



# Strategy Identification



There are 49 strategies for improving RTA that were collaboratively identified. A set of strategies are grouped by the goals they will predominantly achieve below. Several strategies could achieve multiple goals - indeed, it is best if strategies can help solve many problems simultaneously.

Potential strategies for improving RTA are described in the following section. These strategies were

identified as potential ways to reach the planning goals set at the on-set of this planning process. The strategies were vetted to the public at public meetings and on-line surveys. This section lists and broadly defines the strategies. Following the identification of potential strategies, the section after discusses strategy prioritization and key initiatives.



These 49 strategies lead to several key initiatives to move RTA forward.

## STRATEGY IDENTIFICATION

GOAL	STRATEGY
Access	Increase frequency of bus service on existing key routes, while maintaining existing coverage
Access	Increase service in the middle of the day and on the weekend, while maintaining existing coverage
Access	Implement bus rapid transit on more priority routes
Access	Create safer and better walking and bicycle connections
Collaboration	Build a coalition to support and advocate for funds for transit oriented development
Collaboration	Partner with mobility providers to expand reach of transit
Collaboration	Expand incentives for transit ridership
Collaboration	Develop a multi-county transit system and seamless service
Collaboration	Form partnerships with senior centers and medical providers
Customer Experience	Streamline customer feedback and monitoring system
Customer Experience	Improve bus stops with more shelters, amenities, real-time information, and lighting
Customer Experience	Improve cleanliness of buses, rail cars, stops and stations
Customer Experience	Implement fare collection systems that speed up customer boarding
Customer Experience	Develop family and female friendly policies
Customer Experience	Increase the security presence throughout the system
Economic Prosperity	Focus transit service in core urban areas
Economic Prosperity	Establish positive advocacy messages about transit
Economic Prosperity	Better link people to jobs
Economic Prosperity	Better link people to retail and entertainment destinations
Economic Prosperity	Create partnerships for transit oriented development planning and implementation
Environmental Sustainability	Establish a roadmap to mode shift toward transit to meet regional climate crisis goals
Environmental Sustainability	Expand sustainable fleet, including electric-powered buses
Environmental Sustainability	Support bike, pedestrian, scooter, and other multimodal connections to transit
Environmental Sustainability	Implement comprehensive sustainability initiatives for all aspects of RTA's operations
Environmental Sustainability	Expand integration of alternative power at stations/stops
Environmental Sustainability	Offer charging stations at RTA facilities
Equity	Implement fare policies that include fare capping and include free transfers
Equity	Consider lower fares for low income riders and workforce development programs
Equity	Consider increased costs for premium service
Equity	Improve access for those of all physical abilities
Equity	Ease payment access for unbanked population
Financial Stability	Identify additional funding to meet existing and future transit needs
Financial Stability	Increase revenue by increasing ridership
Financial Stability	Create revenue through real estate asset management and transit oriented development
Financial Stability	Serve as a catalyst to corridor and district development
State of Good Repair	Prioritize reinvestment in replacement rail cars
State of Good Repair	Prioritize reinvestment in track and bridge rehab
State of Good Repair	Invest in maintenance of bus fleet
State of Good Repair	Invest in maintenance and rehabilitation of station/stops
State of Good Repair	Study possibilities for reallocating Waterfront Line and Green Line rail service
Technological Innovation	Develop a coordinated payment app for seamless transit coordination
Technological Innovation	Implement more widespread transit signal priority
Technological Innovation	Apply advanced flexible routing technology to enable improved paratransit scheduling
Technological Innovation	Pilot on-demand flexible bus service (microtransit) where fixed routes are not justified
Technological Innovation	Use technology to improve transfer connections
Technological Innovation	Provide improved notice of service changes and special event operations
Transparency	Provide open data to the public on RTA's goals and outcomes
Transparency	Implement strategies to make board and board committee meetings more accessible
Transparency	Provide reports on customer feedback and responsive actions

## ACCESS

**Goal:** RTA will facilitate increased access to jobs, education, and civic life.

Potential strategies include:



Increase frequency of bus service on existing key routes, while maintaining existing coverage

In 2019, RTA completed a System Redesign study, one of several Pillar Studies that inform the Strategic Plan. With a focus on the next three years to 2023, the study sought input on two conceptual networks showing how the transit network could look if it were designed to focus slightly more on generating high ridership. Today, about 60% of RTA’s service is where it would be if ridership were the only goal, while 40% of the service is focused on extending coverage to more people and jobs. Alternative scenarios were presented for illustrative purposes:

- The **Current Funding Concept** showed how RTA’s network could look if it were designed to focus slightly more on generating high ridership, but without reducing the overall area served by transit (65% ridership, 35% coverage).
- The **Coverage Alternative** showed the RTA network at 50% ridership and 50% coverage, with the same resources as today.
- The **High Frequency Alternative** showed 85% ridership and 15% coverage, with the same resources as today.
- The **Expanded Funding Concept** showed how the network could look if about 25% more resources were available to run bus service. In this scenario, the bus network could provide 70% ridership and 30% coverage, with an overall increase in bus service.

The Current Funding Concept and Expanded Funding Concept were further examined for their impacts and outcomes. Public input revealed positive responses to the general concepts that enhanced routes focused on increasing ridership. However, strong

disagreement was voiced regarding the potential elimination of Park-N-Rides and downtown trolleys. A balanced approach to future bus service changes is prudent within current financial constraints. Large enhancements to the bus network require finding savings elsewhere that can be reallocated or securing additional funding in order to put more service out on the street.

## Transit System Redesign Alternative Concepts

### Today

60% ridership

40% coverage

### Current Funding Concept

65% ridership

35% coverage

### Expanded Funding Concept

70% ridership

30% coverage



Increase service during the middle of the day and on the weekend, while maintaining existing coverage

The System Redesign Study examined additional service in the middle of the day and on weekends. The standard 9 to 5 work day is changing with technology and diversity of working sectors. College students, retail employees, restaurant and entertainment workers, and health care professionals such as nurses might need transit service at a variety of days and times. Additionally, customers visiting retail establishments or utilizing medical services desire bus service on weekends and throughout the day.

During public input for the redesign study, a majority of respondents (59%) agreed or strongly agreed that the balance of service between weekends and

weekdays was right in the Expanded Funding Concept. This concept provides a higher level of service (frequency and span) on many routes on weekends than is available today. As RTA improves bus service, expansion of midday and weekend service on key routes will be a viable step forward.



### Implement bus rapid transit on more priority routes

RTA's HealthLine, a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line, aims to offer rail-like convenience with the flexibility of a bus. Opened in 2008, it has been associated with more than \$9.5 billion in economic development along the Euclid Corridor. BRT features high-frequency service, dedicated right-of-way with higher travel speed limits, precision docking, level boarding stations, traffic signal prioritization, off-board fare collection, and real-time information displays.

RTA has one of the best examples of BRT systems in that it operates the HealthLine in its own right-of-way, a "lite" version in the CSU line which operates in peak hour lanes, and the MetroHealth line that is branded bus service. In 2014, RTA launched the Cleveland State Line, serving Downtown and several West Side communities. Since then, ridership has almost doubled. In 2017, RTA's MetroHealth Line opened with rebranded buses, shelters, and stops along the West 25th Street corridor. In the future, RTA can continue these efforts to make service fast, simple, safe, and first-class alongside community partners on other high ridership corridors.

