

MINUTES

Ad Hoc Technology Committee

5:04 p.m., April 21, 2022

Committee: Pellot (Chair), Duarte

Not present: None

Staff: Benford, Birdsong, Caver, Coffey, Dangelo, Fields, Fleig, Garofoli, Lively, Miller, Miranda, Mothes, Orlando, Schipper, Sutula

Public: Loh, Stocking

The meeting was called to order at 5:04 p.m. There were two (2) committee members present. Ms. Birdsong stated the mission and vision of the RTA. This is important in setting the stage of IT becoming a conduit in becoming more efficient in how we serve the community. The new mission speaks to how we affect lives as far as mobility, ease of use of the service, paying fares, etc. The vision enables us to supplant the mission statement. In addition, how we think about solution based activities and not just putting out fires. Mr. Lively will go through short term and long term planning to get to those solutions.

Mission: Connecting the Community

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

Digital Divide

Mike Lively, Director of ITS gave the presentation.

RTA Strategic Plan: Key Initiatives are listed. Today's presentation will focus on the items in red.

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

Improve How Customers Pay

The main keys to this improvement includes open architecture, contactless, account based, stored value, fare capping and open payments, which makes a more regional system and easy system for customers to pay. At the same time, not everyone has a cell device.

- Implement recommendations from Fare Equity Analysis pillar study
- Change RTA fare collection to improve customer experience and better reflect best practices
- Seamless, equitable

Engage with Emerging Technology

Transit is very tech forward. Our buses and trains have become more sophisticated over the years. They are a rolling data hub. At any given time, we can have up to 15 computer type devices on our vehicles. Following is how we want to engage with emerging technology.

- Refocus using technology as way to improve the customer experience & equity
- Experiment with connected vehicles
- Improve infrastructure
- Enhance real-time info
- Invest in data security & sharing
- Pilot mobility management

Cleveland's Digital Divide

Prior to COVID, a lot people may not have known what the Digital Divide was. Below are statistics from Digital C.

- 2018 Census Bureau: Cleveland had the lowest rate of connectivity
- 2019 American Community: 30.7% of Cleveland households had no broadband access
- The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic showcased the divide
 - Schools and companies transitioned to remote learning
 - Students and employees may not have had adequate solutions and devices

RTA and the Digital Divide

The equipment on current vehicles were removed to install state of the art technology. We added another SIM through AT&T. We have seen tremendous growth with the improved equipment.

- In 2019, RTA launched an innovative, radio communication project
- RTA installed mobile routers and hired AT&T for unlimited, un-throttled internet service
- As part of the project, RTA launched complimentary Wi-Fi for all riders
- RTA team members were awarded the “Most Innovative” award at the Vontas conference in 2021

We launched complimentary Wi-Fi during COVID in March 2020. We started bridging the digital divide before COVID. Ridership was relatively low over the last year and a half. The adoption of Wi-Fi expanded exponentially. Hayden garage has 10 more buses than Triskett garage. Hayden riders use more Wi-Fi than the other garages combined. We are averaging upwards of 16 terabytes of data per month. Chris Orlando and his IT team installed Wi-Fi at multiple (5) rail stations. We called them Homework Hotspots where students could do homework and access the Internet. We will continue to expand the service.

RTA Job Fairs

Using the technology, we are now able to be a partner in the community. At job fairs held on buses, applicants could submit applications, have an interview and receive an offer the same day using the technology. This enables us to connect the community in different areas by taking the technology on our vehicles to people.

- In 2021, RTA held multiple job fairs to recruit operators
- RTA used buses and other mobile routers to provide connectivity to applicants and the human resource department

Real-Time TVs

Not all stations have Wi-Fi yet due to cost effectiveness. In place of that, real time TVs will be placed at all train stations. Monitors are transit stations can cost between \$8,000 to \$10,000. The proposed TV cost \$1,000. It is a standard TV that is easy to replace. It has a mobile router so that the same

Wi-Fi on buses and trains powers the TV. Customers near the TV can get real time information and free Wi-Fi. Those with a cellular device, but no plan can use the Wi-Fi. RTA Wi-Fi will connect anytime the customer is near our stations.

Infotainment on New Buses

- Onboard Messages:
 - New buses are equipped with multiple screens that display route information and videos
 - All buses have audio announcements playing along with the screen (ADA compliance)
 - RTA can now record messages in Spanish

New Fare Collection System

The new fare collection system will be a regional effort with other transit systems. Riders without a cell device can get a free smart card. They can add fare to the cards. Fare capping allows riders to be capped in a daily pass and monthly pass. If you do not have the ability to pay for a monthly pass upfront, you will pay more. With the smart card, it is account-based, cash can be added, and once the cap is reached, you would not pay more than \$95. This could save riders up to \$35 a month.

