

PLANNING PROCESS AND PROFILE

TRANSIT SERVICE PROFILE

GCRTA HIGHLIGHTS

The History of public transit in Cleveland through 2017 can be found at <http://www.riderta.com/history> and current activities are posted through social media:



Figure 1 – Social Media

Since 2018, the Authority has:

2018

- [GCRTA 2018 Annual Report](#)
- Celebrated MetroHealth Line’s 1 millionth rider less than a year of opening
- Celebrated HealthLine’s 10th anniversary and generated \$9.5 billion in economic development along Euclid Corridor
- Celebrated Red Line’s 50th anniversary to Cleveland Hopkins International Airport – the first in the world to offer direct public transit rail service between a city’s Downtown district and an international airport

2019

- [GCRTA 2019 Annual Report](#)
- India L. Birdsong Terry hired as CEO/General Manager
- Received APTA Gold Award for Bus Safety
- Completed upgrades to East 105-Quincy Red Line Station
- Hosted Major League Baseball All Star Game and Tall Ships Festival
- Completed a \$6.4 million track upgrade to the Red Line in May, extending between the West Park Station and the Airport Tunnel, including 3.6 miles of railroad track, replacing 12,275 timber cross ties, improving track drainage, adding signal improvements, and repairing the platform at Puritas Station
- A corrective action plan was implemented for the S-Curve Retaining Wall, installing 75 steel beam frames along the 300-foot long wall
- Completed five studies (“pillar studies”) to provide a comprehensive examination of RTA’s operations and impact on the Greater Cleveland and Cuyahoga County community, which provided information used for the new Strategic Plan in 2020

2020

- [GCRTA 2020 Annual Report](#)
- Received COVID-19 Coronavirus A Relief Economic Stimulus (CARES) Act dollars for operating expenses, which allowed RTA to continue 87% of service during global pandemic and return to 97% of pre-COVID service level by the end of 2020
- Provided free WIFI accessible on vehicles and at stations for the general public
- Installed new radio equipment on all vehicles (buses and trains)
- Provided free rides for election day to support access to those limited by the pandemic supported by a grant



- Developed a new ten-year Strategic Plan

2021

- [GCRTA 2021 Annual Report](#)
- Implemented NextGen system redesign
- Issued RFP for purchase of new Rail Cars
- Received TRAC Funds, ODOT awarded GCRTA \$4.2M for light rail rehabilitation
- Received the APTA 2021 Rail COVID-19 Gold Award for Heavy Rail
- Received a First Place Award for Marketing in the 2021 Annual APTA AdWheel Awards, "Greater Cleveland RTA's "Holiday Trains" Social Media: Best Marketing and Communications to Support Ridership or Sales
- Received additional Emergency relief funds to assist with operating expenses and decreased passenger revenue under Coronavirus Response & Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act (CRRSA) and American Rescue Plan Act

2022

- [GCRTA 2022 Annual Report](#)
- Introduced a new HealthLine fleet
- Signed the Hispanic Promise
- Received \$81 million from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act- \$20.3 million annually over the next four years
- Joined the APTA Racial Equality Commitment Pilot Program
- Launched a new mobile ticketing app – Transit with EZfare
- Launched Transit Ambassador and Crisis Intervention Specialists Programs
- Created a Civilian Oversight Committee for independent review and investigation of public complaints of alleged misconduct regarding its Transit Police Department
- Received remaining funds from American Rescue Plan Act
- Introduced Positive Impact Bus Operator Mentoring Program
- Received one of seven 2022 Awards of Excellence in Government Finance from GFOA

2023

- [GCRTA 2023 Annual Report](#)
- Launched Microtransit workforce connector programs in Solon, Ohio and the Aerozone Region
- Approved the selection of Siemens Mobility Inc. and initiated the process to purchase 24 Siemens Model S200 rail cars.
- Received a \$130 million grant to GCRTA for the [Rail Car Replacement Program](#), presented by Senator Sherrod Brown and FTA Administrator Nuria Fernandez
- Collaborated with Akron METRO on new fixed-route bus services from GCRTA's Southgate Transit Center
- Re-opened the Waterfront Line for Cleveland Browns home football games
- Announced the newly created Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Announced the return of their Civilian Oversight Committee (COC) with new elected members
- Awarded a \$12.6 million grant from ODOT for use towards their [Rail Car Replacement Program](#)
- Created and launched EngageRTA, a new online tool on their website that receives and processes requests submitted from members of the communities served by GCRTA

2024

- [GCRTA 2024 Annual Report](#)
- Received the Healthy Business Council of Ohio Gold Level Award for healthy Worksite Practices
- Coordinated an Inter-agency program to effectively manage three major events in one weekend: the Solar Eclipse, the Guardians Home Opener, and the NCAA Women’s Division Basketball Finals
- Coordinated an Inter-agency program to effectively manage the APTA 2024 Rail Conference
- Completed the preliminary design review for the new vehicles
- Opened the Transit Ambassador Office at the Louis Stokes/Windemere Rapid Station
- Hosted the annual Rail Rodeo and Family Fun Day
- Hosted a Siemens Commissioning Team Lead to tour the Delivery Switch at the Port of Cleveland the Brookpark Rail Shop
- Relunched Adopt-A-shelter Program
- Launched the Ride Free Day on Election Day, Roll to the Polls
- Hired our first, Senior Director of Customer Experience & Performance Management
- Celebrated 50 years of serving Cuyahoga County on December 30, 2024

2025

- [GCRTA 2025 Annual Report¹](#)
- Received the Healthy Business Council of Ohio Platinum Level Award for healthy Worksite Practices
- Celebrated the eighth annual Ohio Loves Transit Week, highlighted by Ohio Loves Transit Day
- Celebrated the 50th Anniversary of GCRTA during the year.
- Commemorated Transit Equity Day, a national day of action held on Rosa Parks’ Birthday each year to elevate the message that public transit should be safe, sustainable, and equitable for all people and all communities
- New Board Member Mayor Marie Gallo joined GCRTA Board of Trustees
- Welcomed 14 New Transit Police Officers at swearing-in ceremony
- Hosted a Career Fair for Bus Operators
- Recognized and honored GCRTA’s workforce on Transit Employee Appreciation Day
- Thanked Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio General Assembly for their continued support of public transit in the approved state transportation budget
- Honored Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage month with special bus stop signs on the #9 – Mayfield-Hough bus route
- The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) awarded their Distinguished Budget Presentation Award to GCRTA
- Hosted a special 50th Anniversary “Ride Through Time” event at their Waterfront Line Settlers Landing station
- Board of Trustees voted unanimously for the reappointment of three members to the GCRTA Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

