

Minutes

RTA External & Stakeholder Relations & Advocacy Committee Meeting

1:04 p.m., February 19, 2019

Present: McCall (Chair), Lucas (Vice Chair), Welo

Other Board Members: Joyce

Not present: Bibb, Clough, Elkins, Moss, Serrano

Also Present: Anderson, Benford, Bitto, Bober, Burney, Calabrese, Caver, Czeck, Dangelo, Davenpery, Davis, Faith, Feliciano (Jr.), Feliciano (Sr.), Fields, Freilich, Garofoli, Gautam, Gillan-Shafron, Jaszczak, Johnson, Keshtkaran, Krecic, Landman, Lee, Lewis, Love, Lozada, Mess, Metcalf, Mitturholzer, Palagyi, Shaffer, Schipper, Shea, Singh, Sohrabian, Stocking, Togher, Vukmanic, Yuen

Ms. McCall called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. The secretary called the roll and reported that three (3) committee members were present.

System Redesign Study

Jarrett Walker of Jarrett Walker and Associates, gave the presentation. The system redesign is one of the five pillar studies. The other studies are related to rail cars, economic impact with CSU, fare equity, and financial and operational review. This will be the first of several meetings. This meeting will have public comment. Today's presentation will show how the system could be redesigned. Jarrett will be here all week for a retreat with leaders from the city, state, NOACA and others.

Jarrett Walker has done network redesign work for 25 years and his firm has been around for 11 years. They have done network redesign studies around the country, more recently in Houston, Columbus and Richmond. His book, called "Human Transit", looks into the public transit problem, what it is and what the choices are. His firm fosters clear conversations about transit that leads to confident decisions. He does not make recommendations. He will make recommendations about questions that RTA should ask and think about. They will have a role in developing ideas with RTA. This is RTA's plan and a result of its thought process and work. They will set up the questions in relation to the big decisions that affect the future of the transit system, but they will not recommend an answer. It won't be easy. His team is present today. They are Evan Landman, project manager and Chris Yuen, planner.

RTA only has so much money to run service so priorities are needed. This study is about asking the public whether the way the service is deployed matches their priorities and if not, what the priorities should be. Later he will sketch out contrasting alternatives. First he will present a set of geometric facts about what public transit is, how it interacts with the environment and how that produces useful mobility. This presentation is about geometry, not culture, demographics and marketing. The most important word in his presentation is IF. If you wanted high ridership, what could you do? Transportation planning is freedom planning. The

question is where people can get to in a certain amount of time. Expanding ridership is expanding freedom. To expand ridership means to make the service useful to go to more places to do more things. RTA's operation grid pattern on the inner east side, all the way out to University Circle has a grid pattern that makes it possible to go in several directions. A lot of that area has decent access to jobs. There is not much of a grid pattern going west, but there are major streets. There are large areas where much job access can't be provided because it requires covering large distances.

To design a system to increase ridership, it requires providing useful and liberating service in places where transit can compete for a lot of trips and to have the access to jobs to be in places where there are a lot of people. Useful, liberating service is frequent service and service available when needed, which is called span of service. Every transit rider understands frequency. Travel time in transit includes waiting time. They take the route by route data for every bus route in the system. Higher frequency correlates with higher productivity. High frequency, 15 minutes or better, is powerful if deployed in the right places where lots of people will benefit from it. RTA has a few routes that are frequent all day in addition to the rail network. Any map they create for RTA will be in a style to show frequency. High frequency can't be provided everywhere because it is expensive.

They will focus on a few things. One is density. Density is the number of people around every stop. RTA's current frequency network follows its pattern of density, but there are several high density areas not served with frequent service. Second is walkability. Is service a .25 mile walk from a high ridership stop? Is the street safe to cross? Third is linearity. It matters whether big destinations are in straight lines. It results in higher frequency. Routes not in a straight line are longer, cost more to operate and no one wants to ride it. Last is proximity. Does transit have to traverse long gaps? An example is community colleges out on the edge of the county where there is a long drive through, but not a lot of demand to get to. This results in a higher cost and the market less effective. If ridership is the focus, a business thought process is necessary to focus on the places where transit can succeed.

When determining a network, there can be a ridership goal or a coverage goal. The ridership goal takes density, linearity and walkability into consideration. A coverage goal spreads the service out, which is spreading it thin. This results in low ridership because of low frequency. Devoting resources to a ridership goal will achieve supporting dense and walkable development. It also supports environmental goals. The coverage goal thinks like a public service or access for all. Life line access is about need. Ridership is about demand. Coverage is about need. An easy way to disparage transit agencies is to say that low ridership services is evidence that the transit agency is failing. Most low ridership services were not designed for ridership. RTA's current network provides 60% ridership and 40% coverage. Does RTA want to change this? More ridership means coverage disappears. Higher ridership with no new money means that coverage disappears. More coverage means cuts in frequency and ridership decline. This is a difficult choice to make with no new funding.