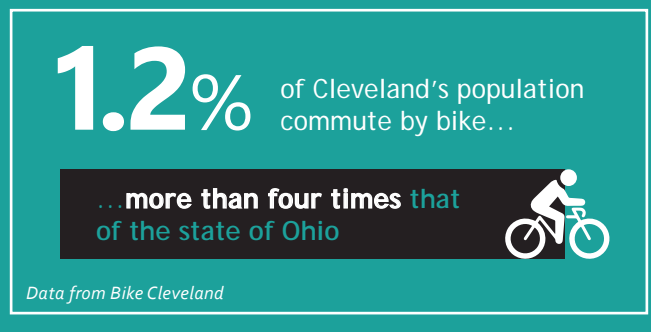


### Create safer and better walking and bicycle connections

Though the streets and infrastructure that comprise connections to transit fall outside the boundaries of RTA's property, sidewalks and bike lanes are still critical components of an effective public transit system. Data from RTA's 2017 First Last Mile Strategic Plan shows that 3% of Rapid Station users bike to transit services and almost one-third (33%) of all

Rapid Station trips are accessed by walking. NOACA Aim Forward 2040 highlights that 62% of the region's population is within a half-mile of a transit stop, a relatively short distance that is feasible for many people to bike or walk. A disconnect can sometimes occur between bike advocates and transit agencies over the division of constrained right-of-way for multiple modes. Climate Action Plans for City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County support increased emphasis on transit, bicycling, and walking.

RTA can work with agency partners to expand the reach of transit through infrastructure and policy improvements, maximizing multi-modal benefits & efficiencies, and building on existing regional sustainable policies and planning initiatives. Recommendations include increasing wayfinding signage to connect people on bicycles to transit services, supporting new bike facilities, and partnering to increase bike-transit connections.



## COLLABORATION

**Goal:** RTA will work with stakeholders to foster creative solutions to mobility challenges and drive opportunities for economic development around transit services, also known as transit oriented development.

Potential strategies include:



**Build a coalition to support and advocate for funds for economic development around transit services, also known as transit oriented development and transit infrastructure**

Community and partner support is essential to develop land near transit services in ways that support transit use. RTA's transit-oriented development research notes that successful walkable development near transit includes development that is compact and dense relative to the surrounding area; has a mix of land uses; has a safe, inviting, interconnected public realm; and offers a different approach to parking with fewer cars, shared facilities, and district design standards.

RTA is a national leader in partnering with community stakeholders to support key services, such as the HealthLine with Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals, MetroHealth Line with the MetroHealth System, and Cleveland State Line with CSU. Support from private partners, institutions, other public agencies, and neighborhoods creates goodwill and positive results that go beyond transit. NOACA is a strong partner from its work on transit-oriented development and transit needs. By investing in infrastructure adjacent to corridors where transit ridership is already high, the region supports dense communities that maximize utilization of limited resources to create shared benefits among partners and enhance the social fabric around transit corridors.



**Partner with mobility providers to expand reach of transit**

Transportation options have evolved rapidly in recent years, with new providers emerging frequently. Uber and Lyft have led the way on ridesharing, offering relatively affordable trips at passengers' fingertips on their smartphones. Opportunities in micromobility such as scooters provide new ways to accommodate short trips through dockless rentals from companies such as Lime and Bird. These new mobility opportunities are sometimes viewed as partners to traditional transit agencies but can also be viewed as competitors in some ways. Effective partnerships around the country have maximized the benefits of the flexibility and convenience of new mobility companies while minimizing the negatives. For example, when new mobility companies utilize valuable and limited space on downtown streets and sidewalks, RTA could be negatively impacted.





### Expand incentives for transit ridership

RTA's Commuter Choice Advantage program includes more than 700 companies and organizations today. Nearly 14,000 employees now participate in Commuter Advantage -- a unique opportunity for employees to enjoy an added discount on public transportation fares. This payroll deduction plan allows workers to prepay transit fares on a before-tax basis, saving employees and employers money. This type of incentive makes riding transit easier and more financially feasible for participants.

While Commuter Advantage is aimed towards workers and businesses, another program is established for college students called U-Pass, or "Universal Pass." This program involves RTA offering a discounted transit pass to students at participating colleges and universities. The pass enables students to ride RTA anywhere, at any time. U-Pass generally costs \$25 a semester for students and is automatically charged. Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland Institute of Music, Cleveland State University, and Tri-C are participants.

Commuter Advantage has a lot of room for growth. It could be targeted at specific areas or types of businesses. Collaboration such as RTA's work with UCI's Transportation Task Force provide opportunities for future growth. Similar programs could provide cost savings and ease of use to the general public. In the future everyone should be able to seamlessly pay for and use RTA services. New technology has given rise to new business models as well, in which transit riders can earn points for trips and redeem points for discounts at retailers.



### Develop a multi-county transit system and seamless service

RTA provides approximately 97% of the region's transit trips. RTA shares regional transit responsibilities with agencies in adjacent counties - Geauga County Transit, Lorain County Transit, Medina County Transit, and Laketran. The largest job hubs in the region are within RTA's service area of Cuyahoga County.

The majority of the region's total trips are within Cuyahoga County and do not cross county lines. When assessing each county in the region, in fact, the majority of trips start and end within each county.

Given that approximately 97% of the region's transit trips are handled by RTA, it is not recommended that services and agencies are combined. RTA has a variety of issues specific to the population it currently serves - adding additional challenges to serve sprawling geographies under a single transit agency would not benefit RTA or adjacent counties.

However, a nuanced approach to coordinated activities among agencies could be appropriate. Regional funding and advocacy for the need for transit could be ways to continue to strengthen collaboration among the region's transit agencies. RTA will continue to collaborate with the region's transit agencies.



### Form partnerships with senior centers and medical providers

Cleveland is home to over 70,000 residents age 60 and older, according to Age Friendly Cleveland's Action Plan. Seniors and others with special medical needs have unique transportation challenges that are well suited to being addressed by RTA's services. According to RTA's On-Board Survey, almost 5% of RTA's riders are over 65 years old. Seniors over age 65 can pay a discounted Senior rate to ride RTA buses and trains. There are 13,000 people with disabilities registered to use Paratransit service, and many people with disabilities successfully ride fixed route service as well.

RTA could strengthen its ease of use by emphasizing partnerships with senior centers and medical providers. Through improved customer information and enhanced technological advances, it is possible to streamline mobility to medical appointments. The region has such a renowned medical community and institutions, which RTA has successfully partnered with in the past. It will be important to strengthen that partnership as Cuyahoga County's population collectively gets older and new technological tools become available to provide transportation to senior centers and medical providers.

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

**Goal:** RTA will provide dependable, clean, fast, and seamless transportation that creates a positive experience for RTA customers.

Potential strategies include:



**Streamline customer feedback and monitoring system**

RTA offers many ways to offer commendations, suggestions, inquiries, or complaints. Customers can call the RTA Answerline by phone, utilize the internet through [www.rideRTA.com/feedback](http://www.rideRTA.com/feedback), and get in-person help at Tower City and the RTA Main Office. However, the feedback system can be convoluted and disconnected from solutions to complaints. Each year RTA conducts a customer satisfaction survey. In 2019, the survey revealed that only 35% of customers are satisfied with responsiveness to customers' complaints or problems.

RTA could focus on streamlining customer feedback, improving the problem resolution process, and monitoring progress. By improving the ability for customers to voice their issues and see them get resolved, RTA could improve the customer experience and lead to greater ridership. RTA would increase loyalty, enhance its brand, reveal situations of unsatisfactory service, and provide more likelihood that customers will recommend RTA to others.



