

Minutes

RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:58 a.m. June 27, 2023

Board Members: Lucas (Chair), Moss (Vice Chair), Biasiotta, Joyce, Koomar, Mersmann, Sleasman, Welch

Not present: Weiss (virtual)

Staff/Other: Biggar, Birdsong Terry, Burney, Dangelo, Davidson, Fields, Fleig, Ford, Garofoli, Gautam, Gibson, Jenkins, Kirkland, O'Donnell, Schipper, Togher, Walker Minor

Public: Allison, Allred, Bingaman, Cartwright, Gibbons, Loh, Rodriguez, Rubin, Thompson

The meeting was called to order at 9:58 a.m. There were eight (8) board members present.

It was advised that notice of this meeting had been posted more than twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting, that the usual notification had been given the news media and other interested persons, and that all requirements of the Ohio Revised Code and Rules and Bylaws of this Board regarding notice of meeting had been complied with.

Minutes

President Lucas stated that the minutes from the May 2, 2023 Special Board Meeting and May 16, 2023 Board Meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed, and asked whether there were any additions and/or corrections. There were no corrections. It was moved and seconded. The minutes were approved.

Public Comments – Agenda Items

1. Loh – These comments are on behalf of Larry Rodriguez who had to leave early. The area for riders to go between the train and buses is not clean and safe at West Park. This applies to several other train stations.
2. Rev. Pamela Pinkney Butts – She announced an event at the Lebron James Room in Akron on behalf of mothers. She asked about the Transit Police budget. Money is needed to meet the needs of the people. She asked that RTA partner with her to meet the needs of the community.
3. Airric Stewart – If RTA wants more operators, more advocacy is needed from the public. RTA needs to stop being tricky and evasive with the public and using marketing schemes. Route 15A gives extra service on Harvard, to route 48 at E. 131st Street, Blue and Green Line at Shaker Blvd., rout 50, 48A and 40 at MLK Blvd. and Quincy where route 11 runs.
4. Dontez Taylor – A trolley is needed at Lee/Harvard Shopping Center. Restrooms are needed at train stations.

Committee Reports

There were no reports.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

There was no report.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

There were no reports.

Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

New Hires:

1. Marquita Gibson – Administrative Assistant
2. Ibrahim Masoud – Financial Accountant I
3. Amaya Heiselman – Marketing Intern
4. Eric Thompson – Transit Police Officer
5. Antonina Weems – Maintenance Planner
6. Thomas Morgan – Operator
7. Robert McClain – Operator
8. Lakysya Ballard – Operator
9. James Bresnahan – Operator
10. David Woods – Operator
11. Austen Tell – Operator
12. Anthony Daughtery – Operator
13. Donovan Tabler – Operator
14. Anisa Rahman – Operator
15. Sue Sanders – Operator
16. Camren Peterman – Operator
17. Deidra Prettyman – Operator
18. Lee Stover – Operator
19. Ashley Mack – Operator
20. Earnest Crawford – Operator
21. Dachauna Hunter – Hostler
22. Benjamin Beam – Equipment Servicer
23. Damon Margida – Talent Acquisition Business Partner
24. Jaron Brown – Summer Intern
25. Madelynn Harwood – Public Transit Development Intern
26. Alexandria Hahn - Public Transit Development Intern
27. Lawson Nash - Public Transit Development Intern
28. Brandon Bowles - Public Transit Development Intern
29. Jacob Moore - Public Transit Development Intern
30. Sanjana Venkataraman – Public Transit Development Intern

Promotions:

1. Cassidy Carter – ITS Specialist
2. Alton Kerley – Equipment Servicer
3. Derrick Warren – Assistant Operating Instructor
4. Roy Strickland, Jr. – Sr. Network Engineer
5. LaTriece Thomas – Assistant Operating Instructor
6. Lavelle Ferebee II – Assistant Operating Instructor

Executive Session

The Board was scheduled to have an Executive Session to discuss the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, compensation of a public employee or official. But the Compensation Committee asked to table the session and Resolution No. 2023-47 due to the Board's Legal Counsel not being in attendance. It was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Mayor Koomar. There were eight (8) ayes and none opposed. The resolution is tabled.

Introduction of Resolutions:

