



MEETING MINUTES

GCRTA Board of Trustees Meeting

March 24, 2026

Board Members: Mayor Koomar (President), Ms. Elder, Mayor Gallo, Mr. Love, Ms. McPherson, Mr. Sleasman, Mayor Weiss, Ms. Smith Whigham

Not Present: Ms. Pacetti (Vice President)

Staff/Other: Tom Allen, Shawn Becker, India Birdsong Terry, Nick Biggar, Janet Burney, Floun'say Caver, Brent Charnigo, Patrick Coffey, Kristie Cox, Nick Davidson, Allison Dykes, George Fields, Bob Fleig, Joel Freilich, Catherine Galla, Anthony Garofoli, Rajan Gautam, Sharon Jenkins, Chief Deirdre Jones, Lawrence Jupina, Carl Kirkland, Ida Marshall, Gerald Mason, Ruben Morgan, Holly Mothes, Mike Schipper, Kay Sutula, Wendy Talley, John Togher, Natoya Walker-Minor, Kimberly Wright, Carolyn Young

Public: 10

I. Call to Order

Mayor Koomar called the meeting to order at 9:53 a.m.

II. Roll Call

A quorum was present.

III. Certification regarding Notice of Meeting

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

Mayor Weiss moved, and Ms. McPherson seconded to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2026, Board Meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

V. Public Comments – Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

Members of the public addressed the Board regarding both agenda and non-agenda items. Public comments submitted through the webform will appear in their original form and have not been edited for grammar or content. GCRTA reserves the right not to publish any explicit language, derogatory remarks, or personal attacks against individuals.

1. Kevin Hinkle (in-person)

Kevin Hinkle stated that he was a long-time RTA commuter and resident. He suggested having a representative use public transportation to see how important it is to the community. If they can ride for two just weeks, interact with some of the fellow riders and see how important it is -- especially the areas that had that face a lot of safety and economic challenges -- and come to these meetings and interact with riders to see for themselves and take questions and answers, then we can have a better relationship.

2. Unidentified Speaker 2 (in-person)

The speaker stated that he would like a bus stop at 78, near the airport.

3. Unidentified Speaker 3 (in-person)

The speaker discussed an incident that occurred on a bus in 2024. Staff volunteered to assist with this issue.

4. Unidentified Speaker 4 (in-person)

The speaker referenced potential service cuts and suggested racial bias because routes tend to be cut on the east side but substituted on the west side. She also stated that buses on the east side do not go into neighborhoods and have farther walks from the stops.

5. Unidentified Speaker 5 (in-person)

The speaker suggested additional training for dispatchers and scheduling finally a recent miscommunication while taking a trip to a medical appointment.

6. Carren Woods (in-person)

Ms. Woods thanked staff for their service.

7. Airric Stewart (phone)

I would like to know how much RTA has spent on fuel for each of the years 2021 through 2024 and if you have an assessment for the first quarter 2025. I also would like to know how your municipal bonds have performed each of those years?

I also would like to know that in the spirit of work, school and hospital pursuit for your poorly studied NEXT GEN project. How is it that you will not run a bus to Pinecrest Shopping Center, which is less than half a mile from Tri-C? Coming up Harvard, but you'll run a bus every 15 minutes up Harvard to try. How did you come to that conclusion?

The City of Cleveland gave Shaker Square \$12 million to rehab and improve business there. How did you come to a conclusion that is not a good idea to run the 48 a bus through there and the suggested 15 a bus through there? These are simple questions that could have been addressed in in a clear, concise way that have never been addressed.

I listened to Joel Freilich today say that all public comments on will be given the same analysis. I would like you today to give a detailed assessment of what qualifies as an analysis.

How is it that you have not shown any consideration for the population that will ride that number 50 bus coming through the Mount Pleasant neighborhood up West 131st and Miles? No consideration for them wanting to get to Marymount in one bus and having instead of transferring.

That's something that should be put in the public comments too, as a response to my public comments. Now I've listened to everybody that has something to say today, from the public comments and some of this stuff is stuff that I've heard many times before. They get no response. They have to come all the way down here just to get somebody to listen and respond to something that they could have responded to. A few people would just respond to your emails and phone calls that are put out to you. Please read the webform in this public forum today and let people hear them.

