



## RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

April 15, 2025

### MEETING MINUTES

**Board Members:** Mayor Koomar (Chair), Ms. Welch (Vice Chair), Ms. Elder, Mayor Gallo, Mr. Love, Rev. Lucas, Ms. McPherson, Ms. Pacetti, Mr. Sleasman, Mayor Weiss

**Staff/Other:** Nick Biggar, India Birdsong Terry, Janet Burney, Floun'say Caver, Melinda Dangelo, Nick Davidson, Shashelia Degraffinried, Maribeth Feke, Michael Fesler, George Fields, Bob Fleig, Ida Ford-Marshall, Joel Freilich, Anthony Garofoli, Rajan Gautam, Chief Deirdre Jones, Lawrence Jupina, Carl Kirkland, Sheila Miller, Joshua Miranda, Charles Morgan, Holly Mothes, Mike Schipper, Kay Sutula, John Togher, Natoya Walker-Minor, Carolyn Young

**Public:** Rich Exuem, Loh

I. Call to Order

- a. Mayor Koomar called the meeting to order at 9:32 am.

II. Roll Call

- a. There were ten (10) Board members present, representing a quorum.  
Rev. Lucas was delighted to answer the roll and thanked everyone for their cards and concerns while he was in the hospital. He is glad to be back

III. Certification regarding Notice of Meeting

- a. It was advised that the notice of this meeting had been posted more than twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting, that the usual notification had been given to 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.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. The minutes from March 18, 2025, Annual Meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed, and the Board Chair asked whether there were any additions and/or corrections. It was moved by Ms. Pacetti and seconded by Mr. Love and approved by unanimous vote.
- b. The minutes from March 18, 2025, Board Meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed, and the Board Chair asked whether there were any additions and/or corrections. It was moved by Ms. Welch and seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.

V. Public Comments – Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

The public comment section has been consolidated to include agenda and non-agenda items.

Several members of the public addressed the Board regarding both agenda and non-agenda items.

1. In-person – Cleveland, OH - One resident expressed ongoing concerns with Paratransit services, citing frequent miscommunication regarding pickup locations, incorrect scheduling, and poor customer service. She described repeated issues with being left behind, long wait times due to scheduling errors, and rude treatment by dispatchers. She also shared a safety concern involving a threat made toward her and her son on public transit, noting that RTA police provided no follow-up. Additionally, she reported a past injury while using RTA services and highlighted the need for more consistent, supportive treatment for riders with disabilities.
2. Kevin Hinkle – Cleveland, OH (in person) - a Cleveland resident and funeral director, raised safety concerns regarding passengers blocking aisles and doorways on coaches. He emphasized the importance of drivers enforcing existing safety policies to prevent injuries when the bus stops abruptly.
3. Airric Stewart – Cleveland, OH (caller) - voiced frustration about his public comments being abbreviated in meeting records. He also expressed dissatisfaction with being disconnected after speaking via the phone line, which he previously used to listen to entire Board meetings. He urged the Board to make this line consistently available for both Board and Community Advisory Committee meetings, citing transparency and accessibility. Mr. Stewart further requested that written comments submitted through the web form not be edited or shortened, stating that full messages should be shared and addressed.
4. Airric Stewart – Cleveland, OH (webform) - submitted a written message reiterating his comments, which mirrored the verbal comments he had just made during the call-in segment.
5. Unknown – Cleveland, OH (webform) – asked for bus service to be extended across the Carnegie Bridge to gain access to West 3<sup>rd</sup> from Ohio City.
6. Jimmy Carter – Cleveland, OH webform) – calendar is spelled wrong – need spellcheck

VI. Board Governance Committee Report

- a. No committee report

VII. Operational Planning & Infrastructure Committee Report

- a. No committee report

VIII. Audit, Safety Compliance and Real Estate Committee Report

- a. No committee report

IX. External and Stakeholder Relations and Advocacy Committee Report

- a. No committee report

X. Civilian Oversight Committee (COC) Report

- a. Ms. Welch reported a meeting was held and new officers were voted: Mr. Jonathan England, Chair and Mr. David Morris, Vice Chair.

XI. Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

- a. No committee report

XII. Ad Hoc Committee Reports

- a. No committee reports.

Mayor Koomar stated the Compensation Committee would have a brief report following the relevant resolution.

XIII. Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

- a. Ms. Marshall, Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition announced the new employees and promotions including new operators, administrative staff and engineering personnel. The board welcomed and applauded these individuals for joining or advancing with GCRTA.

