



MEETING MINUTES

GCRTA Board of Trustees Meeting

April 21, 2026

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

Not Present: Mayor Gallo

Staff/Other: Jack Barnett, Jr., Shawn Becker, India Birdsong Terry, Nick Biggar, Casey Blaze, Janet Burney, Floun'say Caver, Brent Charnigo, William Cogar, Nick Davidson, Shashelia Degraffinried, Traci Ext, Scott Ferraro, George Fields, Michael Gettings, Bob Fleig, Joel Freilich, Anthony Garofoli, Rajan Gautam, Fiona Gibbons, Orlando Hudson, Sharon Jenkins, Eric Johnson, Chief Deirdre Jones, Lawrence Jupina, Carl Kirkland, Ida Marshall, Sheila Miller, Joshua Miranda, Bryan Moore, Charles Morgan, Holly Mothes, Mike Schipper, Heather Schnear, Kay Sutula, Wendy Talley, John Togher, Natoya Walker-Minor, Carolyn Young

Public: 12

I. Call to Order

Mayor Koomar called the meeting to order at 9:09 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

Mr. Sleasman moved, and Ms. McPherson seconded to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2026, Annual Meeting. The motion was approved with one abstention by Ms. Pacetti.

Mr. Sleasman moved, and Mr. Love seconded to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2026, Board Meeting. The motion was approved with one abstention by Ms. Pacetti.

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 Cleveland resident and transit user and emphasized the importance of public mass transit for underserved communities and urged elected officials to experience local transit firsthand.

2. David Henry (in-person)

Mr. Henry advocated for continued protection of both employees and customers and requested the retention of the trolley service.

3. Carren Woods (in-person)

Ms. Woods thanked staff for their service.

4. Alex Johnson (webform)

As a frequent transit user here in Cleveland, I'm disappointed to learn about the service cuts which you are administering. These cuts will alter the quality of life of many residents and ultimately provide a temporary fix to your chronic problem. I encourage you to seek alternate sources of funding, just as so many other transit agencies have. We are counting on you.

5. David Awkar (webform)

I am writing to speak against the proposed service reductions. The RTA is a fantastic service that connects the county to downtown and enables many people (including myself) to commute to work, school, and navigate around Cleveland. If we want to build a strong urban community, it is vital to have secure public transportation. The RTA's funding from the county was last set in the 70s and has not increased since. State and federal funding is not sustainable nor reliable. The best long-term solution is not service cuts, but to propose a levy on the county level which will secure funding for the RTA for decades to come.

The best way to make this pass is to be transparent to the voters. Create a thorough plan on how the money will be spent and publicize it. Be open to questions, comments, and criticisms. Show how funding the RTA will help more people than just people who use public transit. Many other transit agencies include community and infrastructure funds in levies like this to incentivize more voters to support it. This can be used as an opportunity for the residents of Cuyahoga to create a better downtown as a whole.

6. Airric Stewart (webform)

RTA has a responsibility to the socioeconomic well-being of the public through the implementation of public transit. What are the names of the decisionmakers who are responsible for reading the inquiries and suggestions for April 13, 15, and 16 on service reduction from the public? The suggestions on the 50 and number 15 route adjustments that were suggested by me should be given some detailed response by leadership as to why they will be accepted or not accepted. A detailed response from decisionmakers and leadership should also be given on the number 48A and adjusted 15A reimplementations suggestions by me. Why has the phone service been reduced during the Board of Trustees meetings? What is

the cost to maintain it currently and prior to 2024? Why do your customer service people not have correct information as to where bus stop locations are? This most recently has been a problem with Dana and Jacyntha (or Janitha). I'm not sure about the second person's name spelling. India Terry has received three pay raises between 2019 and 2025. Was the budget problem known before her last raise? The policy of misleading the public needs to end immediately at this taxpayer-funded agency. Thorough studies should be made available to the public that give the actual numbers that your percentage conclusions are based on. Respect the accurate assessment of the facts. Deceive, deny, divert, delay, should not be a policy.

