that might affect the health of the agency.

Mayor Gallo moved to nominate Ms. Pacetti as Board Vice President and seconded by Ms. Elder. The motion was unanimously approved.

XV. Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

Ms. Marshall, Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition provided an update on new hires and promotions for September. She noted that this month's additions are primarily in operations, including a group of new bus operators. Ms. Marshall welcomed the new employees, emphasizing their role in ensuring safety and reliability for riders.

XVI. Introduction of Resolutions

- A. 2025-102 – Authorizing Contract No. 2025-095 with Richard L. Bowen & Associates, Inc. for Project 31G – Architect/Engineer Services for Blue Line Stations Reconstruction in an Amount Not to Exceed \$1,239,711.92 (RTA Development Funds, Engineering & Project Development Department Budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Sleasman, seconded by Ms. McPherson and approved by majority vote.
- B. 2025-103 – Approving Amendments to Community Advisory Committee (“CAC”) Operating Guidelines, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McPherson, seconded by Ms. Elder and approved by majority vote.
- C. 2025-104 – Expressing Congratulations to the Employees of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority Who Retired During the Third Quarter of 2025, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McPherson, seconded by Ms. Elder and approved by majority vote.

Secretary-Treasurer’s Report

Rajan Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer, presented the Secretary-Treasurer's report. The economic conditions remain stable, with interest rates decreasing to 4.25% in September and inflation at 2.9%. Consumer sentiment remained stable on a monthly basis, though year-over-year measures showed modest declines. Year-to-date ridership was slightly below 2024 levels and 23.7% below 2019 pre-COVID 2019, with fare revenue reflecting similar trends. September sales tax receipts rose 10.5% compared to September 2024. Long-term debt remained steady at \$22.3 million, and investment yields averaged 4.8%. Total cash and investments were \$356.1 million, of which \$326.4 million is in restricted funds. The unrestricted or General Fund cash and investments amount is \$29.7 million. Total long-term debt as of the end of 2024 was \$22.3 million, with payment on debt due in December 2025.

Moving to the 2025 budget, Mr. Gautam stated that staff budgeted a transfer of \$50.5 million from the Revenue Stabilization Fund to support operations. To date, \$25 million has been transferred. The current balance in the Revenue Stabilization Fund is \$100.8 million. Staff expects to transfer the remaining \$25.5 million by year end. 2025 revenues stood at \$273.3 million with budgeted expenses of \$323.8 million.

During the November Board Meeting, staff will request the approval of an amendment to the 2025 budget for an increase in appropriations largely due to an increase in healthcare costs, which have increased roughly 30% from 2024 levels.

Two public hearings will be held to present the 2026 budget leading to the request for Board approval during the December meeting.

Mayor Weiss questioned whether ridership has been impacted by a structural change to work habits. Dr. Floun'say Caver, Chief Operating Officer, advised that the downtown central business district has about 80% of its pre-COVID activity. Weekend and post-rush hour recovery has been strong, but not enough to offset the central business district decline.

CEO Terry stated that monthly fluctuation in ridership is due to seasonal activities such as weather, schools and holidays, but downtown activity during business hours have been impacted by COVID.

Ms. Pacetti stated that ridership levels have stagnated after increasing each year since 2020 and may not recover to pre-COVID levels.

XVII. General Manager, CEO Report

India L. Birdsong Terry, General Manager, CEO, began the report by stating that on October 15 the semi-annual staff meeting, or Town Hall, was held, which included a Fireside Chat and audience questions, during which major projects were discussed.

Moving to the legislative update, CEO Terry advised that the federal government shutdown continues. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which is a major funder of GCRTA capital projects, is deemed essential and therefore continues with operations without a significant impact on the budget. There are no service cuts or employee furloughs due to the government shutdown. All projects are continuing as planned.

CEO Terry stated that a hiring freeze had been immediately implemented as a proactive measure to contain costs and be good financial stewards. Staff understands how important GCRTA services are to the community and will be aggressive. The hiring freeze protects current employees; the hiring of operators and mechanics continues because service has not changed.

Moving to the month in review, CEO Terry reported that she and staff attended a Cleveland Leadership Center meeting as well as the 2025 NOACA Annual Meeting.

Multiple public meetings were held regarding the MetroHealth Line or the West 25th BRT. GCRTA wanted to respond to questions from the community regarding parking availability while supporting the business community and increasing mobility and reliability for customers. Over \$500,000 in safety enhancements were added to that program based on community feedback. Another open house will take place later during the month. The goal is to make it safer and more reliable for customers -- and especially ambulances that need to get through that corridor.

CEO Terry acknowledged Tariq Mohammed, who is a Business Operations Administrator and was named a global ambassador for the 2025-2026 cohort. He will represent RTA locally and internationally.

CEO Terry stated that GCRTA has requested \$16.7 million in Transportation Review Advisory Committee (TRAC) funding to advance the next phase of light rail. More is coming with preparedness programs as new rail cars are embraced and make it a safer overall ride. Regarding a timeline, Mr. Schipper stated that the final decision will be made in March, but staff will have a preliminary indication in January.

External Affairs staff traveled to Columbus for a policy summit regarding Asset Limited Income Constrained and Employed (ALICE) during which the business community and others collaborate about how to support those that may be economically in need of support. The submit is hosted through The United Way to support folks that utilize RTA service.

The GCRTA street team with 80 volunteers and staff conducted a customer experience day that started at Public Square and went around the system to seek customer feedback.

XVIII. President's Report

Mayor Koomar stated that the 2026 Board & Committee Meetings calendar had been finalized and distributed.

XIX. Old Business

No items.

XX. New Business

No items.

XXI. Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, November 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) by selecting the meeting date. The public is welcome to attend in person.

XXII. Adjournment

There being no further business to bring before this Board, a motion to adjourn the meeting by Ms. Pacetti and seconded by Mr. Love was approved by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Attest:


Secretary-Treasurer


President