8. Bernie Oakar, Medina (webform)

Do not cut service.

9. Isaac Shimsky-Agosto (webform)

I was glad to see that RTA will be changing the branding on buses so that it no longer covers the windows. When going to a stop that you haven't used before, even something relatively small like that can make big difference in how easy it is to get off at the right stop.

10. Airric Stewart (webform)

The following questions have not been answered—1) Is there going to be a reduction in service with the 50, 48, 40, 19, 15, and 14 bus routes? 2) Why was the phone service reduced for callers at 440 276 4600 during the BOT meeting? 3) What was the cost of maintaining the service in the past and what is the cost of the service today? 4) Have BOT and CAC members made the suggestions of the implementation of the 48A and 15A routes available for thorough public examination? 5) What is the annual cost to run the 15 bus in its existing form? 6) How many people annually (each of the last 3 years) have participated in the customer service survey offered at the phone number 216 621 9500? 7) Why do you refuse to give the numbers that your percentages are based on when you give your survey and report card results? 8) Did you know prior to giving India Terry her third pay raise in 5 years that you were going to be significantly overbudget? 9) Amongst others my April 15, 2025, webform does not reflect exactly what I typed. 10) How much would it cost to assemble and install the 6 bus shelters that have been suggested to you by me for the proposed 15A route? The locations are in a previous webform. RTA has a responsibility to the socioeconomic well-being of the public through the implementation of public transit. Respect the accurate assessment of the facts.

11. Adam Rossi, Cleveland Heights (webform)

Thank you for your service to the people of Cuyahoga County, and thank you for the opportunity to comment today. I am deeply concerned about the upcoming budget shortfall facing RTA and what it means for transit riders like myself, and for the future of RTA in general. I understand that the service cuts that happened earlier this year were in anticipation of the upcoming budget

cliff, but I don't think cutting service is the right approach to this conundrum. Cutting service puts RTA in a terrible position to approach voters with a sales tax increase in the coming years. Instead, RTA should use different strategies to cut costs in the short-term. One strategy to make some short-term cost-saving measures would be to make some operational changes to increase service speeds. There are interventions that can increase the speed of buses that RTA hasn't implemented yet, like the adoption of electronic payment systems, like tap-to-pay; all-door-boarding; longer stop spacing; and shorter, more direct routes. These strategies could result in savings while keeping service at current levels, which is critical if RTA is to remain relevant and wants to pass a sales tax. We can't have more service cuts if RTA wants to remain relevant. Thank you for your time and consideration.

VI. Board Governance Committee Report

A Governance Committee Meeting will be held on April 7 at 8:00 a.m. to have a general follow-up on the Board retreat.

VII. Operational Planning & Infrastructure Committee Report

No committee report

VIII. Organizational, Services & Performance Monitoring Committee Report

No committee report.

IX. Audit, Safety Compliance and Real Estate Committee Report

No committee report.

X. External and Stakeholder Relations and Advocacy Committee Report

Ms. McPherson stated that Baron's and Greyhound recently left downtown for Brook Park and the Board had an opportunity for a site visit earlier this month, which was beneficial to see the great work happening there.

XI. Committee of the Whole

No committee report.

XII. Civilian Oversight Committee (COC) Report

Mayor Gallo stated that Elise Auvil resigned from the COC. There are now two open positions on the Committee and applications are being accepted.

XIII. Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

No committee report.

XIV. Ad-Hoc Committee Reports
a. Ad-Hoc Compensation Committee

No committee report.

b. Ad-Hoc Nominating Committee

No committee report.

XV. Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

Ida Marshall, Senior Manager of Talent Acquisition, provided an update on new hires and promotions, emphasizing the essential nature of these additions, particularly in operations.

XVI. Introduction of Resolutions

- A. 2026-16 – AUTHORIZING CONTRACT NO. 2025-137 WITH ISO CLAIMS SERVICES, INC., THROUGH ITS INSURANCE INFORMATION EXCHANGE UNIT (IIX) FOR DRIVER'S LICENSE CHECK SERVICES IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$170,670 FOR A THREE-YEAR PERIOD AND IN AMOUNTS NOT TO EXCEED \$56,890 FOR EACH OF TWO OPTION YEARS, FOR A TOTAL CONTRACT AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$284,450 FOR FIVE YEARS (GENERAL FUND, SAFETY DEPARTMENT BUDGET)

Mayor Weiss moved to adopt the resolution; seconded by Mr. Sleasman. The motion was approved unanimously.

