



## Committee of the Whole

August 5, 2025

### MEETING MINUTES

**Committee Members:** Mayor Koomar (Chair), Ms. Elder, Mayor Gallo, Mr. Love, Ms. McPherson, Mr. Sleasman, Mayor Weiss, Ms. Welch

**Not Present:** Rev. Lucas, Ms. Pacetti

**Staff/Other:** Shawn Becker, Nick Biggar, India Birdsong Terry, Janet Burney, Floun'say Caver, Wayne Colonna, Sharon Cottrell, Nick Davidson, Drew Dimmick, Lynne Finnigan, George Fields, Bob Fleig, Joel Freilich, Anthony Garofoli, Rajan Gautam, Chief Deirdre Jones, Lawrence Jupina, Carl Kirkland, Jonathan Laule, Kathleen McGrevey, Sheila Miller, Bryan Moore, Charles Morgan, Mike Schipper, John Sulik, Kay Sutula, Wendy Talley, Carolyn Young

**Public:** Loh, Darwin Rutledge

Mayor Koomar called the meeting to order at 9:59 a.m. with a roll call. Nine (9) committee members were present, representing a quorum. Rev. Lucas left at 10:23 am.

A motion by Ms. Welch, seconded by Mr. Love to approve the minutes from July 1, 2025, and was unanimously approved.

Mayor Koomar called for the first presentation of the Ridership Analysis and Report. This was presented by Joel Freilich, Director – Service Management and Ruben Morgan, Manager of Operations Analysis.

Mr. Morgan began by explaining that RTA primarily calculates ridership using Automatic Passenger Counters (APCs) installed on buses, rail vehicles, and at Red Line stations, supplemented with fare collection system data in areas without APC coverage. Paratransit ridership data comes from the trapeze scheduling system. In 2024, total system ridership reached 78 percent of pre-COVID (2019) levels, with weekday ridership at 74 percent and weekend ridership performing stronger at 93 percent. By mode, weekday bus ridership recovered to 80 percent of pre-COVID levels, while weekends exceeded 2019 levels on some routes. The HealthLine reached 76 percent on weekdays and 94 percent on weekends. Rail lagged behind, recovering to only 52 percent on weekdays and 71 percent on weekends. Paratransit ridership, however, grew beyond pre-COVID numbers, with a 34 percent increase on weekdays and 53 percent increase on weekends, requiring corresponding service expansion.

Mr. Morgan reviewed the results of the Next Gen system redesign implemented in 2021, noting that community input had called for greater off-peak and weekend frequency, improved non-downtown service, and less emphasis on peak-only routes. Current data shows two of the three highest-ridership bus routes, excluding the HealthLine, do not serve downtown. The report then covered case studies on frequency improvements. In August 2024, Route 50's service was improved from hourly to every

30 minutes, aligning with Route 48 to create a combined 15-minute corridor; ridership on Route 50 grew by 72 percent, with increases also seen on Route 48. Routes 16 and 86, also improved from hourly to every 30 minutes, experienced ridership growth exceeding 50 percent. On Route 71, midday frequency between downtown and Southland was improved to match peak service, resulting in a 26 percent increase. In December 2024, weekend frequencies on Routes 10, 22, and 28 were improved from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes, producing ridership gains above system averages.

Board members discussed the clear correlation between increased frequency and ridership gains, while acknowledging that the increase is not directly proportional to the service added. Mr. Freilich explained that routes were selected for improvement based on existing ridership, population density, economic activity, and budget constraints, with priority corridors targeted first. Several members emphasized the need for ongoing public communication to highlight service enhancements, particularly in non-downtown areas, and suggested further evaluation of frequency increases on high-performing services such as the HealthLine.

Mayor Koomar called for the next presentation – Option to Purchase Up to Twelve (12) Railcars. The presenters will be Shawn Becker, Director of Procurement, Bryan Moore, Railcar Project Manager, Carolyn Young, Director of Grants and Tony Garofoli, Executive Director Internal Audit.