**Improve bus stops with more shelters, amenities, real-time information, and lighting**

The waiting environment for transit riders is an essential part of the transit trip. Rapid stations have experienced quality improvements to modernize the waiting environment and provide amenities to passengers. With over 6,000 bus stops that have approximately 1,100 bus shelters, RTA is challenged

with providing access to transit stops while also deploying limited resources appropriately.

The System Redesign Study completed in 2019 identifies a Frequent Network of routes that would provide short wait times and dependable transfers across the system. Implementation of changes outlined in that study provide an opportune time to review bus stops and amenities.



**Improve cleanliness of buses, rail cars, stops and stations**

Regardless of industry, a customer's experience can be immediately impacted by a location's cleanliness, or lack thereof. Whether stepping into a department store, restaurant, or bus, a lack of cleanliness can overwhelm all other aspects of the experience. RTA buses and trains provide millions of miles of service to millions of customers each year. The heaviest used stops and stations see thousands of customers a day. It is undoubtedly a challenge to maintain cleanliness of vehicles and facilities that witness such high levels of activity. However, cleanliness was mentioned numerous times from riders during public input and from stakeholders discussing the perception of RTA.

Once COVID-19 hit the region in early 2020, RTA stepped up efforts to sanitize and disinfect vehicles and facilities. RTA's COVID response continues to lead in national best practices for transit agencies.



**Implement fare collection systems that speed up customer boarding**

RTA completed a Fare Equity Analysis in 2019 as one of the Pillar Studies of the Strategic Plan. It suggested changes to RTA fare collection to improve customer experience and better reflect best practices in the US. A survey of riders revealed that the largest gaps between how well RTA does versus how important certain issues are included: *fares should be easy to understand; fares should be affordable; process should be convenient; and fare payment should be fast.*

In other words, the above issues are things customers really think RTA could do a better job on. The study identified that confusion arises among customers from multiple fare types and policies. The study revealed that the fare payment process inadvertently penalizes people with low incomes and slows down the boarding process.

Customers are often not aware of the best fare pass for their travel, which is particularly true for people with low incomes since they transfer among RTA services at higher rates. The study recommended immediate measures such as better education and promotion of fare processes, as well as long term initiatives that include new technology and fare capping. A court decision rendered RTA's Healthline Bus Rapid Transit fare collection and enforcement system that used uniformed police to enforce fares potentially illegal. As a result, RTA switched to riders walking up to the driver to show fare payment. This has slowed down boarding and made riding the HealthLine more inconvenient. By making the fare collection system easy to understand, convenient, and affordable without requiring complicated knowledge on behalf of the customer, RTA can improve the rider experience and speed up the boarding process.



### Develop family and female friendly policies

Women comprise the majority of RTA's riders. RTA data corresponds with national transit demographics, in which approximately 55% of transit riders are women. Based on RTA's on-board survey, a likely rider of RTA is of working age, female, African American, employed full-time, and making less than \$25,000 per year. In 2019, Metro, the transit agency in Los Angeles, released the first report of its kind in the industry, titled "Understanding How Women Travel," that investigated the needs, preferences, and concerns of women on transit. It sought to understand the mobility barriers to economic opportunity that women face. The initiative was led by the Women & Girls Governing Council, a body established by Metro in 2017. The report reveals that existing evidence shows that women are responsible for a disproportionate share of the household's transport

burden while at the same time having more limited access to available means of transport. Often a focus on a gender lens towards female issues quickly turns to a look at family. In LA, data indicates that a majority of women bring their children on transit.

Similar to Metro, the benefits, burdens, and risks of RTA travel are more pronounced for women, as they make up the majority of RTA's customers. In addition to customers, much of RTA's workforce is comprised of women. Irregular schedules for bus operators, for example, can provide a unique burden on women in the transit industry that could be incorporated into decision-making processes at RTA.



### Increase the security presence throughout the system

Safety on transit is an issue of reality as well as perception. Stakeholders have commented that a perception is that RTA is unsafe. In reality, RTA was awarded the Gold Award for Bus Safety & Security Excellence from the American Public Transportation Association multiple times in recent years. RTA's Traffic Radio Control Center operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides communication between operators, supervisory and maintenance vehicles, and emergency response personnel. RTA has a Transit Police Department that is the fourth largest police department in Cuyahoga County with 128 full-time officers and 20 part-time officers. In addition, eight canine teams roam the RTA system along with plain clothes detectives to deter crime and terrorism.

It is important to note that not all groups equate more police with more safety. Perception or not, populations of color, immigrants, and those from low income neighborhoods can describe a fear of police. In a system in which approximately 75% of customers are African American, a consideration of staffing, policies, and protocols of the security presence in the RTA system could be helpful to improve the perception of safety among current and future customers.



## ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

**Goal:** RTA will be the transportation backbone that moves the economy forward and improves the quality of life of county residents by enabling economically sustainable regional land use and development and reinforcing investment in strategic employment and population centers.

Potential strategies include:



### Focus transit service in core urban areas

Transit can often provide more service to more people and destinations in urban areas than it could in suburban areas. With more people living and working in dense land uses, service along main streets in Cleveland and around downtown can be efficient in transporting high amounts of people. In suburban and rural areas, land uses are such that fewer people live and work in dense areas, making it more difficult for a bus to efficiently pick up and drop off large numbers of people.

The System Redesign Study's accumulation of public surveys revealed that more people want a service focus on ridership than on coverage. People responded that they slightly preferred transit service where ridership potential is highest and where transit is supported by dense and walkable development.

RTA's Priority Corridor designation has existed internally in recent years and identified that efforts to improve transit conditions were focused on Broadway Ave, Cedar Rd, Detroit Ave, E. 105/Turney, Kinsman Rd, Lorain Ave, St. Clair Ave, Warrensville Centre/Harvard Rd, and W. 25th/State Rd/Pearl Rd. Many of these corridors are in core urban areas and have offered opportunities for transit supportive land uses and high ridership.



### Establish positive advocacy messages about transit

Every vibrant city in the world has a robust transit system. Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, and all of Northeast Ohio have struggled in recent times to attract greater numbers of jobs and residents. As the region turns toward a new decade, positive developments abound. For example, after a national search Sherwin-Williams recently announced that it is keeping its headquarters in downtown Cleveland in the heart of a transit rich area. The global paint manufacturer and Fortune 500 company will join other new development in downtown Cleveland.

RTA has been a part of the region's identity for decades, and it will continue to be a key partner in future economic prosperity. Many people probably are not aware of RTA's economic impact. Cleveland State University quantified RTA's economic impact in a RTA Pillar Study in 2019. The findings discovered, among other things:

- RTA is critical to the economic success of the region and to the well-being of people who live and work here
- RTA's impact on local employment totals \$485.8 million, measured in annual earnings brought home by those who depend on RTA transit services to get to work

RTA and its partners can collaborate on positive messages that can promote shared benefits that transit creates. The growth in downtown residents and in University Circle continues. Partnership includes Downtown Cleveland Alliance, the UCI Transportation Task Force, GoOhio, and many others. Together with NOACA, Geauga County Transit, Lorain County Transit, Medina County Transit, and Laketran, the impact of transit on the region is a good story to be told.



## Better link people to jobs

One of transit's key roles in the region, similar to regions around the world, is to connect people to jobs. The majority of RTA riders are employed full-time and are headed to a workplace. According to RTA's onboard survey data, approximately 10-15% of RTA riders are not currently employed but are seeking work. While some people in Northeast Ohio may never ride RTA, often the people that keep the city moving for everyone else - such as health care workers, restaurant workers, retail workers - do take transit.