- In May 2022, RTA will soft-launch the new mobile, fare payment app
- As part of the project, RTA will also implement smartcard technology

Smartcards:

- Free for riders
- Provide account based ticket
- Provides fare capping capabilities for fare equity
- Allows riders to load funds (credit card or cash) onto their card

Ms. Pellet asked if the new numbers are available as far as Cleveland's Wi-Fi connectivity and asked him to explain what unthrottled Wi-Fi connectivity means. Mr. Lively said he could get those numbers. Cell carriers may slow your service down to 3G or 4G if too much data is being consumed. Unthrottled means RTA customers will have 4G speed at all times. She asked if there is a goal to expand Wi-Fi to all stations. Mr. Lively said all stations would have Wi-Fi by the end of the year. The TVs just need power and would be installed before the end of the year. Ms. Birdsong said translation of messages on the buses into Spanish would expand our reach to customers. We should continue to think about palatines, messaging and advertising in different languages in different neighborhoods. We should also explore geofencing and geospatial advertising. These can match riders up with business as they ride.

Public Comments

1. Chris Stocking – Cleveland, OH – (web form) 1.) When countdown clocks were installed in NYC, it was the biggest driver of improved customer satisfaction. Install real-time clocks at all rail and bus shelters. Even with a data plan, it is not practical to take off gloves etc. to check phone constantly for updates. Bring the updates to stops directly. Include service alerts. 2.) Riders need to be notified immediately when RTA is not operating as happened twice already this year on 1/17 and 2/18: Consider an opt-in text alert system for riders that can be customized for what type of alerts they want to receive a text or email about -Emergency shut downs -Planned system maintenance by line (Blue, Green, Red) -Planned detours (including bus routes) -Planned service/schedule changes (including bus routes) -Elevator status by location. 3.) Audio announcements at rail stations/vehicles for service updates. THANK YOU to RTA/India Birdsong for discontinuing audio ads/annoying longstop announcements. Keep it short and relevant. 4.) RTA app includes 60-minute transfers, RTA cash fare has no transfers, RTA 5 ride 2.5 hours transfer. New fare system must standardize transfers. Look at Detroit as

model: 4-hour pass is \$2, day pass is \$5. Make day pass true 24 hours. This can be done on current equipment like New Orleans. 5.) Display service info on screens at transit stations and vehicles, not security recording footage on bus.

2. Loh – Cleveland, OH – Today’s presentation was very informative. For RTA to keep up the good work, communication is the key. The TVs are good. The display of information on the bus is limited. We need to communicate to the deaf and blind community. With the elimination of ads, customers can hear the important information. Announcements can be programmed at certain locations during their ride, for example Tower City. Technology may not satisfy everyone’s needs. Some people do not have email accounts.
3. Robert Winn - Cleveland, OH (caller) – He thanked Mr. Lively for meeting with Clevelanders for Public Transit (CPT) twice about the new fare collection system. He said at the last committee meetings, it was mentioned the remaining 2022 deployment includes 2 to 3 validators on rail vehicles and two on HealthLine vehicles. But this will create bottleneck. He asked how the validators would be positioned. He asked the Board to consider weekly capping along with daily and monthly. This could be a valuable price point for riders.
4. Marvetta Rutherford – Cleveland, OH – (web form) - In order for the Ambassador Project to be effective for the people of #Cleveland there should be people on every bus and train in every direction. This will be equitable to the paying customers. It will lessen situations that were slowing down progress in the transfer system that also needs attention to fairness. The goals of CPT are the same quality services that are offered worldwide.
#WeDeserveAndDemandBetterTransit
5. Chris Martin – Cleveland, OH - (web form) - Because this public comment web form arbitrarily limits the characters a member of the public may use to communicate with you, my friend Chris Stocking, was unable to finish his web-submitted comment. Therefore, I will do so for him. Thank you for working on a new fare system for RTA. It is years past due. Please make sure each door on the HealthLine and rail has a scanner to ensure riders understand the new process. It should be clear they scan at any door and go. This will speed up trips and customer experience drastically but the readers have to be at every door. Also, please follow up with the Clevelanders for Public Transit letter emailed to RTA board and staff on 2/3/2022. The letter included many suggestions related to technology to improve the customer experience. RTA should consider a rider experience czar that can make the entire RTA system more rider focused and improve customer satisfaction.

Ms. Birdsong said staff is discussing fare equity and examining the gaps. Also increasing accessibility and ways for customers to get tickets from a variety of locations.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:39 p.m.