The survey ask customers with existing resources (1) how much should be spent on ridership and coverage, (2) if there were additional funds, how much of those funds should be spent on ridership or coverage and (3) lastly is a question about coverage service. When you run predictively low service to low ridership places, there are different policy reasons. First is a need for seniors and low income. Second is response to new development. Last is serving every tax payers no matter where they are located. The last option spreads the network the most. They plan to sketch four alternatives. The first two focuses on available resources

(existing and less or more). The two existing level of resources will differ based on whether they are more focused on ridership or on coverage. He urged the Board to share with the rest of the Board about the conversation and controversy that will be provoked when the maps are released. After they get public feedback, they will develop scenarios for growth and less service.

The online survey will stay open until March 17. There will be a design workshop this month with RTA, county, city and MPO staff to hammer out how the alternatives will look like. One will focus on ridership. The other will focus on coverage. These will come out in the spring. There will be public engagement about that. People will say the ridership will need to be higher without understanding the sacrifice to do that. People will want coverage without understanding that sacrifice. Either choice will result in the expense of the other. After public engagement, they will come back to the Board for guidance and an ultimate decision at the July 9th meeting. The second design workshop will look at the high and low alternatives. It will be informed by where the Board wants to be on the ridership/coverage spectrum. After that, there will be another round of public engagement. The final presentation is in October.

Chief McCall said this will be the first of a series of meetings. She asked that the survey be sent out broadly. She asked that public comment be included in the process. There may be some touch points internally to look at timing of the public input. She suggested there be feedback from operators. There is time to be flexible with the schedule. Mayor Welo asked him to explain the public engagement process. Jarrett suggested the maps related to where the network could go be shared via web survey, public meeting and focus on people who have less access to technology or less confident going online. There will be an extensive amount of meetings to gather public input. She request the schedule be looked at. Chief McCall wants to look at what the system could be like with more resources. Dr. Caver said the growth question covers the question of more resources. She requested the presentation be made public. Rev. Lucas believes the focus should be on increasing ridership.

Public Comment

1. Larry Rodriguez – Cleveland, OH – He represents Clevelanders for Public Transit. He asked what west side routes would be affected. He uses the 81 and 51. He is disabled. He is concerned about losing coverage and that users of these routes would have to rely on Paratransit.

Chief McCall said that there is no information on what routes will be affected.

2. Jose Feliciano, Sr. – He chairs the Hispanic Round Table. He asked what cities are attached to the four scenarios. He asked if there is an industry standard for ridership versus coverage. He also asked that the Hispanic community be included in the process.

Jarrett said that RTA shouldn't focus on what other agencies are doing. Chief McCall believes that looking at the industry is important and not to lose sight of that.

3. Chris Stocking – Cleveland, OH – He quoted Jarrett Walker's website in a blogpost entitled *Charging for Connections is Insane*. Jarrett writes "Charging passengers extra for the inconvenience of connections is insanely self-destructive. It discourages exactly the customer behavior that efficient and liberating networks depend on. It undermines

the whole notion of a transit network. It also gives customers a reason to object to network redesigns that offer both greater efficiency and greater liberty, because by imposing a connection on their trip, their fare is now raised.” There is no way to purchase a transfer if you buy your fare on board. Five-ride tickets are not available at most places. The Transfer Policy needs to be included in the discussion.

Joel Freilich said he spoke with the consultant about the Transfer Policy. He urged both consultants that they don't have to tell the other not to talk about fares or service.

4. Loh – She asked that the public engagement include multiple languages and to consider different survey formats for people with disabilities. Consider that the responses to the survey is a result of the current lack of service. This could result in the wrong interpretation if there is not enough background information.

Jarrett said they are not just looking at existing ridership. High ridership planning looks at the built environment and where there will be demand. They are skeptical of ridership data.

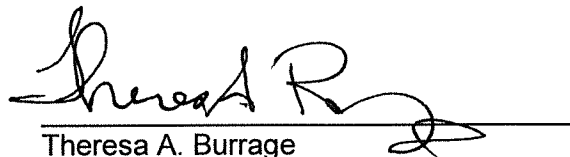
5. Akshai Singh – He hopes the process will justify the service. He wants to fight for restorations. The survey responses will vary depending on who you ask. How can major employers be involved to make sure they have accessible facilities, as costly transit service is being provided to them?

Chief McCall asked that connections be made to neighborhood associations and CDC's about the surveys. She plans to meet with Dr. Caver about the public meeting schedule.

Chief McCall adjourned the meeting at 2:01 p.m.



Floun'say R. Caver, Ph.D., Interim CEO
General Manager/Secretary/Treasurer



Theresa A. Burrage
Executive Secretary