Resolution No. 2025-46 - Expressing Congratulations to the employees of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority who retired during the first quarter of 2025 the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Ms. Elder and approved by unanimous vote.

Took time to acknowledge the Retirees that were present by have pictures taken with India Birdsong Terry, CEO, Mayor Paul Koomar, Board President. Each honoree thanked GCRTA for this honor....

XIV. Introduction of Resolutions

- A. 2025-47 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-214 with Burgess & Niple, Inc. for Project 20.29 – Engineering services for special bridge inspections – 2025 in an amount not to exceed \$371,710.00 for a period of 24 months (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department Budget) the adoption of which was moved by Ms. McPherson, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.
- B. 2025-48 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-163 with Vail Network Co., DBA VN Services, Inc. for Project 20.13 – On-Call Schedule and Cost Control – 2024 in an amount not to exceed \$200,000.00 for a period of twenty-four months (RTA Capital and/or RTA Development Funds, Engineering & Project Development Department Budget) the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Sleasman, seconded by Rev. Lucas and approved by unanimous vote.
- C. 2025-49 - Authorizing Contract No. 2025-007 with R.L. Hill/ Platform Contracting Joint Venture for East 79<sup>th</sup> Street Green and Blue Line Station reconstruction in an amount not to exceed \$9,984,587.00 (RTA Development Fund, Engineering & Project Development Department Budget) the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Koomar, seconded by Ms. Elder and approved by unanimous vote.
- D. 2025-50 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-217 with CPC Industries, Inc. for the furnishing of all-purpose, heavy-duty cleaner/degreaser, as specified and as required, for a period of two (2) years in an amount not to exceed \$167,200.00 (General Fund, Fleet Management Department Budget) the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pacetti, seconded by Mr. Love and approved by unanimous vote.
- E. 2025-51 - Granting Permanent and Temporary Easements for the Construction, Operation and Maintenance of Sewer Infrastructure (Kingsbury Run Consolidation Sewer Project) the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pacetti, seconded by Ms. Elder and approved by unanimous vote.
- F. 2025-52 – Authorizing a Salary Adjustment for India L. Birdsong Terry, General Manager, Chief Executive Officer for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority. the adoption

of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mr. Sleasman and approved by unanimous vote.

#### Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan D. Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer, addressed the board, first providing clarification on a significant variance from the Q4 Quarterly Management Report. He explained that reimbursed expenses were 163.9% over budget primarily due to the use of preventive maintenance (PM) funds to close out several older grants, increasing the PM amount from the budgeted \$1 million to \$7 million.

He then delivered his regular financial update, noting key economic indicators: the annual inflation rate stood at 2.9%, and interest rates remained at 4.5% pending a Federal Reserve decision. Year-to-date ridership through February 2025 was up 0.2% from 2024 but remained 24% below pre-COVID 2019 levels. Passenger fare revenue was 14.1% below February 2024 due to delayed UPASS receipts and 15.2% under budget. Sales tax revenue, which reflects economic activity from three months prior, was down 2% year-over-year for February, and year-to-date collections were 0.9% lower than in 2024. He also noted recent changes by the Ohio Department of Taxation, which consolidated tax categories.

Financial highlights included \$22.3 million in outstanding debt as of December 31, an average investment yield of 4.07% year-to-date, and total cash and investments of \$361.1 million—\$27.5 million of which is in the general fund, meeting the board's reserve policy. In response to Mayor Weiss's question about investment income projections, Mr. Gautam confirmed the 2025 general fund investment income was budgeted at \$1 million and agreed to follow up with additional details.

#### General Manager, CEO Report

India L. Birdsong Terry, General Manager, CEO provided the final formal report of the annual meeting, beginning with gratitude and setting the tone for a celebratory close, including two upcoming appreciation videos. She first acknowledged the board transition, thanking outgoing Mayor Anthony Biasiotta of Seven Hills for his service. She welcomed Mayor Marie Gallo of Parma Heights as the newest board member.

Ms. Terry highlighted a significant recognition for the finance team: under the leadership of Deputy General Manager of Finance, Mr. Rajan Gautam and Director of Accounting, Mr. John Togher, the team was awarded the Government Finance Officers Association's (GFOA) highest honor for governmental accounting and financial reporting for fiscal year 2023. John humbly thanked his team, and Ms. Terry playfully acknowledged his unofficial title as the "King of the St. Patrick's Day Parade," a historically high ridership day for RTA. She praised the operations and Transit Police divisions for their excellent service during the event, emphasizing the collective effort involved in ensuring a successful and safe day for Clevelanders.