- B. 2026-17 – AUTHORIZING CONTRACT NO. 2025-125 WITH OHIO BUSINESS MACHINES, LLC TO PROVIDE MULTIFUNCTIONAL DEVICES WITH ONE YEAR OF MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT, AND PRINT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE WITH FIVE YEARS OF MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$366,107 (GENERAL FUND AND RTA DEVELOPMENT FUND, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT BUDGETS)

Ms. McPherson moved to adopt the resolution; seconded by Mr. Sleasman. The motion was approved unanimously.

- C. 2026-18 – AUTHORIZING CONTRACT NO. 2026-14 WITH HARSCO RAIL, LLC TO PROVIDE PROTRAN TECHNOLOGY RANGING RIGHT-OF-WAY ("ROW") SAFETY EQUIPMENT IN A TOTAL AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$516,532.50 (RTA DEVELOPMENT FUND, POWER AND WAY DEPARTMENT BUDGET)

Mr. Sleasman moved to adopt the resolution; seconded by Ms. McPherson. The motion was approved unanimously.

- D. 2026-19 – AUTHORIZING AN INCREASE TO CONTRACT 2021-070 WITH DIRECT ENERGY BUSINESS MARKETING, LLC DBA DIRECT ENERGY BUSINESS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL NATURAL GAS SUPPLY REQUIREMENTS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$3,000,000 FOR A TOTAL CONTRACT AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$12,000,000 (GENERAL FUND, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET DEPARTMENT BUDGET)

Mr. Love stated that given the increasing price volatility of natural gas and the LNG export

market, the war and maybe more variability to come, that he would encourage the authority to not rest on its laurels relative to CNG, and continue to think about, fleet and future planning whether that's electric, hydrogen, whatever the options may be, but just keep those efforts in motion, even if it's longer term. But I don't think we're going to see a stabilizing CNG market.

Mr. Sleasman moved to adopt the resolution; seconded by Ms. Elder. The motion was approved unanimously.

- E. 2026-20 – AUTHORIZING CONTRACT NO. 2025-165 WITH SLE TECHNOLOGIES, INC. FOR HAYDEN GARAGE LIFT REPLACEMENT – PHASE 2 IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$1,470,630.83 (RTA DEVELOPMENT FUND, ENGINEERING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT BUDGET)

Mr. Sleasman moved to adopt the resolution; seconded by Mayor Weiss. The motion was approved unanimously.

- F. 2026-21 – AUTHORIZING THE GENERAL MANAGER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO APPOINT AN UNDERWRITING SYNDICATE AND TO EXECUTE CONTRACTS WITH MEMBERS OF THE UNDERWRITING SYNDICATE AT A RATE NOT TO EXCEED \$3.25 PER \$1,000 OF DEBT ISSUANCE FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS. (PAYABLE FROM THE PROCEEDS OF THE DEBT ISSUE)

Mayor Koomar stated that he understood this to be a renewal and have always had this relationship in place. Raj Gautam informed that his understanding was correct and that the Authority has historically maintained relationships with the team that make up the underwriting syndicate. The last agreement expired in 2025, so this is indeed in a renewal.

Mayor Koomar moved to adopt the resolution; seconded by Mayor Weiss. The motion was approved unanimously.

XVII. Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer, presented the Secretary-Treasurer's report. He advised that February 2026 ridership was 1.8 million — a 3.7% decrease from the previous year and 1.5 million below pre-COVID levels. Bus ridership decreased by 5%, heavy rail by 22.6%, while paratransit increased by 5.6%. Inclement winter weather was likely a factor for the decrease.

Consumer sentiment showed a slight increase in February of 0.4%. Consumer Sentiment month over month change decreased 1.9% and year over year showed a 2.6% decline.

Passenger fare revenue was also down by 2.4%, which was attributed partially to changes in school payment schedules. Mr. Gautam explained that staff and CMSD agreed to a 90% lump sum payment in the fall of 2025. During the previous year, they were making monthly payments. The payments will match as the school year concludes.