Cleveland State University's economic impact report identified that, within a decade, for previously unserved areas that gain transit access:

- Employment increased by 3.1%
- Poverty decreased by 12.9%

The System Redesign Study identified concepts to link more people to jobs. For the average resident in Cuyahoga County:

- Current Funding Concept will link people to 11% more jobs in under 60 minutes than the present-day network.
- Expanded Funding Concept would link to 38% more jobs within 60 minutes compared to the present-day network.

Shaker Heights and the Van Aken district have light rail lines with room for continued collaboration for transit-oriented development. RTA has new partnerships as a result of the Paradox Prize, a local initiative for innovative transportation, as well as with the Centers for Children and Families. By linking people to jobs, RTA's services offer access to prosperity for individuals and families. At the same time, this access to personal opportunity fosters collective opportunity for the region as a whole.

## RTA is critical to the economic success of the region and to the well-being of people who live and work here.



**\$485.8**  
million

*RTA's impact on **local employment**, measured in annual earnings by those who depend on RTA transit services to get to work*



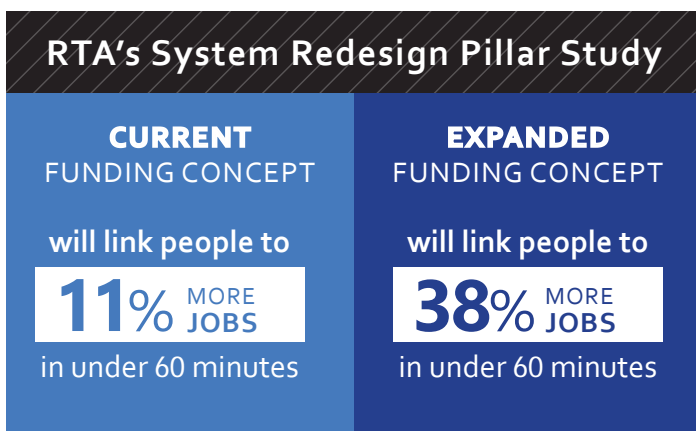
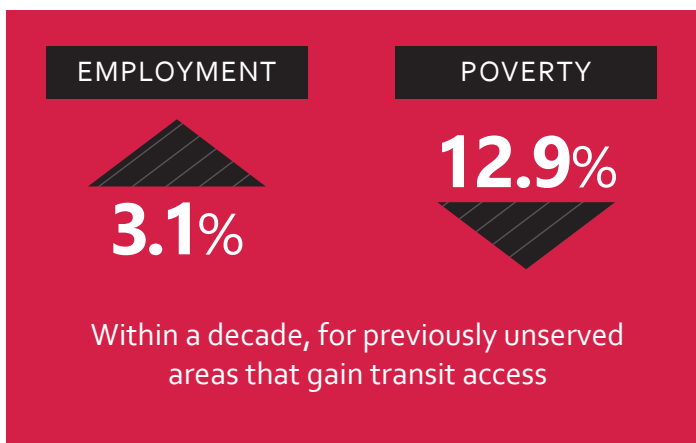
**\$2.2**  
billion

*Impact on Cuyahoga County **property values***



**\$51.8**  
million

***Annual savings** to passengers who choose to ride RTA rather than use their own transportation*



**Better link people to retail and entertainment destinations**

Cleveland is home to world-class entertainment destinations, such as Playhouse Square, FirstEnergy Stadium, Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse, Progressive Field, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, West Side Market, and the numerous destinations around University Circle, to name a few. Many entertainment destinations are near Rapid stations and bus service. On a smaller scale, retail destinations across the region benefit from transit access as well. In all of these instances, both workers and visitors to these locations benefit from greater transit access. Increased weekend service, as identified in the System Redesign Expanded Funding Concept, would provide better transit to destinations on weekends.

Additionally, RTA can improve linkage to these destinations by improving processes for special event service. A fairly common observation during public engagement opportunities was that RTA could do a better job of serving major events. RTA's service during special events offers the opportunity to put its best foot forward to infrequent riders and tourists in a way that improves the perception of the region as a whole.



**Create partnerships for transit oriented development planning and implementation at rail stations and along priority bus corridors**

RTA has seen many successes in transit-oriented development along priority corridors and at Rapid stations. The HealthLine has delivered more than \$9.5 billion in economic development along the Euclid Corridor in the decade since it was built.

This magnitude of success is difficult to replicate, but smaller scale initiatives can make a big impact. Through partnerships with agencies such as City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, NOACA, and others, joint applications for Federal Transit Administration grant funds could have a greater chance of being awarded. RTA is continuing its success with recent transit-oriented development initiatives along W. 25th St in partnership with MetroHealth and others. A 2015 planning study was followed by 2017 implementation of the MetroHealth Line with improved amenities. RTA then received additional FTA grant funding and is currently collaborating on additional improvements. This model of planning followed by implementation, coordinated with strong collaboration among partners, is vital to RTA's contribution to the economic success of the region.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

**Goal:** RTA will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region by providing clean transportation and shifting travelers away from single occupancy vehicles.

Potential strategies include:



**Establish a roadmap to mode shift toward transit to meet regional climate crisis goals**

One of the best ways to promote environmental sustainability is to get more people to ride transit instead of driving in their personal vehicles alone. Cuyahoga's Climate Change Action Plan calls for the County to aspire to a 45% overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from its 2010 baseline by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. It notes that Cuyahoga County is particularly auto-dependent, with 79.8% of commuters driving alone to work, above the national average of 76.4%. The plan calls for repurposing overbuilt road infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation (e.g. dedicated bus lanes, bike lanes) without creating major congestion issues. It aims to return public transit service and ridership to 2006 levels by 2025 and increase the transit mode share.



**Expand sustainable fleet, including electric-powered buses**

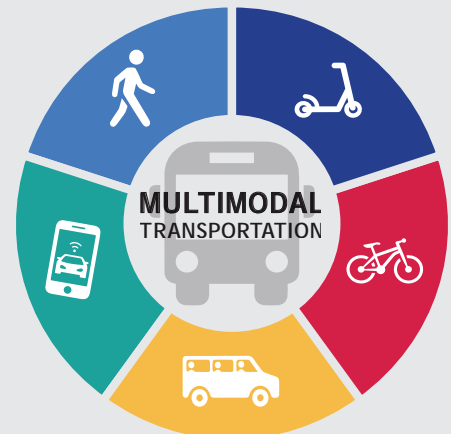
RTA's strong efforts to transition its diesel fleet to compressed natural gas (CNG) have reduced negative impacts to the environment. Vehicle technologies such as electric vehicle technology and hydrogen fuel cell technology are evolving rapidly. Electric vehicles for passenger use have become more popular over the past decade with a continual expansion of the range covered on a charge. At the same time, technologies for heavy duty vehicles such as buses have become prominent across the U.S. and the world. With grant funds available from FTA and public advocacy increasing to address climate change, more transit agencies are transitioning to green technologies.

Zero emissions vehicles offer a quiet, comfortable ride experience that customers enjoy. On a regional and global scale, they create lower global emissions than diesel and compressed natural gas vehicles.

## SUPPORTING MULTIMODAL CONNECTIONS TO TRANSIT



*A de-emphasis on single occupancy automobile transportation will provide opportunities to diversify high quality alternative modes.*



**RTA and partners can prioritize multiple modes that support green and healthy communities.**

Importantly, on a local scale, they create zero tailpipe emissions for the neighborhoods immediately around transit corridors, thus helping to create healthier neighborhoods.