Mr. Becker presented a proposal to exercise a contract option with Siemens Mobility Inc. for the purchase of up to twelve additional high-floor light rail vehicles (LRVs) under contract number 2021-125. This contract, awarded in April 2023, covered the base order of twenty-four LRVs with options for up to thirty-six more. Previous options had been exercised in November 2023 for six LRVs at approximately \$31 million, and in November 2024 for eighteen LRVs at approximately \$112 million. The current request is for an amount not to exceed \$72 million. The base price of \$5.17 million per unit has increased due to inflationary adjustments to an estimated \$6 million per unit at final assembly.

Mr. Moore, Railcar Project Manager, outlined the key features of the new vehicles, including compliance with RTA's 2020 Design Standards, heated windshields and pantographs for winter performance, a load-leveling system to maintain consistent floor height, separate HVAC systems for operators, and capacity for fifty-two seated passengers, four wheelchairs, and two bicycles. The design includes door configurations that permit boarding from both high and low platforms. Interior amenities will feature passenger information systems with variable message signs. Mr. Moore showed photographs of the painted car shells, underframe components, and wiring inspections, noting that the first vehicles are in final assembly and significant fabrication milestones have been achieved. Infrastructure modifications are also underway to accommodate the new fleet.

Ms. Young, Director of Grants Management and Treasury, presented the financial overview. The total railcar replacement program budget is \$450 million, with \$380.7 million allocated to vehicle acquisition, \$33.5 million to infrastructure upgrades, \$6.5 million to design and inspection, and the remainder to administration and contingency. To date, \$420.5 million, or 94 percent of the total program budget, has been secured or committed through awarded and committed grants, including contributions from NOACA, ODOT, FHWA, and the FTA, as well as general fund transfers. The remaining \$29.5 million is expected to be covered by \$15 million in planned general fund transfers over 2026 and 2027 and \$14.5 million in competitive grant opportunities.

Mr. Garofoli, Executive Director of Internal Audit, confirmed that all prior orders under the contract had passed pre-award audits required by the Federal Transit Administration, including compliance with Buy America provisions, and that a similar audit would be conducted for this option upon Board approval. Board members noted that the funding position for the program is strong, though they emphasized the need to continue monitoring the impacts of tariffs and delivery schedules. Mr. Becker stated that a formal resolution for the purchase will be presented at an upcoming board meeting.

Mayor Koomar called for the next presentation – Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual Update. This is to approve the revisions to Policy 400.04: Payroll Deductions. The presenters will be Nadine DeJesus, Benefits & Compensation Manager and John Sulik, Associate Counsel II.

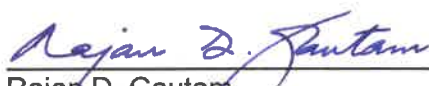
Ms. DeJesus presented proposed revisions to Personnel Policy 400.04 on payroll deductions. The revisions were the result of a joint review by Human Resources and Legal to ensure the policy aligns with federal, state, and local laws and reflects current GCRTA operational practices. Ms. DeJesus explained that the updated policy explicitly distinguishes between mandatory and voluntary deductions and clarifies that all voluntary deductions require prior written employee consent.

Mandatory deductions include federal, state, and local taxes; Ohio Public Employees Retirement System contributions; court-ordered garnishments; and, newly added, recovery of overpaid wages. Voluntary deductions may include health, dental, and vision insurance premiums; life insurance; flexible spending accounts; union dues and agency fees; deferred compensation contributions; and recovery of costs for lost, stolen, or damaged equipment or unauthorized P-card purchases. The policy also adds a provision allowing partial-day wage deductions for salaried employees if they are absent for personal or sick reasons without available or approved leave and have exhausted their paid leave balances.

Mr. Sulik emphasized that the updated policy language codifies practices that are already in use and that HR, Finance, and Legal will continue to review permissible payroll deductions on an ongoing basis. Board members expressed agreement that the revisions were appropriate and necessary for compliance and transparency. The Committee voted to recommend forwarding the revised Personnel Policy 400.04 to the full Board of Trustees for approval.

It was recommended that the Committee forward these items to the full Board for approval. A motion to do so was made by Mayor Koomar and seconded by Mr. Sleasman and unanimously approved.

There being no further business to bring before this Committee, a motion to adjourn the meeting was given by Mayor Koomar and seconded by Ms. Welch. The meeting was adjourned at 10:49 am.

  
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Rajan D. Gautam  
Secretary/Treasurer

  
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Avis R. Lyons  
Interim Executive Assistant