¹ Not yet available as of publication

- Held a ceremony to commemorate the groundbreaking of the East 79th Blue and Green Line Station reconstruction project
- Reopened the Red Line W.117-Madison Station for service upon completion of rehabilitation project
- The Sculpture Center, in partnership with the GCRTA and The MetroHealth System, unveiled a new permanent public sculpture by internationally acclaimed artist Edra Soto, titled La Distancia / The Distance; the sculpture functions as a GCRTA bus shelter in Cleveland’s Clark-Fulton neighborhood
- Approved the [Rail Car Replacement](#) Team’s request to exercise a negotiated competitive contract option for the purchase and delivery of up to 6 new rail cars from Siemens Mobility Incorporated
- Celebrated Customer Experience Day by honoring our riders and the people behind better transit connections
- Honored Paratransit Operator James “Jimmy” E. Smith for achieving 45 years of safe driving
- Joined the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and transit agencies across the country in celebrating National Transit Career Day
- Welcomed new Board Member Shanelle Smith Whigham joined GCRTA Board of Trustees
- Reappointed two members to the GCRTA Civilian Oversight Committee (COC)
- Returned #55 Bus Line to GCRTA branding
- Reappointed Mayor David E. Weiss to the GCRTA Board of Trustees
- Reappointed eight Community Advisory Committee members
- Received Grant Awards:
 - The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) awarded \$2.7 million in grant funds from the Diesel Emission Reduction Grant (DERG) program to GCRTA for the purchase of new environmentally friendly compressed natural gas (CNG) buses
 - NOACA awarded GCRTA funding to purchase new vehicles through funds provided from NOACA’s Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program.



Figure 2 – Railcar in Production

COUNTY PROFILE

Cuyahoga County Profile (2024) ²			
		Number	Change from prior year
Population	2024 Population	1,240,594	7,506
	% Change from last Decennial (2020)		-1.3%
	Census 2030 Population estimate (change from 2020)	1,154,210	-8.7%
	Land Area (sq. miles)	457.2	0
	% Female	52.0 %	-0.1 %
	Persons per Sq. Mile	2,697	
Race & Ethnicity	% White	63.5 %	
	% Black	31.9 %	
	% Hispanic/Latino	7.5 %	
	% Asian/Pacific Islander	4.6 %	
	% American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.6 %	
	% Other	6.8 %	
Housing	Avg. persons per Household	2.21	
	# Housing Units	615,292	
	Occupied Housing Units	555,988	
	% Resident Home Ownership	59.4 %	
	Housing Median Value (owner-occupied)	\$195,400	
Income	Median Household Income	\$65,974	
	% Population under Federal poverty line	15.7 %	
Largest Cities (population)	Cleveland City (county seat)	365,391	2,721
	Parma City	79,365	413
	Lakewood City	49,517	-712
	Euclid City	48,421	-570
	Strongsville City	45,768	-254
	Cleveland Heights City	44,064	-630
	Westlake City	34,232	4
	North Olmsted City	31,690	-341
	North Royalton City	30,894	-119
	Garfield Heights City	29,014	-355
Land Usage³	Developed/Urbanized	77.0 %	
	Bare/Mines	0.2 %	
	Forest	18.8 %	
	Pasture	1.4 %	
	Cropland	0.1 %	
	Wetlands	1.1 %	
	Open Water	0.4 %	

Figure 3 - County Profile

² American Community Survey 1 year estimate

³ Last updated 2021



County Profile		
		Number
Education Resources⁴	School Districts	31
	Public Schools	281
	Non-Public Schools	152
	4-Year Public Universities	1
	2-Year Public Colleges	3
	Private Universities & Colleges ⁵	4
	Public Libraries	9
	Branch Libraries	67
Means of Transportation to Work	Drive Alone	68.5 %
	Carpool	9.1 %
	Public Transportation	3.0 %
	Walk	2.7 %
	Other	2.8 %
	Work from Home	13.9 %
Travel Time to Work	Less than 15 minutes	25.6 %
	15 to 29 minutes	44.7%
	30 to 44 minutes	22.5 %
	45 to 59 minutes	4.1 %
	60 minutes or more	3.2 %
Major Employers⁶	Cleveland Clinic Health Foundation	Healthcare provider
	University Hospitals Health System	Healthcare provider
	Group Management Services	Staffing and employment services firm
	Minute Men Cos.	Staffing and employment services firm
	U.S. Office of Personal Management	Federal government
	Walmart	Operator of retail supercenters
	Progressive Corp.	Insurance company
	Amazon	Online retailer
	Giant Eagle, Inc.	Multi-format food, fuel & pharmacy retailer
	Accurate Staffing	Employment agency offering staffing and recruiting
	State of Ohio	State government
	Cuyahoga County	County government
	The Metrohealth System	Healthcare provider
City of Cleveland	Municipal government	
Summa Health	Healthcare provider	

Figure 4 – Economic Profile

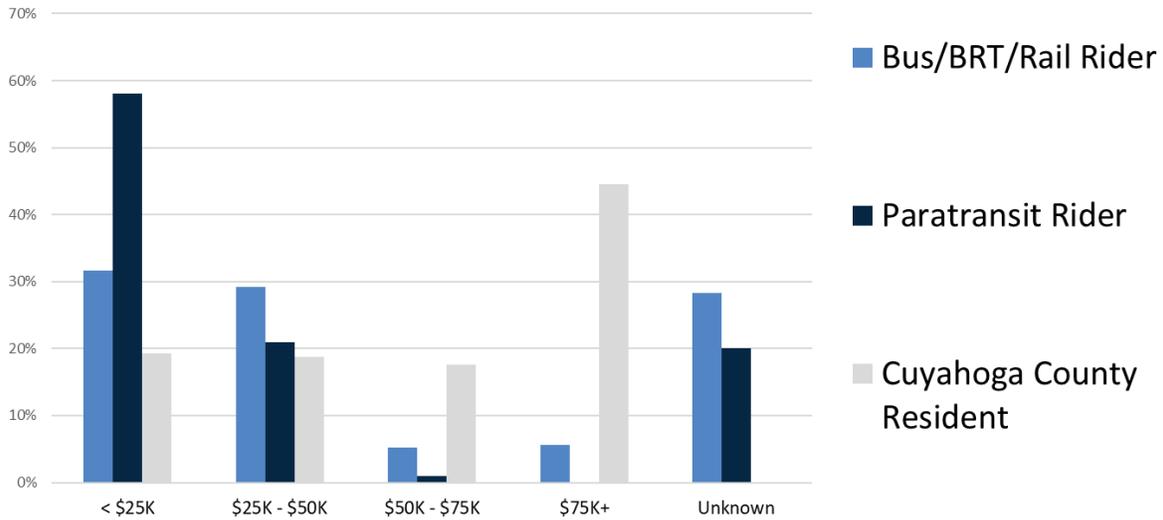
⁴ data <https://oeds.ode.state.oh.us/DataExtract> downloaded 1/9/2026