The American Lung Association gives Cuyahoga County a grade of “F” for ozone pollution in its State of the Air 2019 report. The report notes that some people are especially vulnerable to the effects of air pollution, including infants, older adults and people with lung diseases like asthma. People of color and those earning lower incomes are often disproportionately affected by air pollution that put them at higher risk for illnesses. In Cuyahoga County, many of the most frequent and highest ridership routes travel through areas of low incomes and people of color. While transit buses are only part of the problem, RTA can lead on this issue to bring zero emission buses to the streets of Cleveland to improve the customer experience and support healthy communities.



### Support bike, pedestrian, scooter, and other multimodal connections to transit

A majority of RTA customers access RTA’s services by walking. Cuyahoga’s Climate Change Action Plan calls for more public transit, biking, and walking. The Cleveland Climate Action Plan aims to make Cleveland a premier cycling city. The advocacy group Bike Cleveland notes that 1.2% of Cleveland’s commute mode share is by bicycle.

Shared scooters have burst onto the urban scene rapidly in recent years across the country. City of Cleveland coordinated a 6-month demonstration permit for multiple scooter providers in 2019, and even a casual observer was able to see their immediate popularity downtown.

People who are bicyclists, scooter riders, and transit riders are often a mix of the same people. By collaborating, RTA and partners can prioritize multiple modes that support green and healthy communities. A de-emphasis on single occupancy automobile transportation will provide opportunities to diversify high quality alternative modes.



### Implement comprehensive sustainability initiatives for all aspects of RTA’s operations

A transit agency, like all businesses, has multiple opportunities to support sustainability initiatives. Beyond the transit vehicles themselves, sustainable initiatives can include items such as energy efficient facilities and support for the use of sustainability strategies in capital projects to reduce personal and facility carbon footprint. In 2019, RTA’s Brookpark Station received LEED Silver Certification. RTA’s sustainability plans will drive green solutions forward in collaboration with similar efforts at the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.



### Expand integration of alternative power at stations/stops

Transit agencies around the country have experimented with the use of alternative power such as solar, wind, and geothermal. METRO in Akron utilized over 400 rooftop solar panels on its transit center. RTA’s Brookpark Station utilizes innovative wastewater design, stormwater processes, and energy efficiency to create an environmentally friendly facility. To reduce electricity usage, RTA completed a lighting retrofit and installed LED bulbs to reduce electricity usage at the Central Bus Maintenance Facility. Initiatives such as these show that changes big and small can improve an agency’s environmental sustainability.



### Offer charging stations at RTA facilities

Electric vehicle charging stations could offer an amenity to the public that supports green transportation. One of the challenges to adoption of electric vehicles is the ability for users to charge the battery. NOACA and State of Ohio support initiatives to expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure. RTA’s public property is a potential source to locate multiple green transportation amenities in a single location, where feasible.

## EQUITY

**Goal:** RTA will continue to provide equitable transit services that benefit disadvantaged individuals and communities.

Potential strategies include:



**Implement fare policies that include fare capping and include free transfers**

RTA's Fare Equity Analysis pillar study determined that over half of trips are taken by riders who are best served by a monthly or weekly pass. However, about half of these trips, especially those taken by people with low-incomes and people of color, are paying more than they should because they do not purchase a pass or purchase a weekly instead of a monthly pass. In addition, RTA's System Redesign bus network would require about half of all riders to transfer, but some riders, especially people with low incomes and minorities, pay excessively for transferring. RTA

should change its fare policy to eliminate the cost for transfers between RTA services.

Fare capping refers to a policy that is becoming best practice with today's fare payment technology. Fare capping makes the equivalent of transit passes available to people who can't cover the full cost at once. As a rider using a transit card or app rides RTA enough times to reach the cost of a daily, weekly, or 30-day pass, they would no longer be charged for any additional trips for the duration of the appropriate pass. There are variations of this policy, but for a frequent rider, this would mean that they could pay individually for each trip (\$2.50) 38 times to reach the cost of a \$95.00 monthly pass ( $\$2.50 \times 38 = \$95.00$ ). If, for instance, a person rode the bus twice per day, by the 20th day of the month they would be able to ride free for the next ten days.

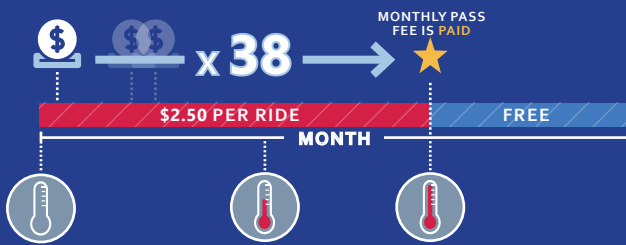
It is inappropriate to make poor people pay more money than well-to-do people for the same RTA ride, simply because poor people cannot afford to buy in bulk. Policies and technology can address this issue.



**Consider lower fares for low income riders and workforce development programs**

## FARE CAPPING

An alternative payment schedule for a monthly pass that allows the rider to make individual payments per trip until the total monthly pass fee is paid, at which point the rider can ride for the remainder of the month without paying.



= Price for single ride (\$2.50)

= Price for monthly pass (\$95.00)

A majority of RTA riders' household income is less than \$25,000 per year. RTA's Fare Equity Analysis Pillar Study's rider survey found that over 30% of respondents do not buy a monthly pass because they "can't afford it." This is unfortunate because for a frequent rider, the monthly pass offers the cheapest fares over time. Those who would benefit most from this deal are boxed out of this opportunity by their economic situation.

Additionally, a majority of respondents to the Fare Equity Analysis pillar study survey revealed that they do not use a monthly pass or a 7-day pass because they either "don't use transit enough" or they "can't predict transit use." For these riders, they risk buying more than they need due to the uncertainty of their lives, a risk that can have devastating consequences for people with low incomes.

The majority of RTA riders are employed full-time and are headed to a workplace. According to RTA's onboard survey data, approximately 10-15% of RTA riders are not currently employed but are seeking work. It would be beneficial for RTA to support the equitable access to opportunity of residents with low incomes and those seeking jobs through equitable fare policies.



### Consider increased costs for premium service

The Park & Ride surcharge adds complexity to fares without raising significant revenue, as highlighted by RTA's Fare Equity Analysis Pillar Study. Park-N-Ride Bus fare is \$2.75 for a single trip compared to the Bus/Rapid/BRT fare of \$2.50. Compared to other vehicles, the Park-N-Ride fleet provides a more luxurious experience. In addition to express routing, RTA's recent addition of nine commuter coaches to its Park-N-Ride fleet, with three more to arrive later in 2020, provide unique amenities to passengers: overhead parcel racks, individual reading lights, air-flow controls at every seat, and USB ports at every seat.

Park-N-Ride fare differentials should be increased to at least \$0.50 or eliminated, as recommended by RTA's Fare Equity Analysis Pillar Study. Simplicity of understanding for customers is essential so that confusion over fare costs do not create a barrier to ride. Any addition of complexity in fare costs should be significant to raise funds in an appropriate and equitable manner.



### Improve access for those of all physical abilities

Paratransit service is an essential part of the lives of people with physical or other disabilities who are inhibited in their ability to ride fixed route transit. RTA's paratransit costs are higher than in comparable cities, as highlighted by the Financial Analysis and Economic Forecast Pillar Study. Streamlining costs and finding ways to reduce costs are valuable aspects of

RTA's financial future. RTA's Fare Equity Analysis Pillar Study highlighted that RTA's paratransit fare structure is one area of investigation. Most transit agencies charge the maximum allowable for paratransit, twice the base fare, and do not provide passes.

