



Operational Planning & Infrastructure Committee

November 4, 2025

MEETING MINUTES

Committee Members: Mr. Sleasman, Ms. Pacetti, Mayor Gallo, Mr. Love

Staff/Other: Shawn Becker, Nick Biggar, India Birdsong Terry, Janet Burney, Floun'say Caver, Brent Charnigo, Scott Ferraro, George Fields, Bob Fleig, Joel Freilich, Anthony Garofoli, Mabry Harris, Carl Kirkland, Jonathan Laule, Kathleen McGerver, Sheila Miller, Charles Morgan, Holly Mothes, Mike Schipper, John Sulik, Kay Sutula, Wendy Talley, John Togher, Eric Vukmanic, Natoya Walker-Minor, Carolyn Young

Public: Kesley Finucan, Ryan Fogliano, Brian Gibson, Lori Ingram

I. Roll Call

Mr. Sleasman called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. with roll call. A quorum was present.

II. Approval of Minutes – October 7, 2025

Mr. Sleasman moved to approve the minutes; Mr. Love seconded. The motion carried.

III. IFB Procurement – a presentation of a competitive procurement for the second phase of the reconstruction of the grade crossings at Shaker Square and Shaker Junction.

Kathleen McGerver, Engineering Project Manager, stated that the purpose of the project is to replace the existing vehicular vehicle crossings at the two locations mentioned, as well as the pedestrian crossings in those two locations. The existing track structure will be replaced with 115-pound rail ties and ballast. As part of the track reconstruction staff will replace one crossover or switch area that is closest to the roadway so that we do not have to come back later. The whole road will be doing an asphalt overlay and pavement marking.

Jonathan Laule, Program Contract Manager, stated that the Invitation for Bid was issued on September 15, 2025. Twelve (12) parties reviewed the solicitation, and two (2) firms submitted a bid. The lowest responsive, responsible bidder for this project was Rail Works Track Services, LLC in amount not to exceed \$2,438,863.

Michael Schipper, Deputy General Manager, Engineering, advised that the bulk of the work will take place during the summer of 2026. Work on crossings usually takes approximately ten (10) days.

Mr. Sleasman questioned whether staff expected to receive more than two bids. Mr. Schipper stated that it was not surprising, and bids were received from the usual bidders.

Mayor Gallo moved to advance the item to the Board and was seconded by Mr. Love. The motion was unanimously approved.

IV. General Fund Budget – increase in appropriation to the 2025 Budget

Kay Sutula, Director of the Office Management and Budget, stated that healthcare and prescription costs had increased by 34% from October 2024 to October 2025. Should this trend continue through November and December, staff projects an annual expenditure of \$45.6 million by the end of the year.

Nadine DeJesus, Benefits & Compensation Manager, stated that GCRTA has stop-loss insurance that covers claims over \$500,000. GCRTA pays up to \$500,000 and the stop-loss insurance covers anything above that threshold. There were three specific stop-loss claims in 2024 and this year through August 31 there have been six stop-loss claims.

The average annual increase in health insurance costs have fluctuated but the six-year average is 3.8%.

Kesley Finucan, of Oswald Companies, stated that she has worked with GCRTA for several years helping to manage healthcare costs and RFPs. She explained that utilizing various survey data, the long-term 3.8% rate of increase is lower than industry trends of 7%.

Ms. Sutula advised that for 2025, due to healthcare and prescription costs increasing 34% compared to 2024 levels, staff will need to increase the appropriation to the operating budget by \$9 million. The appropriation will be only towards payroll taxes, healthcare benefits and other fringes.

Any questions from the board or the committee or the board?

Mayor Weiss inquired whether this should be incorporated into the development of budgets on an ongoing basis in the future. Ms. Sutula stated that staff is finalizing the 2026 budget and has incorporated a 26% increase in healthcare and prescription costs.

Ms. Elder questioned which methods were utilized to account for anticipated healthcare cost increases. Ms. DeJesus stated that cost containment strategies include a wellness incentive program, spousal opt-out programs and others.

Mayor Weiss asked whether the current plan coverage for employees has a spousal provision that requires the spouse not employed by GCRTA to have coverage with their employers. George Fields, Deputy General Manager, Human Resources, stated that GCRTA has a waiver provision for employees to opt out and go on a spouse's healthcare plan. Staff is looking at ways to incentivize that action.

Ms. Pacetti requested a brief overview of plan designs offered to employees. Ms. DeJesus advised that two plans are offered through Anthem: a PPO plan, which has a larger network and an HMO plan which is a smaller and Cleveland Clinic-based only.

Ms. Pacetti inquired regarding the nature of the GCRTA contract with Oswald Companies. Ms. Finucan explained that the contract includes shopping the market, assisting with preparing RFPs and annual help with renewal planning.

Anthony Garafoli, Executive Director of Internal Audit, advised that staff has engaged an audit consultant to audit the healthcare plans and the scope is to review claims accuracy, eligibility compliance and adherence to the benefit plan rules. Staff will also provide management with recommendations for improving the plans with the new contract.

Mr. Sleasman asked whether the number of stop-loss claims were an anomaly this year. Ms. DeJesus stated that the claims are legitimate, and we are having a bad year.

Mr. Sleasman questioned whether the levels of stop-loss claims could be increased. Ms. DeJesus advised that the deductible could be changed when the next RFP is issued.

Mayor Koomar stated that GCRTA must develop a strategy to address plan design to avoid future increases that may impact operations.

Staff requests that the operational planning and Infrastructure Committee present the amended 2025 General Fund budget to the full board for approval.

Mr. Love moved to advance the item to the Board and was seconded by Mayor Gallo. The motion was unanimously approved.

V. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Mr. Sleasman moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Love. The meeting was adjourned at 9:32 a.m.


Rajan D. Gautam
Secretary/Treasurer


Brent Charnigo
Board Administrator