⁵ Excludes Notre Dame College which closed in 2024

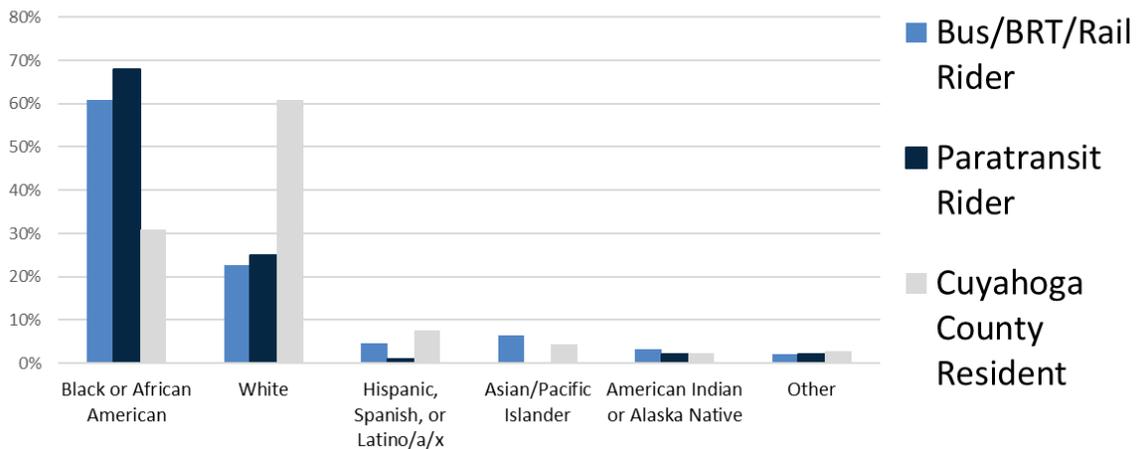
⁶ Cuyahoga County 2022 Annual Information Statement – major employers in northeast Ohio with operations in Cuyahoga County



Household Annual Income



Race/Ethnicity



⁷ Cuyahoga County and U.S. General Population data from American Community Survey 2024 – 1-year estimate; Rider data from RTA 2025 Customer Experience Survey Wave 2; excludes riders under age 15

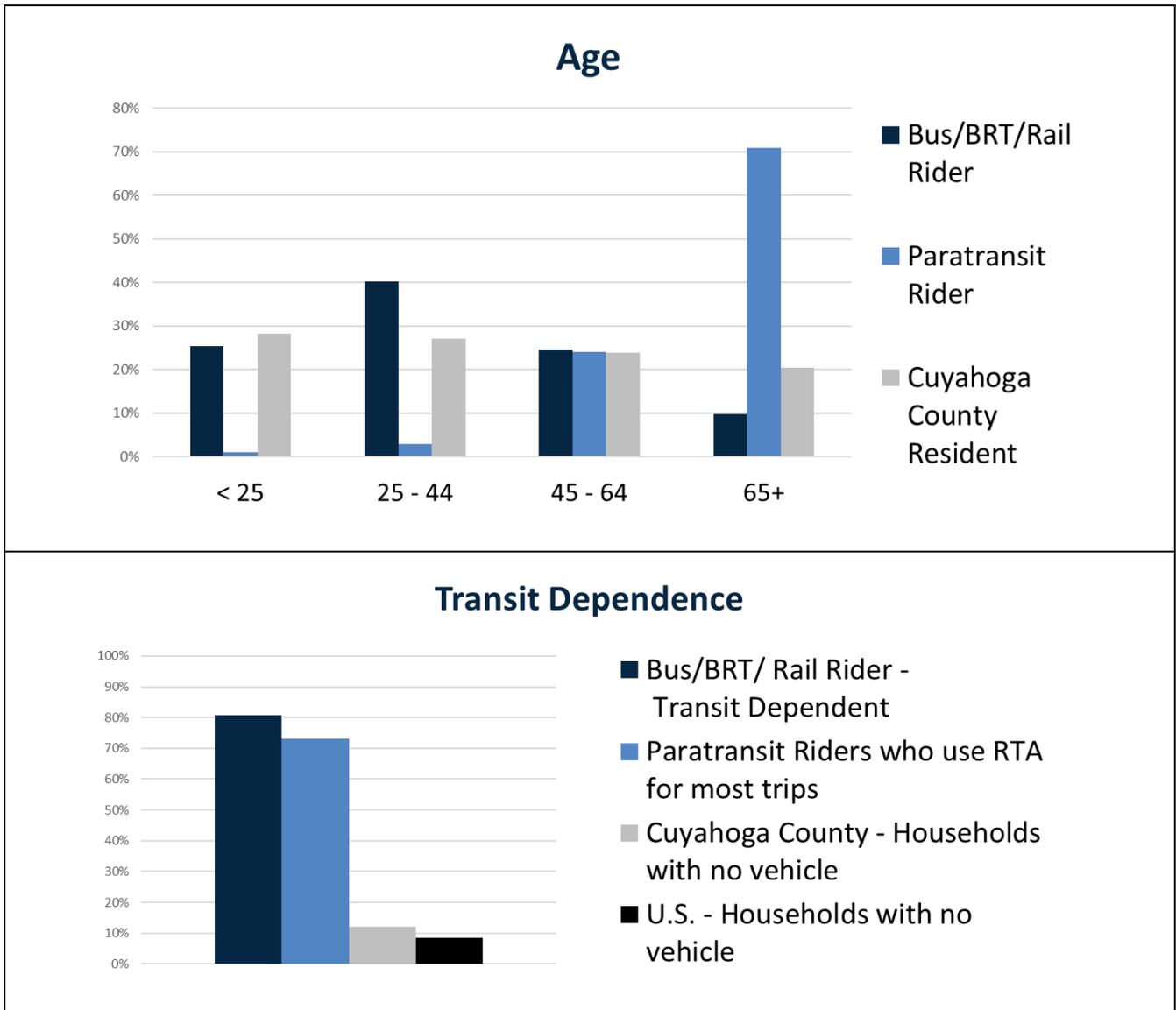


Figure 5 – County/Rider Demographics

TRENDS OF NORTHEAST OHIO COMPARED TO THE STATE AND NATIONAL AVERAGES

Cleveland's population has experienced fluctuations in recent years. As of 2023, the city's population was estimated at 362,670. In 2024, estimates indicated a slight increase to 365,391 residents ranking it 53rd among the largest U.S. cities. Notably, 2024 marked the first year in a while that the city's population increased like other older American cities.

Regarding unemployment, the Cleveland-Elyria metropolitan area saw significant improvements in 2024. In December 2024, the unemployment rate was 3.5%, down from 4.0% in September 2024. This trend reflects a broader recovery from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, with unemployment rates returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Population - Urban Centers ⁸						
Year	Cleveland	Akron	Cincinnati	Columbus	Dayton	Toledo
1900	381,768	42,728	325,902	125,560	85,333	131,822
2000	478,403	217,074	331,285	711,470	166,179	313,619
2010	431,363	207,216	333,013	769,360	141,527	316,238
2020	372,624	190,469	309,317	905,748	137,644	270,871
2024 ACS est.	365,391	189,664	314,915	933,263	136,346	265,638

Figure 6 – Population – Ohio Urban Centers

County Population Changes ⁹				
County	2024	2010	Diff.	%
Ashtabula	96,906	101,490	-4,584	-4.5%
Cuyahoga	1,240,594	1,280,115	-39,521	-3.1%
Geauga	95,362	93,409	1,953	2.1%
Lake	232,360	230,050	2,310	1.0%
Lorain	322,030	301,371	20,659	6.9%
Medina	184,625	172,333	12,292	7.1%
Portage	163,839	161,425	2,414	1.5%
	538,370		-3,408	-0.6%
Summit		541,778		