RTA has increased access for people with disabilities for decades, with numerous Rapid stations being renovated to include Americans with Disabilities compliant sidewalk ramps and related infrastructure. Every fixed route transit vehicle is able to accommodate people in wheelchairs. RTA should continue this strong focus on improving access for those of all physical abilities on fixed route transit, so that as many people as possible can have the freedom that others have without having to rely on paratransit.



### Ease payment access for unbanked population

For a household of four people, \$25,000 per year of income is approximately the line determined by the government to be considered living in poverty. Many RTA riders make less than that per year. According to the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, there are over 225,000 residents of Cuyahoga County, approximately 18%, who are living in poverty. According to the Center for Community Solutions, approximately 36% of the population of Cleveland lives in poverty. People with low incomes face numerous daily challenges, one of which is the ability to access transit payment options. People with low incomes may not have a bank account, debit card, or credit card that can allow them to access RTA's services. RTA's website lists approximately 88 vendor locations that are authorized sales agents for transit passes. RTA should maintain this network, make sure vendors are providing passes in a way that meets RTA customer standards, and build on this network of vendor partnerships. Future advancements in fare technology should follow best practices to provide equal access to fare products for the unbanked population as well.

## FINANCIAL STABILITY

**Goal:** RTA will be a responsible steward of public funds by providing exceptional services cost-effectively.

Potential strategies include:



Identify additional funding to meet existing and future transit needs

According to the Ohio Public Transit Association, Ohio ranks 38th in the nation in per capita funding for transit and the State funds only three percent of public transit expenditures. RTA is a vital backbone for the region that serves more than a transportation purpose - the Economic Impact Pillar Study reveals the deep integration of RTA into the shared success of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Northeast Ohio, and the entire state.

RTA has opportunities to reduce some costs, as described by the Financial Analysis and Economic Forecast Pillar Study. RTA's administrative costs appear to be higher than at agencies in similar cities, so eliminating positions and reorganizing job responsibilities could save up to \$13 million per year. The study finds that RTA's paratransit costs are higher than in comparable cities, so opportunities to streamline paratransit costs could potentially save approximately \$7 million a year. RTA's aging fare equipment is becoming increasingly expensive to maintain and doesn't meet the future needs of RTA. The high cost of maintaining rail infrastructure could potentially be assisted with sources of new funding including a sales tax increase, a new property tax, or a commercial-only property tax. In 2019 alone, RTA successfully competed for and won approximately \$40 million in competitive grants. Continual advocacy at the federal level with Federal Transit Administration will be necessary, as the current administration has provided persistent challenges to properly funding urban mass transit in Cuyahoga County and around the country.



Increase revenue by increasing ridership

RTA's current efforts to redesign its bus routes and bring ridership in line with peer cities could increase revenue by \$6 million, according to the Financial Analysis and Economic Forecast Pillar Study. The System Redesign pillar study's Current Funding Concept will expand frequent service on key corridors such as Detroit, Lorain, Kinsman, and E. 105th.

**RTA's Priority Corridors drive transit ridership. With high levels of population and job density, Priority Corridors provide efficient service where transit works best.**

Based on the community's feedback, the Current Funding Concept allocates 65% of current resources toward enhancing frequencies with the remaining 35% toward market coverage. This will help stem decreasing ridership because it will provide 167,000 more people with frequent service within a half-mile walk. It will provide access to approximately 11% more jobs in 60 minutes compared to the existing bus network.

Fare revenues provided approximately \$42.8 million in 2019, down from \$46.6 million in 2018. By redesigning bus service to meet the needs of customers and increasing ridership, a corresponding increase can occur in revenue.

**The System Redesign pillar study's Current Funding Concept will expand frequent service on key corridors such as Detroit, Lorain, Kinsman, and E. 105th.**





### Create revenue through real estate asset management and transit oriented development

RTA's real estate assets include hundreds of parcels across the region. RTA owns its headquarters, rail stations, rail yards, vehicle storage and maintenance facilities, transit centers, and additional infrastructure and facilities. Many of these assets are vital to the current and future operations of core RTA services. As highlighted in the Financial Analysis and Economic Forecast study, however, there are opportunities to evaluate whether some real estate assets could be sold or leveraged in innovative ways. Through potentially a one-time sale or an ongoing influx of capital, these real estate assets could be opportunities of untapped revenue. Transit oriented development is taking place on RTA-owned and adjacent property at the West 25th Street station in Ohio City. In partnership with public and private partners, RTA can continue to facilitate creative use of its real estate and leverage its assets in ways that support community development. RTA's transit oriented development program is a strong asset for future success.



### Serve as a catalyst to corridor and district development

The HealthLine has been a catalyst in attracting more than \$9 billion in development to the Euclid Corridor in the past decade, a national model of Bus Rapid Transit success. Station improvements and renovations such as at the Cedar-University station and Mayfield-Little Italy station on the Red Line have caused ridership to increase. As highlighted by the Financial Analysis and Economic Forecast study, these stations have attracted hundreds of millions of dollars in redevelopment in the surrounding areas. These types of projects highlight the potential for RTA improvements to be a catalyst towards economic development, placemaking, and revitalization of adjacent neighborhood districts. NOACA's TLCI program assists in corridor development across the 47 communities in RTA's service area. Through partnerships with City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, NOACA, private developers, local institutions, and community groups, RTA can continue to provide value to corridor and district development.



## STATE OF GOOD REPAIR

**Goal:** RTA will enhance, preserve and maintain its infrastructure and assets.

Potential strategies include:



### Prioritize reinvestment in replacement rail cars

RTA's 33-mile rail network is a multibillion dollar infrastructure asset to the community, as highlighted by the Rail Car Evaluation pillar study. RTA's heavy rail vehicles (HRVs) and light rail vehicles (LRVs) have approximately five and ten years of remaining useful life, respectively. As fleets age, in-service failures increase, customer service degrades, service reliability suffers, and maintenance costs increase.

The study concluded that a \$240 million program of rail car replacement and infrastructure upgrades is a prudent course of action. The report recommends RTA begin procuring HRVs by 2020 for delivery no later than 2023, followed by procuring LRVs by 2025, for delivery no later than 2028. The recommendation includes associated infrastructure upgrades to the rail maintenance facility, equipment and stations. As of early 2020, RTA has been awarded approximately \$61 million, with another \$57 million committed, approximately halfway toward the program goal of \$240 million. Funds include awards and commitments from NOACA, ODOT, Federal Formula Funding as well as the self-funded Rail Car Replacement Fund.



### Prioritize reinvestment in track and bridge rehab

Reinvestment in track, bridge, and related rail infrastructure is essential to deliver fast, reliable service to customers. When RTA's rail infrastructure is not prioritized and maintained, high profile disruptions to customers can create a lasting impression that drives away future riders. In 2019, RTA was forced to make repairs to the Red Line "S Curve" retaining wall between W. 117th St. and West Blvd. stations. Red Line service was immediately suspended and replaced by buses that caused slower trips and inconvenience for customers during high profile events. When operating as designed without issues, the Red Line is capable of providing fast service rivaling the best mass transit rail in the country.

