



Committee of the Whole

January 20, 2026

MEETING MINUTES

Committee Members: Mayor Koomar (Chair), Ms. Pacetti (Vice Chair), Ms. Elder, Mayor Gallo, Mr. Love, Ms. McPherson, Mr. Sleasman, Mayor Weiss, Ms. Smith Whigham

Staff/Other: Shawn Becker, India Birdsong Terry, Muriel Bower, Felicia Brooks-Williams, Janet Burney, Floun'say Caver, Brent Charnigo, Drew Dimmick, Maribeth Feke, Michael Fesler, George Fields, Bob Fleig, Joel Freilich, Anthony Garofoli, Rajan Gautam, Fiona Gibbons, Chief Deirdre Jones, Carl Kirkland, Ida Marshall, Nicholas Miller, Sheila Miller, Charles Morgan, Mike Schipper, Joe Shaffer, Kay Sutula, Wendy Talley, John Togher, Gerald Ware, Kimberly Wright

Public: Rhonda Chesney, Belinda James, Matt Krauss, Lauren Lynch, Calley Mersmann, Beatrice Osbey, Perry Osbey, Clark Suital, Chris Urban, Dagmar White, Jerome Windsor

I. Roll Call

Mayor Koomar called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with roll call. A quorum was present.

II. Approval of Minutes – December 2, 2025

Ms. Pacetti moved, and Ms. McPherson seconded to approve the minutes; the motion carried.

III. West 25th Street BRT Project Update

Michael Shipper, Deputy General Manager, Engineering, stated that the Board was given an update on the West 25th Street BRT Project in October. The presentation focused on the Ohio City segment, a nearly four (4) mile corridor from Detroit Avenue to Old Brooklyn, with particular attention to the five or six blocks from Detroit to just south of Lorain Avenue.

Calley Mersmann, Director, City of Cleveland Planning Commission, stated that the City of Cleveland is working in partnership with GCRTA on the development and roll out of the West 25th Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, understanding that GCRTA is the key sponsor of the capital project along the corridor. The shared goal is to deliver a capital investment that maximizes transit benefits while supporting a thriving business district with safe and convenient pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular navigation. This presentation is specific to the Ohio City portion of the project.

The project represents a \$52 million roadway investment in the Ohio City neighborhood, including \$4 million dedicated to improvements adjacent to the new Irishtown Bend park. Key features include a multipurpose path connecting regional bicycle networks, sidewalk repairs, asphalt resurfacing, landscaping, security enhancements, and upgraded transit waiting environments. The initiative aims to maximize transit benefits while supporting a vibrant business district and improving pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular navigation

Safety is a central concern, with analysis identifying high-priority intersections for improvements. The project will provide continuous bicycle connections through dedicated bus-bike lanes, reduce transit commute times, and enhance reliability for up to 1.7 million annual rides.

Ms. Mersmann stated that the City of Cleveland is compelled to find a solution that maximizes transit benefits and contributes to the sustained vitality and vibrancy of the business corridor in this high-frequency area. The corridor sees high transit frequency, with 12 routes per hour in each direction, underscoring the need for solutions that balance business vitality and transit efficiency

Mr. Schipper advised that the BRT project has evolved since 2020, beginning with a transit-oriented development study and progressing through environmental and design phases. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recently approved the environmental documentation, setting project limits and scope. 90% of design plans were completed and submitted in November 2025, with ongoing stakeholder engagement, including meetings with business owners, community groups, and the Irish Town Bend team.

The current traffic patterns disrupts and jams the corridor, resulting in GCRTA buses being delayed. Such disruptions occur at different times on different days. In an effort to alleviate the traffic disruptions, the BRT will feature dedicated bus lanes, transit signal prioritization, enhanced curbside stations, and improved reliability, with significant investments in roadway, signals, pedestrian infrastructure, and station amenities such as lighting, security cameras, and real-time information kiosks. Construction is anticipated to take 18 to 21 months and reach completion in Fall 2028.

GCRTA has conducted extensive community outreach with businesses, organizations and stakeholders. Economic development is a major focus, with over \$1 billion in investment projected along the corridor, including \$250 million already built and \$550 million in construction or permitting.

Ms. Mersmann explained how community concerns have been addressed by incorporating traffic calming measures in the market area, including raised crosswalks, vertical delineators, rumble strips, and red stencils for bus-bike lanes. These enhancements aim to improve pedestrian safety in high-traffic zones. The City is also piloting pedestrian detection and safety assessment technology at key intersections and will conduct post-project evaluations to address ongoing issues

Mr. Schipper stated that an area of focus of the project is economic development. Cuyahoga County transit-oriented development data indicates that there will be over \$1 billion of investment in the corridor.

Parking availability is a key concern in the market district. The transition to dedicated bus-bike lanes will result in a net loss of 55 on-street parking spaces in Ohio City. GCRTA and the City of Cleveland have both conducted parking surveys and GCRTA has adjusted its plans to reduce parking impact as much as possible. However, there are nearly 600 additional surface-level parking spaces in the area and have a 70% utilization at peak times. GCRTA wants to deliver reliable transit service to riders.

The City is working with businesses to optimize parking management, designate pickup/drop-off zones, and implement camera enforcement for short-term curb use. A district-wide transportation management plan will clarify public parking options, improve wayfinding, and seek to unify payment systems for ease of use

The project will expand space for pedestrians on the northern end of the corridor, which results in increased park space for Irish town Bend as well as construction of a multi-purpose path that links directly into local and regional bike networks

Concerns about bus lane enforcement are being addressed through physical barriers and camera monitoring. GCRTA transit police will have authority to ticket those who park illegally. The City of Cleveland and GCRTA are committed to support businesses during construction, maintaining access, and providing resources as needed

Mr. Schipper stated that the project's funding includes local match funds, formula grants, \$12 million from ODOT, and a pending \$20.5 million FTA Capital Improvement Grant. If FTA funding is not secured in February, the project will reapply the following year, potentially delaying benefits and increasing costs due to inflation. Coordination with the Irish Town Bend team and other stakeholders is critical to maintaining project momentum and maximizing community value.

The Committee expressed appreciation for the collaborative efforts between GCRTA and the City of Cleveland, particularly in addressing safety and parking concerns.

Ms. Mersmann stated that the City of Cleveland through a separate project currently in partnership with GCRTA is piloting pedestrian detection and safety assessment technology at key intersections along the corridor. Additional safety measures for pedestrians will be implemented.

Ms. Mersmann advised that the transportation management plan includes a focused effort to raise awareness of the available parking, develop clear signage for drivers and pedestrians and move to one payment system. Additional efforts are being made to provide curb management strategies for businesses. The City will fund a district-wide transportation management plan that considers organized district parking solutions that make clear which surface lots are publicly available, implementing wayfinding signage and recommendations to unify pay parking opportunities under one system.

Mr. Sleasman stated that the economics of BRT found that it is positive for businesses and easier for drivers. He noted that one third of traffic congestion is drivers looking for parking. Transportation management signage would help remove distracted drivers in an area with many pedestrians.

IV. Adjournment

There being no further business to bring before the Committee, Mr. Sleasman moved to adjourn the meeting and seconded by Ms. Pacetti. The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 a.m.



Rajan D. Gautam
Secretary/Treasurer



Brent Charnigo
Board Administrator