Figure 7 – Northeast Ohio County Populations

⁸ Source: US Census Bureau and American Community Survey 2024 1-year estimates

⁹ Source: US Census Bureau and American Community Survey 2024 1-year estimates



Unemployment Rates - History ¹⁰			
Year	National Avg.	Ohio	Cuyahoga County
2014	6.2	5.8	5.3
2015	5.3	5.0	4.4
2016	4.9	5.0	5.8
2017	4.4	5.0	4.7
2018	3.9	4.5	4.3
2019	3.7	4.2	3.9
2020	8.1	8.2	8.3
2021	5.4	5.1	4.9
2022	3.6	4.0	4.9
2023	3.8	3.8	3.2
2024 est.	4.1	4.4	3.5

Figure 8 – Unemployment Rates

TRANSIT TRENDS

NATIONAL TRANSIT TRENDS

The National Transit Database (<https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd>) was established by US Congress to be the Nation’s primary source of information and statistics on the transit system of the United States. Recipients of grants from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are required by statute to submit data to the NTD. The NTD is used to help meet the needs of individual public transportation systems, the US Government, State, and Local governments, and the public for information on which to base public transportation service planning.

Below is a comparison of total Cost per Unlinked Passenger Trip for Bus, Rapid Bus, Heavy Rail, and Light Rail. As the number of trips declined following COVID-19, the cost of providing each trip increased.

National Transit Database statistics are always behind two calendar years for final reporting purposes. For example, 2023 NTD data was not available until the end of the 2024 calendar year.

¹⁰ Source – National & State – Bureau of Labor Statistics; County – Federal Reserve Economic Data

Cost of providing each Unlinked Passenger Trip Nationally (by mode):¹¹

	Bus	BRT*	Heavy Rail	Light Rail
2016	\$4.34	\$2.91	\$2.46	\$4.06
2017	\$4.67	\$2.96	\$2.28	\$4.30
2018	\$4.87	\$3.43	\$2.44	\$4.78
2019	\$5.22	\$3.25	\$2.46	\$5.14
2020	\$7.38	\$4.89	\$5.12	\$7.44
2021	\$10.30	\$7.18	\$5.83	\$13.46
2022	\$8.87	\$6.20	\$4.29	\$9.85
2023	\$8.35	\$4.80	\$4.26	\$9.34
2024	\$8.13	\$4.83	\$4.35	\$9.88

Figure 9 – Cost per Trip

Total Unlinked Passenger Trips Nationally (in millions):¹²

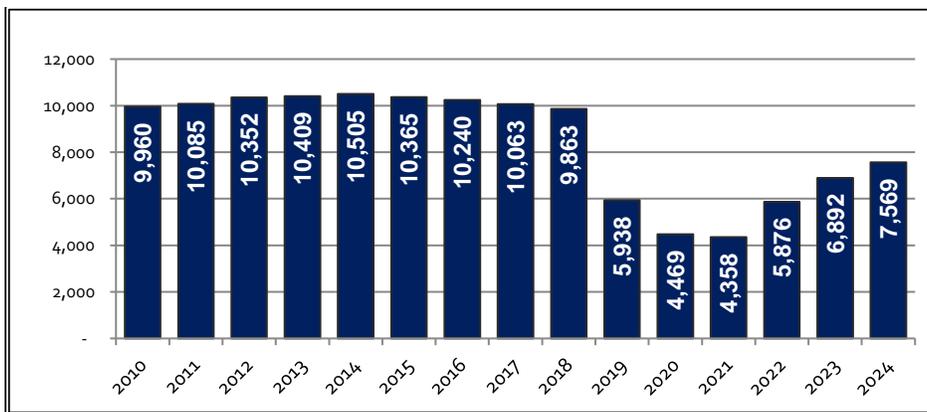


Figure 10 - Passenger Trips

¹¹ National Transit Database

¹² Source: National Transit Summaries and Trends 2023



OHIO & GREATER CLEVELAND TRANSIT TRENDS

The 9 Largest Agencies in Ohio as of 2024 – NTD data listed below:

Agency	Service Area Sq. Mi	Pop	Mode	Unlinked Passenger Trips	Annual Passenger Miles	Vehicle Revenue Miles	Vehicles in Max Service	Vehicles Available for Max Service	Spare Ratio (%)
Akron (Metro)	420	541,879	DR & DR/PT	201,110	1,175,848	1,630,401	84	115	36.9
			Bus	5,140,524	21,591,028	4,265,81	104	135	29.8
Canton (SARTA)	1,131	490,723	DR	133,790	1,100,480	1,301,237	38	43	13.2
			Bus	1,326,60	9,677,069	2,424,515	26	38	5.6
Cincinnati (SORTA)	289	744,901	DR	263,088	2,248,812	1,640,327	60	70	16.7
			Bus	13,315,628	69,637,848	11,452,953	253	306	20.9
Cleveland (GCRTA)	458	1,264,817	DR & DR/PT	661,142	5,798,343	4,914,942	143	171	19.6
			HR	3,151,597	22,627,104	2,333,320	16	39	143.8
			LR	808,055	4,665,719	531,294	7	22	214.3
			Bus	18,187,960	73,259,024	13,363,630	224	295	31.7
			RB	2,080,030	5,375,398	418,772	7	16	128.6
Columbus (COTA)	336	1,413,698	DR & DR/PT	496,458	3,506,040	4,074,677	91	133	46.2
			Bus	11,853,423	54,542,416	11,089,087	198	285	43.9
Dayton (GDRTA)	274	559,062	DR	229,545	1,971,492	1,909,294	75	58	29.3
			Bus	4,297,559	29,099,332	4,790,610	139	64	117.2
			TB	1,713,249	7,840,249	584,446	45	16	181.3
Lake County (Laketran)	627	326,867	CB	65,931	1,429,384	364,883	13	20	53.8
			DR	275,895	2,517,654	2,480,558	84	138	64.3
			Bus	359,943	3,621,026	1,172,354	19	28	47.4
Toledo (TARTA)	238	429,500	DR & DR/TX	248,672	1,631,315	1,777,647	76	79	3.9
			Bus	2,006,430	12,584,700	2,409,418	44	58	31.8
Youngstown (WRTA)	331	430,591	DR	46,099	289,053	378,675	17	25	52.9
			Bus	1,953,402	6,543,897	1,636,850	40	51	40.0

Bus - Fixed Route Bus
 DR - Demand Response
 DR/PT - Demand Response - Purchased Transportation
 TB - Trolley Bus
 LR - Light Rail
 HR - Heavy Rail
 RB - Rapid Transit Bus
 DR/TX - Demand Response - Taxi
 VP - Vanpool