Sales and use tax receipts were 7.5% higher compared to the same time last year. Total long-term debt outstanding at the end of December was \$13.9 million. The average yield of investments was 3.6% with total cash and investments of \$343.6 million, of which \$28.7 million is in the General Fund and meets the one-month operating reserve.

CEO Terry questioned whether potential CMSD school closures may impact the funding GCRTA typically receives. Mr. Gautam advised that staff has not begun the discussions for next year with CMSD officials. The number of students has not changed significantly over the last couple years. The CSU and CMSD contracts expire soon but most of the other colleges and universities are under agreements that do not expire in the near future. Staff is engaged and will provide more information as it becomes available.

CEO Terry stated that she wants to continue that forecasting in terms of education because it has a significant impact on tried and true historical ridership.

Ms. Elder questioned how passenger fare revenue and ridership may be impacted in light of the anticipated 3% reduction in service.

CEO Terry stated that staff will soon present fare-capping information to the Board within the next couple of months. Ridership may improve with more equitable opportunities to ride the service in terms of payment on a monthly basis. Revenue may decrease, depending on how customers respond. However, there is a responsibility to make sure customers are getting fair and equal treatment financially.

XVIII. General Manager, CEO Report

India L. Birdsong Terry, General Manager and CEO, began the report by stating that the Authority will receive a grant through NOACA for the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, which will be in an amount just under \$17 million split between 2028-2029. The funds are awarded to establish new or expanded transportation projects focused on reducing emissions. The Authority appreciates providing services in the most equitable and sustainably forward manner.

GCRTA was recently awarded the Government Finance Officers' Association Award for excellence in financial reporting for the 38th consecutive year. This is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and helps the Authority be a good steward of public dollars.

Quarterly touchpoints are ongoing with the FTA. Key topics included the railcar replacement program and managing tariff impacts. Beyond the regional FTA office, GCRTA works with the FTA in Washington, D.C., the state government in Columbus and the City of Cleveland to make sure stakeholders are inclusive to adding to quality of life. Staff works with these entities every step of the way and projects that are brought to the Board have been reviewed at the federal level.

Staff is preparing for the 2026 Triennial Review is a three-year audit spearheaded throughout the entire agency.

Mike Schipper attended a WTS Budget & Forecasting Panel on February 12 to discuss budget, forecasting and how it impacts the bottom line in Northeast Ohio.

Staff of the External Affairs Department traveled to Columbus as part of Ohio Loves Transit to educate legislative partners on investments and the return on investment public transit delivers for the state and region.

The Board of Trustees toured GCRTA facilities and the Baron's bus terminal in Brook Park along with the Cleveland Browns proposed stadium site.

CEO Terry served as a judge for the Climate & Energy Innovation category during an Accelerate: Citizens Make Change event on February 26 that supports talent and innovation. CEO Terry also recognized the marketing staff who produced a video that won an APTA AdWheel Award. The Veterans ERG we chose to highlight their contributions serving us and United States citizens.

The annual Board of Trustees retreat was held on February 27. The Executive Leadership retreat will be held on March 31 and April 1.

CEO Terry stated that St. Patrick's Day is typically one of the largest ridership days of the year. Data regarding ridership will be available within two weeks. There were no transit issues.

XIX. President's Report

No items.

XX. Old Business

No items.

XXI. New Business

No items.

XXII. Executive Session

Mayor Koomar moved and Mr. Sleasman seconded to go into Executive Session to consider the employment, evaluation and compensation of a public employee or official. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board was in Executive Session from 10:55 a.m. to 11:40 a.m.

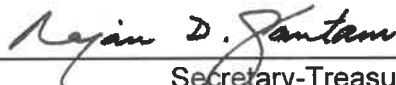
Mayor Weiss moved and Ms. Whigham seconded to resume the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

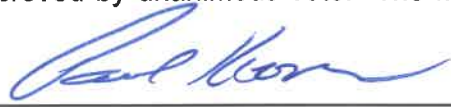
XXIII. Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 21, 2026.

XXIV. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mayor Weiss and seconded by Mayor Koomar; the motion was approved by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 11:41 a.m.

Attest: 
Secretary-Treasurer


President