RTA is making continual improvements across its system as highlighted by recent reconstruction of the E. 116th St. bridge, electrical upgrades to Brookpark Shop, completion of track bonding in Brookpark yard, bonding of Light Rail System track and installation of switch circuit controller, and reconstruction of the W. 65th St. substation. Ongoing projects include light rail track rehabilitation from E. 55th St. to the Buckeye-Woodhill Station and rehabilitation of tracks at the Tower City Station.





### Invest in maintenance of bus fleet

The bus fleet represents the workhorses of the agency's service. More than 22 million trips are taken annually on RTA's buses, providing the majority of RTA's rides for customers. Federal Transit Administration defines the useful life of a bus to be the lesser of 12 years or 500,000 miles. The average age of the large bus fleet was 7.6 years at the end of FY 2017 and 7.2 years at the end of FY 2018. RTA has a plan in place to purchase over 200 new transit vehicles and retire old ones over the next five years. RTA's 2019-2023 Capital Improvement Plan continues a planned bus replacement program, begun in 2013, that plans to continue until the entire fleet is replaced. The program is expected to further lower the average age of RTA's bus fleet to approximately 6.2 years at the end of 2024.

It is admirable that the bus replacement program aims for a new fleet. However, it would be prudent to alter the bus replacement program by discontinuing the purchase of diesel vehicles. RTA's procurement plan calls for purchase of new diesel vehicles for the foreseeable future, but this disregards issues of global climate change and local neighborhood health. At the same time, RTA could transition toward a pilot program for electric vehicles, supported by federal grants. It is also possible that RTA's future peak vehicle requirements will change as a result of the System Redesign implementation. Reductions in vehicles have occurred in other cities that have undergone transit system redesigns, so implementation of the plan should consider whether RTA needs as many vehicles as planned in future years.

NOACA's Long-Range Transportation Plan AIM Forward 2040 identifies RTA bus replacements on its list of major projects. With a total of approximately \$460 million through 2040 for RTA bus vehicles, RTA should not miss an opportunity to transition its fleet to support clean neighborhoods and utilize modern technology.



### Invest in maintenance and rehabilitation of station/stops

With over 600 revenue vehicles completing over 100,000 trips per day to nearly 7,500 bus stops and rapid stations, maintaining a state of good repair for all of RTA's infrastructure is vital for excellent service. RTA recently completed construction of the E. 116-St. Luke's Station ADA rehabilitation, and construction of the Farnsleigh Station ADA rehabilitation. Ongoing projects include rehabilitation of Blue Line and Green Line stations with refurbished shelters and signage.

As service is redesigned in the coming years to connect more people to jobs, there is an opportunity to prioritize stops that will be heavily used in RTA's frequent network.



### Study possibilities for reallocating Waterfront Line and Green Line rail service

The Cleveland region is the smallest urban area in North America to have both Heavy (the Red Line) and Light rail (Blue, Green and Waterfront lines) transit systems. As highlighted in the Financial Analysis and Economic Forecast study, performance of the light rail system is in line with peers. However, dropping ridership on light rail and across the system could force challenging decisions in the best way to do more with less funding. One idea proposed is to reallocate Waterfront Line and Green Line rail service in order to utilize funds towards other services. Population loss continues to highlight that RTA's rail system is built for a larger region. When proposed for public input, the public did not view this idea favorably. Rather than reallocate assets, there is a desire to build upon RTA's and Cuyahoga County's rail assets and use them as a competitive advantage to build a stronger economy in the coming decades.

## TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

**Goal:** RTA will lead in its integration of new technologies and evolving mobility options to enhance the transportation experience for customers, RTA employees, businesses and visitors.

Potential strategies include:



### Develop a coordinated payment app for seamless transit coordination

Some of the most exciting developments in transit and mobility relate to new technologies that allow seamless payment. In 2016, RTA made a real step forward with the launch of the RTA CLE app for mobile ticketing that allows customers to pay for 1-Ride, All-Day, 7-Day, and Monthly Passes with a smartphone. RTA's Fare Equity Analysis pillar study concluded that aging fare equipment will be increasingly expensive to maintain and does not meet the needs of RTA's future.

The study recommended a new fare collection system for long-term improvements. A cloud-based open architecture would allow RTA to avoid being locked into a certain expensive proprietary system with a single vendor. Transparent standards could empower RTA to keep pace as technology evolves and allow RTA to save money when updating outdated technology. An account-based, contactless system that allows open payments will create a seamless boarding experience for customers. With options for customers to pay using a smartcard, contactless credit card, or smartphone, riders will experience the flexibility and frictionless experience they desire. Payment options will include passes and Stored Value, similar to cash, as well as fare capping to ensure no one pays more than they should over time. A new payment system could support the development of Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS), which describes a potential future in which RTA offers seamless integration with private transportation providers.



### Implement more widespread transit signal priority

Corridor improvements can create faster bus trip times for customers. Transit Signal Priority, in conjunction with bus-only lanes and queue jumps, can improve the transit riding experience and create more efficient operations. Transit Signal Priority describes technology that utilizes wireless communication and vehicle location to allow buses to travel through signalized intersections quickly. By either extending the green time or changing a red light to a green light, Transit Signal Priority automatically operates in order to keep buses on time and reduce delays. Queue jump lanes are a design treatment that allows buses to bypass stopped traffic through a short dedicated transit facility and enter traffic flow at an intersection in a priority position, thereby reducing delay.

Travel time reliability can also be increased through broader use of bus-only lanes. New federal guidance from USDOT in 2019 approved innovative red pavement for bus-only lanes.



### Apply advanced flexible routing technology to enable improved paratransit scheduling

Technology improvements are upending the status quo of paratransit service. The Americans with Disability Act requires public transit agencies that provide fixed-route service to provide complementary paratransit service to people with disabilities within 3/4 of a mile of a bus route or rail station. This service provides a means of mobility for people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed route bus or rail service. While RTA's paratransit service is in line with processes at many other agencies, the entire paratransit service model can leave much to be desired for customers. Even for trips that go as planned, the advanced scheduling that goes into trip making can limit potential mobility of people with disabilities.

New technology allows for riders to more easily book rides and seamlessly get where they need to go. Transit agencies are beginning to offer same-day paratransit service that improves customer experience. Multiple

vendors provide opportunities to utilize advanced algorithms to dynamically create routes in vehicles that are fully wheelchair accessible. RTA can explore these new opportunities in order to improve customer experience.



### Pilot on-demand flexible bus service (microtransit) where fixed routes are not justified

Microtransit offers new opportunities to provide enhanced service in low density areas. Technological advancements driven by the private sector have pushed new possibilities for serving public transit customers. Microtransit uses small vehicles and dynamic routing and scheduling. Customers utilize a smartphone app to plan, request, pay, and track the vehicle within a geo-fenced zone. For those without a smartphone, a call-in option is also available.

Fixed routes function best along main streets that connect many people to many destinations. In areas with meandering streets connecting fewer people and fewer jobs, fixed routes might not be feasible when limited resources need to be deployed effectively. As RTA plans to shift its fixed routes to emphasize frequency as described in the System Redesign Pillar Study, there is a desire among the public to also maintain coverage to lower density areas. Flexible service in lower density areas has existed for decades, often referred to as traditional dial-a-ride services, as transit agencies have sought a balance between serving customers and limiting the extent of fixed routes. In the past, flexible transit services could be limited by hassles of advanced scheduling and insufficient customer communication. Today, technology advancements have created new business



models for serving customers in low density areas. Smartphone apps that provide vehicle location, real-time information, immediate scheduling requests, and intelligent routing algorithms have changed the potential of flexible bus service.