Figure 11 – Largest Ohio transit agencies

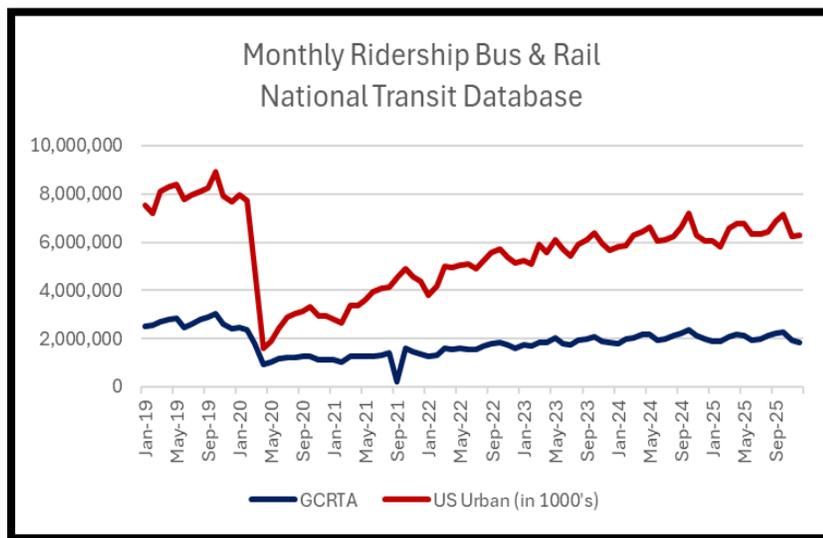


Figure 12 – Ridership since 2019

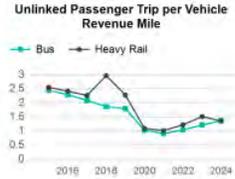
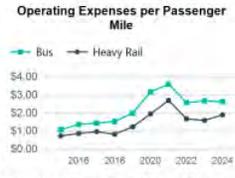
NATIONAL TRANSIT DATABASE: GREATER CLEVELAND REGIONAL TRANSIT PROFILE

2024 Annual Agency Profile - The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (NTD ID 50015)

Mailing Address: 1240 W 6TH ST
CLEVELAND, OH

Website: <http://www.riderta.com/>

Geographic Coverage		Service Consumed					
Primary Urbanized Area	Cleveland, OH	Annual Passenger Miles Traveled (PMT)	111,725,584				
Square Miles	714	Annual Unlinked Trips (UPT)	24,888,785				
Population	1,712,178	Average Weekday UPT	78,387				
Other Areas Served:		Average Saturday UPT	49,405				
	Ohio Non-UZA	Average Sunday UPT	38,907				
Service Area Population	1,264,817						
Service Area Sq. Miles	458						
Assets		Service Supplied					
Revenue Vehicles	537	Annual Vehicle/Passenger Car Revenue Miles (VRM)	2,864,614				
Service Vehicles	246	Annual Vehicle/Passenger Car Revenue Hours (VRH)	161,535				
Facilities	145	Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service (VOMS)	397				
Lane Miles	19.2	Vehicles Available for Maximum Service (VAMS)	543				
Track Miles	87.59						
Modal Characteristics							
Mode	Directly Operated VOMS	Purchased Transportation VOMS	Annual Passenger Miles Traveled	Annual Unlinked Passenger Trips	Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles	Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours	Fixed Guideway Directional Route Miles
Demand Response	60	83	5,798,343	661,142	4,914,942	351,711	0.00
Heavy Rail	16	0	22,627,103	3,151,597	2,333,320	124,305	38.10
Light Rail	7	0	4,665,719	808,055	531,294	37,230	30.40
Bus	224	0	73,259,021	18,187,961	13,363,630	1,073,017	0.00
Bus Rapid Transit	7	0	5,375,398	2,080,030	418,772	47,691	14.10
Total	314	83	111,725,584	24,888,785	21,561,958	1,633,954	82.60
Metrics							
Mode	Service Efficiency		Service Effectiveness				
	OE per VRM	OE per VRH	UPT per VRM	UPT per VRH	OE per PMT	OE per UPT	
Demand Response	\$9.27	\$129.58	0.1	1.9	\$7.86	\$68.93	
Heavy Rail	\$18.49	\$347.04	1.4	25.4	\$1.91	\$13.69	
Light Rail	\$26.05	\$371.70	1.5	21.7	\$2.97	\$17.13	
Bus	\$14.45	\$179.97	1.4	17.0	\$2.64	\$10.62	
Bus Rapid Transit	\$23.98	\$210.55	5.0	43.6	\$1.87	\$4.83	
Total	\$14.18	\$187.10	1.2	15.2	\$2.74	\$12.28	



2024 Funding Breakdown

Summary of Operating Expenses (OE)

Category	Amount	Percentage
Labor	\$231,616,786	75.8%
Materials and Supplies	\$24,995,476	8.2%
Purchased Transportation	\$14,106,279	4.6%
Other Operating Expenses	\$34,986,747	11.4%
Total Operating Expenses	\$305,705,288	100.0%
Reconciling OE Cash Expenditures	\$45,895,295	

Sources of Operating Funds Expended

Directly Generated	\$56,392,129
Federal Government	\$9,661,930
Local Government	\$240,686,634
State Government	\$547,142
Total Operating Funds Expended	\$307,287,835

Operating Funding Sources



Sources of Capital Funds Expended

Directly Generated	\$0
Federal Government	\$69,513,594
Local Government	\$26,169,586
State Government	\$8,186,406
Total Capital Funds Expended	\$103,869,586

Capital Funding Sources



Operating Expense Detail

Mode	Operating Expenses	Fare Revenues	Revenue Vehicles	Systems and Guideway	Facilities and Stations	Other
Demand Response	\$45,574,979	\$1,372,373	\$2,660,234	\$0	\$0	\$0
Heavy Rail	\$43,139,412	\$4,186,141	\$71,675,744	\$17,848,284	\$219,925	\$417,446
Light Rail	\$13,838,393	\$1,123,847	\$0	\$2,126,931	\$601,085	\$0
Bus	\$193,111,300	\$23,421,467	\$0	\$1,179,904	\$5,449,294	\$874,312
Bus Rapid Transit	\$10,041,204	\$2,265,443	\$131,213	\$0	\$0	\$704,304
Total	\$305,705,288	\$32,369,271	\$74,467,191	\$21,155,119	\$6,270,304	\$1,996,062

Uses of Capital

2024 Asset Management

Transit Asset Management (TAM) Tier	Tier (Rail)	TAM Sponsor NTD ID
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Metrics

Mode	Vehicles Operated in Max. Service	Vehicles Available for Max. Service	% Spare Vehicles	Avg. Fleet Age (yrs)
Demand Response	143	171	19.6%	5.2
Heavy Rail	16	39	143.8%	40.0
Light Rail	7	22	214.3%	43.0
Bus	224	295	31.7%	6.5
Bus Rapid Transit	7	16	128.6%	3.0

Figure 13 – GCRTA NTD Profile



BUDGET MANAGEMENT PROCESS

For the Authority, the fiscal and calendar years coincide. The operating budget process begins in June with the development of the Tax Budget, and in August with the development of the Capital and Operating Budgets. The Authority prepares a Tax Budget as required by the Ohio Revised Code for being a political subdivision of the State of Ohio. The Tax Budget presents the projection of revenues and estimate of expenses for the next fiscal year. The Tax Budget is presented to the Board of Trustees in July and submitted to the County Budget Office in the same month.