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, Ms. Terry participated in Case Western Reserve University's "Protecting Your Crown" conference, aimed at empowering Black women leaders. She moderated a panel featuring influential voices discussing work-life balance, authenticity in leadership, and navigating professional spaces as women of color. She described the experience as both powerful and uplifting.

Also spotlighted was Dr. Floun'say Caver's testimony to the Ohio Senate Transportation Committee, advocating for \$80 million in general funds and \$15 million for workforce development to support transit across the state. Dr. Caver emphasized that "mobility is freedom" and "transportation is economic development," messages that resonated with bipartisan legislators. Ms. Terry praised Dr. Caver's preparation and delivery, reinforcing the agency's flat management approach that empowers multiple team members to serve as capable spokespeople.

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Terry participated in iHeartMedia's "CEOs You Should Know" podcast, which showcases leaders from diverse industries across the region. She shared insights on RTA's operations and leadership style. While the podcast hasn't been released yet, it is expected to be published in the coming weeks, and we will share this information once it becomes available.

The swearing-in ceremony for 14 new Transit Police Officers, joined by their families was held in the boardroom on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Chief Jones and Deputy Chief Mike Gettings administered the oaths. Ms. Terry thanked board members Mayor Kumar and Lauren Welch for attending and commended the emotional and proud moment for the new recruits. Chief Jones noted with pride that, unlike many police departments facing shortages, RTA's department is growing and nearing full staffing, with 50 additional candidates in the pipeline. Ms. Terry credited this to the recruitment and marketing teams and praised the department's continued commitment to safety and diversity.

Additionally, Ms. Terry expressed appreciation to Teresa Burrage for her work behind the scenes in organizing board meetings, wishing her well in her new role with the county.

The meeting concluded with a note about Transit Employee Appreciation Day, encouraging everyone to thank RTA staff—from operators to administrators—for their dedication. Two videos were shown: a teaser of the upcoming digital annual report and a heartfelt appreciation video. Special thanks were extended to Natoya Walker-Minor and her marketing team, along with the board-approved contractor who supported production of the report.

#### President's Report

Mayor Koomar reminded everyone that Mr. Gautam will continue to provide his financial overview, which began during the board retreat, at a meeting scheduled for Tuesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 8:30 am. A meeting invitation was recently sent out and members were encouraged to mark their calendars. The President also mentioned an upcoming vacation and noted that the Board Governance Committee would be convened soon to discuss ongoing collaboration with management in the coming year.

In new business, Mr. Gautam provided clarification in response to a question from Mayor Weiss regarding interest rates used in budget planning. He explained that during the budgeting process in August–September, rates were around 4.5%, but projections suggested a decline due to anticipated FOMC actions. As a result, an average interest rate of 2.5%, based on the past three years, was used for budgeting purposes.

#### Executive Session

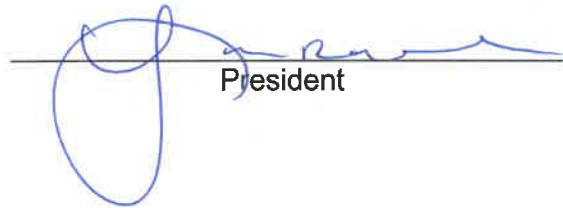
Mayor Koomar indicated that an Executive Session is needed to consider the investigation of charges or complaints against a public employee official, licensee, or regulated individual and To enable the Board to conference with GCRTA attorneys for information gathering, fact-finding, and to receive legal advice. Upon unanimous roll call vote, the Board went into Executive Session to discuss such matters at 10:42 am.

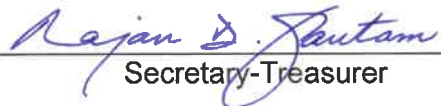
Following Executive Session, the meeting reconvened in open session motioned by Mayor Koomar and seconded by Ms. Pacetti by roll call vote by unanimous vote at 11:12 am.

Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, May 20, 2025** 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](http://www.RideRTA.com/board)) by selecting the meeting date. The public is welcome to attend in person.

There being no further business to bring before this Board, a motion to adjourn the meeting by Mayor Koomar and seconded by Mr. Love was approved by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 am.

  
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President

Attest:   
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Secretary-Treasurer