Autonomous microtransit is emerging as a new technological advancement and has been piloted around the world. The future offers abundant potential for on-demand, flexible microtransit service that can scale up or down based on demand in order to serve customer needs.



### Use technology to improve transfer connections

Technological advancements can offer customers more information about their complete trip and more confidence in the reliability of RTA's services. Connection Protection gives passengers real-time transit information to more accurately predict whether they will make their next connection. A passenger can use their personal mobile device to initiate a request for a connection to wait. If multiple people on a delayed transit vehicle will miss their next connection, transportation providers can adjust departures to enable the passengers to make their next connection. For high frequency routes in a grid network, which is the backbone of the System Redesign Pillar Study, it would be inappropriate to hold buses for transfers for frequent routes since the next bus would be only a few minutes away anyway. However, for routes with long headways and connections between multiple agencies, such as when RTA service connects with transit buses from outlying counties, connection protection can assure that the passenger connection occurs. A balance is required, since downstream impacts of holding a vehicle for connection may make a bus end up running late for the remainder of the current trip and potentially have impacts that extend through the transit network.

When implemented properly, technology allows more seamless connections that reduce near-misses of transfers on infrequent routes. When connecting to outlying agencies, a central communication component could be shared among transit providers to provide seamless transfers for regional travelers.



### Provide improved notice of service changes and special event operations

In recent years, improved communication is one of the biggest innovations in transportation. In fact, information at people’s fingertips has become a standard of modern life for many people across all facets of life. Transportation apps from private providers such as Uber, Lyft, or numerous others provide real-time information about trip conditions, vehicle locations, wait time, and total trip time. Today’s ability to easily communicate with customers contrasts with RTA customer complaints of a lack of information. Service changes and special events are regularly occurring events that can upend travel for customers, so both advanced communication as well as real-time information is important. With a majority of RTA riders having smartphones, improvements to RTA’s app could improve alerts to affected customers who travel on a certain route or are located within a certain affected geography. Any improvements to the app would be accompanied by traditional ways of communicating to customers through notices at transit stops as well as announcements on transit vehicles. Communication protocols will improve customer confidence in RTA’s services.

**TRANSPARENCY**

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**Goal:** RTA will instill public confidence as a well-run institution that is accountable to its customers, employees, and taxpayers.

Potential strategies include:



### Provide open data to the public on RTA’s goals and outcomes

Transit agencies adopting governmental best practices are beginning to provide online dashboards on their websites. A public online dashboard could improve transparency and accountability, display metrics that impact customer confidence, and build public trust. Unfortunately, RTA customers have lost trust.

Ultimately, customers have lost trust in RTA’s ability to effectively transport them to and from their locations each day. Through open, easily accessible data on an online dashboard, customers can gain confidence and begin to trust RTA again.



### Implement strategies to make board committee meetings more accessible

The internet and smart phones provide more opportunities than ever to broadly disseminate information to those who seek it. Millions of rides are taken on RTA services, yet many riders likely do not know that their trips are impacted by what happens in a board room each month. Through simple measures such as video live-streams and recordings of board and board committee meetings, interested parties can easily watch proceedings. Greater access to technology also allows more opportunities for remote question and comment sessions with RTA leadership and board members. The exact software or format for these meetings is not as important as the effort to utilize new technology and policies to support informed consumers of RTA’s services.



### Provide reports on customer feedback and responsive actions

RTA offers many ways to offer feedback. Customers can call the RTAanswerline by phone, utilize the internet through [www.rideRTA.com/feedback](http://www.rideRTA.com/feedback), and get in-person help at Tower City and the RTA Main Office. However, the feedback system can be convoluted and disconnected from solutions to complaints. Internal RTA staff identify that simple issues like a bus that has graffiti on a seat, for example, can require a detailed form submittal that addresses many topics that are not an issue.

RTA could focus on streamlining customer feedback, improving the problem resolution process, and monitoring progress. Through easily viewable reports on an online dashboard, customers could view the types of comments and see RTA’s continual feedback and actions. Not every comment will result in changes in RTA’s service, of course, but customers will be pleased that their voices were heard.

# STRATEGY PRIORITIZATION FROM PUBLIC INPUT

STRATEGY	RATING
Identify additional funding to meet existing and future transit needs	1
Better link people to jobs	2
Increase frequency of bus service on existing key routes, while maintaining existing coverage	3
Improve bus stops with more shelters, amenities, real-time information, and lighting	4
Implement fare policies that include fare capping and include free transfers	5
Prioritize reinvestment in replacement rail cars	6
Build a coalition to support and advocate for funds for transit oriented development	7
Invest in maintenance of bus fleet	8
Implement fare collection systems that speed up customer boarding	9
Consider lower fares for low income riders and workforce development programs	10
Increase revenue by increasing ridership	11
Provide open data to the public on RTA's goals and outcomes	12
Use technology to improve transfer connections	13
Improve access for those of all physical abilities	14
Serve as a catalyst to corridor and district development	15
Focus transit service in core urban areas	16
Better link people to retail and entertainment destinations	17
Invest in maintenance and rehabilitation of stations/stops	18
Develop coordinated payment app for seamless transit coordination	19
Create safer and better walking and bicycle connections.	20
Improve cleanliness of buses, rail cars, stops and stations	21
Prioritize reinvestment in track and bridge rehab	22
Provide reports on customer feedback and responsive actions	23
Provide improved notice of service changes and special event operations	24
Create partnerships for transit oriented development planning and implementation	25
Establish positive advocacy messages about transit	26
Expand incentives for transit ridership	27
Implement more widespread transit signal priority	28
Create revenue through real estate asset management and transit oriented development	29
Ease payment access for unbanked population	30
Support bike, pedestrian, scooter, and other multimodal connections to transit	31
Implement strategies to make board and board committee meetings more accessible	32
Implement bus rapid transit (like Euclid Avenue and MetroHealth line) on more priority routes	33
Expand sustainable fleet, including CNG and electric-powered buses	34
Develop family and female friendly policies	35
Increase service during the middle of the day and on the weekend, while maintaining existing coverage	36
Establish roadmap to mode shift toward transit to meet regional climate crisis goals	37
Form partnerships with senior centers and medical providers	38
Develop a multi-county transit system with seamless service	39
Implement comprehensive sustainability initiatives for all aspects of RTA's operations	40
Apply advanced flexible routing technology to enable improved paratransit scheduling	41
Streamline customer feedback and monitoring system	42
Increase the security presence throughout the system	43
Study possibilities for reallocating Waterfront Line and Green Line rail service	44
Expand integration of alternative power at stations/stops	45
Pilot on-demand flexible bus service (microtransit) where fixed routes are not justified	46
Partner with mobility providers (such as Uber, Lyft, Via, Lime, Bird) to expand reach of transit	47
Offer charging stations at RTA facilities	48
Consider increased costs for premium service	49

## Conclusion

Strategies were proposed to the public in meetings and through online engagement. Each strategy was ranked by the public on a five-point scale, with five indicating the most desired strategy. The top strategies identified were:

- Increase frequency of bus service on existing key routes, while maintaining existing coverage
- Identify additional funding to meet existing and future transit needs
- Better link people to jobs

Results also showed that the public wants better bus stops, new rail cars, better fare policies and technology, and collaboration to create transit oriented development. The public wants RTA to turn the page to a new day of engagement with customers and strategies that reflect the best of today's transit solutions.

In short, there is a desire for solutions that make the customer experience better. Results are displayed on the previous table. Recommendations for Priority Corridors and Key Initiatives are addressed in subsequent sections of the report.