The Capital Budget and the Tax Budget are essential components of the base level appropriations assumed for the succeeding budget cycle. The development of the tax budget begins the annual budget process for both operating and capital.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) provides a five-year plan to provide for the purchase, maintenance, and improvement of the Authority’s capital assets. The CIP cycle begins in August, 14 months prior to the October start of the federal fiscal year and 17 months prior to the January start of the Authority’s fiscal year. For example, the CIP cycle starts with departments submitting capital requests in September 2024 that would be programmed for the CIP budget in fiscal year 2026.

Process:

- September through November – **Departments** submit capital requests.
- February - Capital Program Working Group (**CPWG**) reviews and ranks requests using Federal Transit Administration (FTA) asset management standards. CPWG consists of department representatives, project managers, and assigned staff from the Office of Management & Budget (OMB).
- March to April - the Capital Program Oversight Committee (**CPOC**) reviews each of the recommended projects, aligns funding, and identifies the priority projects to be implemented in the five-year capital plan. The CPOC consists of General Manager/CEO, Deputy General Managers and members of OMB.
- May - the 5-year CIP Resolution is presented to the **Board of Trustees** at a public hearing during a committee meeting. The first year of the five-year CIP budget is approved by Resolution by the Board of Trustees.
- June – the 5-year CIP is submitted to the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinator Agency (**NOACA**), Northeast Ohio’s Metropolitan Planning Office (MPO). NOACA reviews the 5-year CIP over a 5-month process then submits the five-year CIP to the Ohio Department of Transportation (**ODOT**) and the Federal Transportation Administration (**FTA**) for submission in the next federal fiscal year, beginning the following October.

14 Month CIP Timeline Highlights from Project Origination to Project Funding

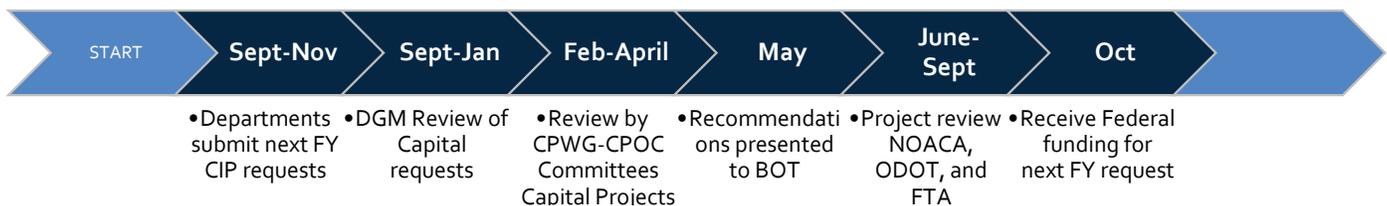


Figure 14 – CIP Timeline

OPERATING BUDGET

The **Operating Budget** provides annual funding for the daily operating activities of the Authority.

- The Operating Budget cycle begins in June with the creation of the Tax Budget. The Tax Budget is developed to project the next fiscal year revenues and estimated expenses. The Tax Budget is presented to the Board of Trustees for approval in July accompanying a public hearing. Once approved, the Authority submits a copy of the Tax Budget to the Cuyahoga County Fiscal Officer and the State Auditor.
- OMB staff, using the Tax Budget as a guide, adjusts the budget starting in August for any non-recurring costs, contracts, binding commitments, or inflation to develop the Base Budget, which serves as the starting point for the following year’s operating budget creation. The Base Budget consists of budgets from each of the Departments. The Department directors and managers review their base budgets and submit requests for adjustments. New requests are submitted based on the Strategic Plan and feedback provided through quarterly customers surveys and semiannual community surveys and input from the Citizens Advisory Committee. Discussions are held in mid-September between OMB and the Departments to finalize the budget, which includes staffing level, commitments, recurring costs, and recommended initiatives under the direction of the General Manager/CEO.
- The finalized **General Manager/CEO’s Recommended Budget** is the refined Base Budgets and negotiated adjustments. It satisfies the Authority’s financial policies and supports the Authority’s mission and strategic plan success outcomes. The General Manager/CEO’s Recommended Budget along with the service levels for the next fiscal year is presented to the Executive Management Team (EMT) in October and then presented to the Board of Trustees in November and December. Public hearings are held in November and December.
- The review process culminates in the formal adoption of a budget resolution by the **Board of Trustees** at the December Board Meeting. Upon approval, OMB loads the operating budget for the new fiscal year.

Operating Budget Development Highlights from Tax Budget to BOT Approval



Figure 15 – Operating Budget Timeline

BUDGET MONITORING AND CONTROL

OMB monitors all revenues and expenses monthly. The Authority focuses largely on the top two outside revenue sources that support the Operating Expenditures (Passenger Fares and Sales and Use Tax) and the significant three expenditures (Salaries/Overtime, Payroll Taxes/Fringe Benefits, and Services/Materials & Supplies). Quarterly financial reports inform the General Manager/CEO and the Board of Trustees (BOT) of how revenues and expenses are performing compared to the budget throughout the year. These reports are used to determine whether transfers and/or adjustments are needed to realign the current year budget. Interdepartmental transfers are the main method of adjusting the Operating Budget. The BOT’s General Manager/CEO has the authority to transfer appropriations within and between departments, which are reported monthly to the BOT. An increase to the overall budget appropriation, if needed, requires BOT approval.

The General Manager/CEO has the authority to upgrade or reclassify staff positions. Positions may be reallocated between departments and divisions, providing the overall staffing level remains at the level approved by the BOT for the budgeted year. This allows flexibility in making staff decisions. If an increase in budgeted positions is needed during the year, prior approval by the BOT would be required.

BUDGET DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR

January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Finalize Previous Fiscal Year-end •Encumbrance Roll •New Fiscal Year begins Prepare Budget Book
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Capital Program Working Group (CPWG) Meetings- Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Capital Program Oversight Committee (CPOC) Meetings: CIP
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Finalize 1st Qtr Projections •Legal Notice: CIP & Public Hearing
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •5-year CIP Presentation to BOT •Tax Budget Extension, if needed
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Legal Notice: Tax Budget & Hearing
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Finalize 2nd Qtr Projections •Tax Budget presentation to BOT and BOT Approval •Submit Tax Budget to Cuyahoga County Fiscal Office
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Upcoming FY Operating Budget Planning Kickoff •Future FY + 1 CIP Planning Kickoff
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Departments Submit requests for next CIP •RTA Service Plan Due •Present next FY Base Budget to CEO and EMT
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Finalize 3rd Qtr Projections •Present Next FY recommended budget to CEO and EMT •Load next FY CIP
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future FY + 1 CIP projects due •Upcoming FY Budget 1st presentation to BOT & public hearing •Presentation to BOT on next FY service plan •Next FY Budget 2nd presentation to BOT and public hearing
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGM review of upcoming CIP projects and approval •Next FY Budget approved by BOT • Load Next FY Budget •Prepare for year-end encumbrance roll

Figure 16 - Budget Development Calendar

STRATEGIC PLAN

RTA is customer-focused and community-engaged to drive the region forward. This undertaking encapsulates RTA’s need to focus on service to customers while considering larger societal conversations across the region. GCRTA’s [Strategic Plan](#) was approved by the BOT in 2020. It establishes a 10-year framework for the future of the Authority. It is a compilation of key highlights and technical information that encompasses **five pillar studies** (defined in the chart below) that informed the Plan’s development and direction.