- A. 2023-41 – Authorizing Contract No. 2023-2 with Burgess & Niple, Inc. for Project 19.63 – Engineering Services for Special Bridge Inspections for a period of 24 months in an amount not to exceed \$348,521.72 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Welch, seconded by Ms. Moss and approved by unanimous vote.
- B. 2023-42 – Authorizing Contract No. 2023-054 with Hill International, Inc. for Project 19.67 – On-Call Construction Inspection - 2023 in an amount not to exceed \$450,000.00 for a period of twenty-four (24) months (RTA Capital and/or Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Biasiotta, seconded by Mr. Joyce and approved by unanimous vote.
- C. 2023-43 – Authorizing Contract No. 2023-57 with NEO Building Construction, LLC for Project 19.33 – W. 65th & W. 117th RTS generators in an amount not to exceed \$166,924.00 (RTA Capital Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.
- D. 2023-44 – Enacting Chapter 1210 of the Codified Rules and Regulations of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Joyce, seconded by Mayor Biasiotta and approved unanimous vote.
- E. 2023-45 – Authorizing the filing of grant applications, furnishing of additional information and accepting funds from the State of Ohio for State Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Assistance under all State of Ohio programs, the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Mayor Biasiotta and approve by unanimous vote.
- F. 2023-46 – Authorizing the submission of grant applications, entering into funding agreements, providing assurances or other documentation and accepting funds from NOACA for State Fiscal Years 2024, 2025 and 2026 for financial assistance and capital projects under all NOACA programs, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Joyce, seconded by Ms. Welch and approved by unanimous vote.
- G. 2023-47 – Amending and restating employment agreement of India L. Birdsong Terry as General Manager, Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority and authorizing the execution of that agreement, it was moved by Ms. Moss, seconded by Mayor Koomar to table. There were eight (8) ayes and none opposed. The resolution is tabled.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan D. Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer gave the report. The annual inflation rate in the U.S. increased from 2.5% in January 2020 to a high of 9.1% in June 2022. Since June 2022, the inflation rate has been falling. At the end of May 2023, inflation is down to 4% and is expected to continue to fall in 2023. This is still higher than the long-term rate of 3.9%. By long term, he means the rates between 1960-2022. The Federal Reserve raised interest rates again in early May 2023. Interest rates are now at 5.25% which is the highest level in 15 years since the 2007-2008 financial crisis. The Federal Open Market Committee is expected to meet again at the end of July to review interest rates.

May unemployment data will be released June 28 for the Ohio Metropolitan Statistical (MSA) areas. The U.S. unemployment rate was 3.4% in April. The total number of job openings increased to 10.1 million in April up 358,000 from 9.7 million in March. Decreases were seen in manufacturing, professional and business services. Job openings increased in trade, transportation and utilities, retail trade, education and health services, construction and financial activities. All of the MSAs experienced a decrease in the unemployment rates from March. As of April 2023, Cleveland was at 3.4% which is down from 4.2% the month before. Cincinnati is 2.8% down from 3.4%. Columbus is 2.8% down from 3.4%. Dayton is 3.2% down from 3.8%. Toledo is down from 4.3% to 2.5%.

May 2023 ridership was 18.9% above May 2022 levels. YTD ridership for 2023 is 8.77 million or 34% lower than 2019 ridership of 13.33 million. YTD ridership is 21.2% higher than 2022. YTD passenger fares pre-COVID was 15.75 million in 2019 compared to 10.92 million in 2023 or 30% lower. May fare revenue was 11.3% above May 2022 levels which is 9.1% over budget. Cash fares increased by 10.6%. U-Pass and student fare cards increased by 45%. Since these are cash-based numbers they are as a result of timing issues of when these fares are collected.

June 2023 sales tax receipts was 2.8% lower than June 2022. YTD we are 5.3% higher than 2022 levels. Fourteen of the 23 categories were positive in June 2023 compared to June 2022. Online sales were 19.1% higher. Regular and statewide sales were lower at 4.8%. Motor vehicles and motorcraft was 10.8% lower due to higher car prices and high interest rates. The last decline in sales tax was September 2022.

General Manager/CEO Report

India L. Birdsong Terry, General Manager, CEO gave the report. RTA was awarded a \$3.2 million grant from ODOT (for six CNG buses) with the support of Senator Brown and ODOT Director Marchbanks. President Lucas thanked the staff, leadership and state representatives and requested a letter of thank you be sent to the state reps. The Rail Car Replacement Team is giving updates around the Authority in May and June. Siemens executed the rail car contract. Staff is preparing to review it for full execution. RTA is partnering with ADAMHS via FTA Safety Advisory for suicide and crisis awareness and support. Car cards are posted on RTA property and the airport.

Chief Jones was highlighted by Cleveland.com for being a woman in policing. She discussed diversity, equity and hiring practices. President Lucas added that Chief Jones is a good leader and has earned the respect of her staff. He desires the TP headquarter be relocated and upgraded. Mass Transit highlighted our DBE Program in an article submitted by Kay Sutula, Director of Office of Management & Budget and Carl Kirkland, Director of Business Development.

RTA held an awards banquet, May 19 to acknowledge 2021 and 2022 recipients. Several awards were presented in various categories. Several staff members attended the APTA Rail Conference in

Pittsburgh, PA June 11-14. RTA will host the conference in 2024. Ms. Birdsong Terry also served on a panel. RTA may also host in 2027 or 2028 when the new rail cars are operating.

Public Comments – public transit related items

1. Brian Gibbons – Mr. Gibbons said the survey results presentation at the earlier committee meeting needs to be measured over the long term to show the trends.
2. Ms. Townsend – She asked if the new seats on the buses will be plastic in the long term. Ms. Birdsong Terry confirmed the hard plastic seating for cleanliness and comfort.
3. Loh – She requested the surveys performed by ETC be more customer focused similarly to the NOBLE paratransit survey conducted during the Pandemic.
4. Dontez Taylor – He requested the Circulators be brought back into service. He asked that the fares not be increased.
5. Airric Stewart – He restated his proposal for the 15A if it ran hourly, could share service with the 15, 11, 48 and 48A and connect with the Blue and Green Lines. His proposal would be more efficient and provide more service.

Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, July 25, 2023**, in the Board Room of the Authority, Root-McBride Building, 1240 West Sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44113. This meeting will be live streamed on RTA's Board page (www.RideRTA.com/board) by selecting the meeting date. The public is welcome to attend in person.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.



President

Attest: 

Secretary/Treasurer