

Minutes

RTA External & Stakeholder Relations & Advocacy Committee

10:31 a.m. August 10, 2021

Committee Members: McCall (Chair), Moss (Vice Chair), Byrne, Duarte, Koomar

Other Board Members: Joyce, Lucas, Weiss **No Present:** Pellot, Serrano

Staff: Becker, Benford, Bitto, Burney, Capek, Catalusci, Caver, Coffey, Dangelo, Davidson, Dimmick, Feke, Feliciano, Fields, Freilich, Gautam, Johnson, Jones, Kirkland, Lincoln, Martin, Mothes, Petit, Schipper, Sutula, Talley, Togher, Ulrich, Walker-Minor

Public/External Presenters: Colliers, Gibbons, Jurca, Sklemar, Wright

The meeting was called to order at 10:31 a.m. There were five (5) committee members present.

This meeting was live-streamed on RTA's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/rideRTA) for staff and members of the public. Members of the public were allowed to attend in-person. Based on Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance to continue to avoid large events and gatherings and Ohio Department of Public Health advice that businesses and other entities may continue to require mitigation measures, as well as RTA's interest in protecting community and employee health and safety, several measures were put in place for in-person attendance, which are spelled out on the meeting notice.

NextGen Follow-up

Joel Freilich, Director of Service Management and Natoya Walker-Minor, Deputy General Manager, Administration and External Affairs gave the presentation. Chief McCall reported that NextGen rolled out in July, but it has been an endeavor for a few years now. We received feedback from the community. She encouraged in-person attendees to make a two-minute comment at the end of the presentation. Ms. Birdsong said the feedback process has made transit a priority by providing input virtually during the Pandemic. We'll attempt to inform the community of the changes and improved service.

Chief McCall asked Dr. Caver to give a brief update on the Five Pillars, which came out of a retreat held several years ago. Dr. Caver stated that in 2017, a foundation was set to make RTA resilient for the future. The five pillar studies included Rail Car Replacement. We are currently moving forward and finding funds and in the RFP process. The 2nd study was the Economic Impact Study conducted by Cleveland State University. The study found that public transit has a \$2.2 billion impact on the aggregate home values. RTA created 2,500 jobs from our spending value. The 3rd study was Fare Equity. One outcome was lowering the fare from \$5.50 to \$5.00. We're looking at fare collection and fare capping. The 4th study was the Financial & Economic Study conducted by GCP. Giving our capital back log and revenue stretches we had, the long run showed a mismatch. We couldn't continue the amount of service we had knowing the capital infrastructure needs. The last study is the System Redesign/NextGen Study. The goal was to have a system that takes us to modern places that have community and stakeholder impact.

The following is a follow-up on meetings with municipal/government officials. They talked about their major concerns and other concerns.

City of Parma City Council:

- Met on August 2, 2021
- **Concern 1:** City Council felt uninformed about NextGen changes
- **Concern 2:** West 54th Street which had a few weekday trips, but since trips were moved to Ridge, City Council was concerned about residents on W. 54th
- **Action:** Inform City Council when considering RTA service changes, not just mayors. They ask that we be in touch with the schools to update them on changes. Ms. Walker-Minor followed up.

City of Cleveland Transportation Committee:

- Met with the City Council Transportation Committee on June 10
 - **Discussion item:** Bus #38, in Wards 9 & 10
 - **Actions** from the meeting:
 - Meet with Transportation Chair Jones, Ward 1
 - Meet with Councilmen Conwell (Ward 9) & Hairston (Ward 10)

They followed up and held the action item meetings.

Meeting with Councilmen Conwell and Hairston:

- Met with Councilmen Conwell & Hairston on June 24 at RTA Headquarters.
- **Issue:** #38 bus route in Hough. Route #9 now serves this area and goes to a lot of jobs that it didn't go to before.
- **Action:** Community meeting to occur August 18 – RTA will hear from customers first-hand about their needs.

NextGen increases service in Ward 9 and Ward 10. Buses were moved from one street to another and additional buses were added to the Ward.