Pillar Study	Result
Economic Impact	Concluded that RTA has a massive economic impact on the Region and State.
Rail Car	Showed immediate need for procuring new heavy and light rail car fleets that have exceeded their 30-year useful life
Fare Equity	Recommended a variety of ways to promote equity and enhance customer experience regarding fare payments. These recommendations were incorporated into the plan. 2021 implemented All Day pass fare reduction from \$5.50 to \$5.00
System Redesign	Comprehensive review and redesign of the RTA bus route system. The NextGen redesign was implemented in June 2021.
Financial and Economic Forecast & Operational Review	Identified benchmarks, risks, issues, efficiencies, performance indicators, and revenue sources

Figure 17 - GCRTA Pillar Study

Various public involvement opportunities occurred and led to the creation of seven key strategic initiatives that highlight prioritized Plan recommendations and provide a framework for the future.

1. Improve where and when buses travel
2. Improve how streets function (prioritizing transit in street design)
3. Improve how customers pay
4. Improve passenger safety and comfort
5. Engage with emerging technology, data, and new mobility
6. Address funding challenges
7. Partner to support vibrant communities and access to job centers

These seven initiatives provide a framework for the future to provide a guide for enhancing the customer experience and pursuing capital improvements through the year 2030.



MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Mission: Connecting the Community

Vision: Leading the delivery of safe and creative mobility solutions and community connections

Values:

Teamwork: We believe in teamwork and will foster a spirit of cooperative effort within RTA and with our partners.

Service Excellence: We will provide safe, clean, reliable, on-time, courteous service that our customers and the community will view as outstanding.

Safety: The safety of our passengers, our employees and the general public is always our top priority.

Responsibility and Accountability: Every individual is accountable. Meeting our individual responsibilities will ensure that collectively, RTA is a high-performing organization. We will meet all regulations and commitments and continually strive to improve.

Respect: We will treat all members of the RTA family, our customers and the general public with dignity and respect.

Innovation: Boldly trailblazing on the leading edge of transit industry innovations in equipment, technology, employee development and learning, partnerships, and overall operational impacts.

Fiscal Responsibility: We are committed to manage every taxpayer and customer-generated dollar as if it were coming from our own pocket.

Ethics and Integrity: We are dedicated to the highest ethical standards, including uncompromising honesty and integrity in our daily activities.

Diversity & Inclusion: The inclusion of individuals representing more than one: gender, race, sex, national origin, color, religion, socioeconomic stratum, sexual orientation. Better insights and business decisions can be achieved because of inclusion of team members with varied experiences, ideas, cultures, and perspectives.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The CEO initiated a process to establish a clear vision and definition for the success of the Authority. The process initially engaged a consultant to collaborate with the Executive Management Team to redefine the Mission, Vision, and Success Outcomes for GCRTA and to develop **TRACTION**, a performance management program. TRACTION was deployed in 2022 as an update to the TransitStat performance management program that began in 2007.

The Authority uses the Strategic Plan to develop TRACTION **Scorecards** to identify performance metrics and goals for each division and the Authority as a whole. The Department of Customer Experience and Performance Management, established in 2025, now administers TRACTION internally. TRACTION Scorecards track data monthly and quarterly at the organization, division, and department levels in identified **Success-outcomes**. These are derived from the Authority's strategic plan, mission and vision.

TRACTION convenes representatives of all GCRTA departments and Executive Management Team in person and on a monthly basis to discuss and measure organizational performance against established Key Performance Indicators. TRACTION participants review performance metrics and update the next fiscal year's performance goals as needed starting at the organization level, then filtered down to the division and department levels. GCRTA presents quarterly TRACTION updates to the Board of Trustees.



In addition to the Scorecards there are individual **Tactics**. A tactic provides an individually focused project or activity tracked monthly that will have a noticeable, measurable impact on success outcomes. GCRTA staff define the tactics at the beginning of the year and reports on their status throughout the fiscal year. Tactics, daily, weekly, and monthly metrics aligned to the Strategic Plan, are reported monthly.

Each scorecard can be found in the Division pages of the Department Budget section. Each metric links to a different information system that provides updates throughout the year. The current data sources for the performance measures include:

- Customer survey- conducted once per quarter
- Community survey- conducted twice per year
- Employee Survey- conducted at least once every 18 months
- Financial Data- tracked and provided by the Finance division
- Performance Data- tracked and provided by the division

The three most important goals identified through the 2025 TRACTION process were 1) expense reduction, 2) improve the perception of personal security while waiting for or riding on a GCRTA vehicle, and 3) increase participation in the wellness incentive program. Highlights from 2025 TRACTION include bringing the management of TRACTION in-house, the establishment of a Customer Experience department, the deployment of real-time information screens at various transit facilities, and expanded opportunities for employee engagement. TRACTION has increased communication, accountability, and interaction between the CEO, DGMs, Directors, and other senior-level leaders. The 2025 TRACTION scorecard for the organization is displayed below.

Employee performance evaluations are integrated directly into the TRACTION performance management cadence to build ownership at the employee level and highlight the role each employee has in the mission to Connect the Community. With the identified information systems, GCRTA is able to rely on regularly updated data to move forward in connection with the strategic plan. Throughout 2026, TRACTION will be continually rolled out to all levels within the Authority to connect the community through customer experience and performance monitoring, analysis, and management.

The organizational scorecard is revised from year to year to adapt to evolving challenges. The 2026 scorecard added umbrella metrics to the Organization success outcomes. The Organizational Scorecard 2025 results and 2026 goals are shown below.

ORGANIZATIONAL SCORECARD - TRACTION



Organizational Scorecard 2025

Success Outcomes	Metric	Definition	FY2025	Objective	Information System	Owner	Annual 2025
			Performance Goals				Actual Results
Customer Experience	Net Promoter Score	% Promoters minus % Detractors. On a 0-10 scale of how likely to recommend GCRTA; Promoters are 9-10 and Detractors are 0-6.	29	↑	Customer Survey	I. Terry	23
	Overall Customer Satisfaction	The % of customers who are satisfied or very satisfied with GCRTA	74%	↑	Customer Survey	I. Terry N. Biggar	78%
	Personal Safety/Security - Perception	The average % of customer who agree or strongly agree that they feel safe on board the vehicle and safe while waiting for the vehicle	68%	↑	Customer Survey	F. Caver	63%
	On-Time Performance - Impression	The % of customers who agree or strongly agree that service is on time	76%	↑	Customer Survey	F. Caver	69%
	On-Time Performance - Actual	The % of actual on-time performance	83%	↑	Performance Data	F. Caver	85%
	Vehicle Cleanliness - Perception	The % of customer who agree or strongly agree that the vehicles are clean	59%	↑	Customer Survey	F. Caver	53%
Community Impact	Perceived Value - Personal Relevance	% of the community who believe GCRTA brings value to them	62%	↑	Community Survey	N. Walker-Minor N. Biggar	65%
	Transit Oriented Development (TOD) on RTA properties	The number of TOD projects taken through contract with a development partner and securing Board approval authorizing the development partner to proceed within calendar year 2025	4	↑	Performance Data	J. Rusnov	1
	Economy: Ratio of Private Sector Investment to Major Capital Investment	The construction value ratio of development within 1/4 mile of active and recently completed (3yr completion) major capital projects (budget > \$1 M)	7	↑	Performance Data	M. Schipper	7.03
	Capital Dollars Invested in Low Income Communities	The % of major projects awarded (>1 million) within low income communities	80%	↑	Performance Data	M. Schipper	90%
	Environment: Emissions Reduction	% Reduction of Type I and II emissions per passenger-mile traveled on RTA	8%	↑	Performance Data	B. Temming	-2%
Employee Investment	Vacancy fill rate : Operators (Bus, Paratransit, Rail), Mechanics, Transit Police	The % of positions filled for Operators, Mechanics, Transit Police (RTA budget to actual Report)	95%	↑	Performance Data	G. Fields	98%
	Cultivate Internal Talent Pipeline	Increase the percent of internal promotions (compared to external hires) 5% compared to 2024.	36%	↑	Performance Data	G. Fields	16%
	Agencywide Retention Rate	% of employees retained by quarter for agency. % of mission critical employees retained for Operators, Mechanics, & Transit Police.	90%	↑	Performance Data	G. Fields N. Biggar	96%
	Vacancy fill rate: Non-Bargaining	The % of positions filled for non-bargained positions (RTA budget to actual Report)	95%	↑	Performance Data	G. Fields	94%
Financial Health	Competitive Capital Grants	Competitive Capital Grant dollars awarded in calendar year 2025	\$35,000,000	↑	Oracle / TrAMS	R. Gautam M. Schipper	\$28,172,159
	Transfer from Revenue Stabilization Fund	Under \$40M. *Metric requires comparison between revenues/expenses, 2024 Y/E accounting may influence the goal"	\$40,000,000	↓	Oracle	R. Gautam N. Biggar	\$45,000,000
	General Fund Transfer to Capital / Rolling Stock Reserve Fund	Transfer to capital and reserve funds (Rolling Stock) above Board Policy	\$10,000,000	↑	Oracle	R. Gautam	\$10,000,000

Figure 18 – Organizational scorecard 2025





Organizational Scorecard 2026

Success Outcomes	Metric	Definition	2026 Performance Goals	Objective	Information System	Metric Type	Goal Points
Umbrella Metric	Net Promoter Score (Quarterly)	Quarterly Output. On a 0-10 scale of how likely to recommend GCRTA; Promoters are 9-10 and Detractors are 0-6. NPS = % promoters minus % detractors	35	↑	Customer Survey	Quarterly	
	Net Promoter Score (4-Quarter Rolling Average)	4-Quarter Rolling Average. On a 0-10 scale of how likely to recommend GCRTA; Promoters are 9-10 and Detractors are 0-6. NPS = % promoters minus % detractors	35	↑	Customer Survey	Quarterly	
Customer Experience (35)	Overall Customer Satisfaction	The percent of customers who agree or strongly agree with the statement "How satisfied are you overall with service?. Measured quarterly.	76%	↑	Customer Survey	Quarterly	8
	Personal Safety/Security - Perception	The percent of customers who agree or strongly agree that they feel safe on board the vehicle and safe while waiting for the vehicle. measured quarterly	70%	↑	Customer Survey	Quarterly	5
	On-Time Performance - Impression	The percent of customers who agree or strongly agree with the statement "The service usually runs on time". Measured quarterly	76%	↑	Customer Survey	Quarterly	8
	On-Time Performance - Actual	The percent of actual on-time performance, measured quarterly.	83%	↑	Performance Data	Quarterly	8
	Vehicle Cleanliness - Perception	The percent of customers who agree or strongly agree with the statement "The vehicles are clean", measured quarterly	60%	↑	Customer Survey	Quarterly	6
							35
Community Impact (20)	Perception of Community Value	The percent of customers who agree or strongly agree with the statement "The RTA system provides value to the community". Measured quarterly. (*NOTE: from customer experience surveys NOT community survey)	89%	↑	Customer Survey	Quarterly	7
	Transit Oriented Development - Activation	The number of TOD projects taken through contract with a development partner and securing Board or General Manager approval authorizing the development partner to proceed within calendar year 2026. Cumulative goal.	4	↑	Performance Data	Year-To-Date	2
	Transit Oriented Development - Progress	The percent of active TOD project transactions that are completed (with handoff to developer) within a rolling 2-year period.	80%	↑	Performance Data	Quarterly	3
	CX Site Visit Closeout Compliance	The percent of tactical items identified through scheduled CX site visits that have been closed out within 45-days, measured quarterly.	70%	↑	Performance Data	Quarterly	5
	Community Partnership Activities	The number of community engagement partnership activities performed by GCRTA staff on an annual basis. This metric includes things that would qualify to be called out in the Annual Report. Cumulative goal.	85	↑	Performance Data	Year-To-Date	3
							20
Employee Investment (20)	First Year Retention Rate - Mission Critical Positions	The percent of Operators (Bus, Paratransit, Rail), Mechanics, Transit Police retained through their first full year of service, measured quarterly	80%	↑	Performance Data	Quarterly	6
	Cultivate Internal Talent Pipeline	The percent of internal promotions compared to external hires, measured quarterly	36%	↑	Performance Data	Quarterly	5
	Professional Development Training Hours (Non-Bargaining)	The percent of non-bargaining employees who achieve 6 hours of professional development training per quarter, as defined through coordination with their supervisor in the annual performance appraisal (goal setting) process. Output to demonstrate supervisor invested in growth.	80%	↑	Performance Data	Quarterly	3
	Wellness Incentive Participation	The percent of covered employees and their families who participate in the wellness incentive program. Measured year to date.	(10%, 20%, 30%, 55%, increase goal by quarter)	↑	Performance Data	Year-To-Date	6
							20
Financial Health (25)	Competitive Grants	Competitive Grant dollars awarded in calendar year 2026. Cumulative goal	\$35M annually	↑	Performance Data	Year-To-Date	6
	Transfer from Revenue Stabilization Fund	Stretch goal to transfer under \$34M from the Revenue Stabilization Fund (\$10M less than budget) to cover operating expenses in calendar year 2026. Cumulative goal	\$34M annually	↑	Performance Data	Year-To-Date	8
	Expense Reduction	Reduce operating expenses by 3% vs 2026 budget, measured quarterly	3%	↑	Performance Data	Quarterly	11
							25
							100

Figure 19 – Organizational Scorecard 2026

GLOSSARY

Please visit [glossary](#) for a complete glossary