Meeting with Councilman Jones

- Met with Councilman Jones and residents of Ward 1 on July 1, 2021 at the Harvard Community Center
- **Issue:** #48A and #15 bus routes – stops on 48A is still served, but riders wanted frequent service but some residents are now pleased. Some attendees don't ride the route regularly and just concerned that the service went away. They made changes based off what residents said in public meetings. They are working with Councilman Jones to set up a future meeting to find out what they want in place of what the Councilman proposed
- **Action:** Follow-up calls with Councilman Jones
- **Challenge:** Councilman wants RTA to adopt a customer's plan, which does not serve current riders needs as expressed during NEXT GEN process

Ms. Walker-Minor said they continue to work with the City of Parma and City Transportation Committee. They have resolved the City of Parma issues by following up with Marketing. They continue to update their list of leaders. She and Joel have spoken to Councilman Jones and look to continue those conversations in the upcoming meeting with Councilman Conwell and Hairston. Chief McCall said an update can be done at an upcoming Board Meeting.

Public Comments

1. Brian Gibbons – Fairview Park, OH – He is active in CPT, but he is not speaking on their behalf today. Routes 22 replaced routes 49 and 79. The bus runs every 15 minutes now so he has less time to read because he's not waiting for the bus as long. There is a stop where the 22 and 55 would have to transfer on Lorain. He doesn't need to transfer, but there was a lady who got off the bus who didn't have an umbrella, who wasn't sure where to get the bus and there were no shelters. He sent his suggestions to Joel about adding a shelter and where to place the transfer location.

2. Rev. Pamela Pinkney – She is concerned about racial disparity in the NextGen process. Chief McCall said she viewed the Cleveland City Council meeting and Joel and Natoya gave the abbreviated version but there were a lot of east side Council leaders that expressed their concerns. She assured her that the concerns came from all parts of town.

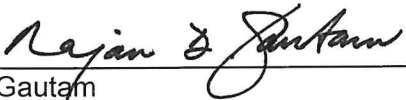
Chief McCall added that we are taking in-person public comments now with limited capacity due to COVID. Ms. Duarte thanked the staff. She asked if frequency can be looked at on the weekday versus the weekend. Looking at the 25Connects presentation and the development going on, frequency is less in that area on the weekends. Collaboration is crucial to get more frequency. We need staff and capacity to listen better. Mr. Freilich said they were told in the in-person meetings in 2019 and online meetings in 2020 that some people start work during non-rush hours, so pay more attention to mid-day and evening. Others work on Saturday and need more service. Funding is crucial. We improved weekend frequency. Weekend service is better and will get you home sooner on NextGen. But more is always better.

Community Immunity Bus

The bus was parked out front at the last Board Meeting. RTA partnered with the City of Cleveland Health Department on this bus. The goal is to encourage citizens to get vaccinated. The target is citizens in communities documented by the Ohio Department of Health that have low percentages of vaccinations. We received a grant from ODOT. In March, we partnered with CSU and others in the max vaccination center. It did not yield the results the State intended so staff decided to be innovative to use the Community Immunity bus to use the grant to get people vaccinated. The first stop for the bus was Public Square when CEO/GM Birdsong spoke for the City Club.

The bus will go to several community events in low vaccinated neighborhoods. Operator Kim Smith from Hayden was selected because she has high customer service in the community and has been highly regarded by her supervisors. She will drive the vehicle every time it is in the community. Staff met with the Cleveland Department of Public Health several times to see how the bus could be used as a mobile clinic. Staff at Central Bus Maintenance prepared the bus for the clinic usage. The bus will stop at RTA locations so that employees can get vaccinated. The bus will be at Hayden this Friday, at Triskett August 27 and at Rail, CBM and Paratransit in September. This is important because in the U.S., 57% of Americans are vaccinated. In Ohio 61% of Ohioans have at least one dose and 58% are fully vaccinated. In Cuyahoga County, 50% of residents are fully vaccinated. Sixty-five people received their vaccination at an event on E.55th a few weeks ago. The CDH said this was a high number. Chief McCall said it's good that the bus is being requested and that employees are provided the opportunity to get vaccinated.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.



Rajan D. Gautam
Secretary/Treasurer



Theresa A. Burrage
Executive Assistant