VI. Board Governance Committee Report

No committee report

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

No committee report

XI. Committee of the Whole

No committee report.

XII. Civilian Oversight Committee (COC) Report

No committee report.

XIII. Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

Ms. Elder stated that the next full CAC meeting is scheduled for July 10 and an ADA Subcommittee Meeting will be held on April 24.

XIV. Compensation Committee

Mayor Weiss stated that the Compensation Committee has completed the review of the 2025 performance evaluation from Anthony Garofoli, Executive Director of Internal Audit. The Committee received and reviewed detailed performance evaluations, scoring and a summary was submitted by all Board trustees.

Consistent with the annual evaluation process, the Committee reviewed both internal and external salary market data for Mr. Garofoli's position in accordance with the management directives issued by the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority on November 14, 2025,

regarding 2026 budget constraints, no merit compensation pool has been allocated for non-bargaining employees in 2026, based on 2025 performance. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that Mr. Garofoli not receive a salary increase for 2026.

This recommendation is consistent with GCRTA's 2026 budget constraints. The Committee emphasized that this recommendation is based solely on current financial limitations and is not reflective of Mr. Garofoli's performance. The Committee recognizes and appreciates Mr. Garofoli's significant contributions in 2025 and will provide that feedback to him directly.

XV. Ad-Hoc Nominating Committee

No committee report.

Following the committee reports, Ms. Janet Burney, Deputy General Manager, Legal, advised that the City of Cleveland reappointed Ms. Anastasia Elder and Mr. Jeffrey Sleasman to three-year terms ending in March 2029 and were sworn-in this morning.

CEO Terry stated that the City of Cleveland has also appointed Emily Harper to a vacant term that ends in March 2028. The on-boarding process for Ms. Harper will begin in May.

XVI. Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

Ms. 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.

XVII. Introduction of Resolutions

A. 2026-22 – A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING CONGRATULATIONS TO THE EMPLOYEES OF THE GREATER CLEVELAND REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY WHO RETIRED DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2026

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

B. 2026-23 – APPROVING REVISED LIST OF POSITIONS DESIGNATED TO USE PURCHASING CARDS

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

C. 2026-24 – AUTHORIZING CONTRACT NO. 2025-164 WITH ADMJ HOLDINGS LLC, DBA ADVANCE DOOR CO., FOR OVERHEAD DOOR REPAIR SERVICES, AS SPECIFIED AND AS REQUIRED, FOR A THREE-YEAR BASE PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED \$330,000, WITH TWO, ONE-YEAR OPTIONS NOT TO EXCEED \$110,000 EACH, FOR A TOTAL CONTRACT AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$550,000 (GENERAL FUND, CENTRAL FACILITIES MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT BUDGET)

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

- D. 2026-25 – AUTHORIZING CONTRACT NO. 2026-004 WITH STANDARD CONTRACTING & ENGINEERING, INC. FOR HAYDEN GARAGE LIFT REPLACEMENT PHASE 3 – MOBILE WIRELESS COLUMN LIFTS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$799,689.00 (RTA DEVELOPMENT FUND, ENGINEERING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT BUDGET)

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

XVIII. Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Mr. Rajan Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer, presented the Secretary-Treasurer's report. He advised that March 2026 ridership was 2 million — a 4.2% decrease from the previous year and 2.2 million or 28% below pre-COVID levels.

Passenger fare revenue was also down by 13.1%, which was attributed to changes in Cleveland Municipal School District payment schedules. Mr. Gautam explained that staff and CMSD agreed to a 90% lump sum payment in the fall 2025. During the previous year, they were making monthly payments. The payments will match as the school year concludes.

Consumer sentiment month over month decreased 8.8% and year over year showed a 10.7% decline.

Total long-term debt at the end of December was \$13.9 million, with investments yielding 3.6% and total cash and investments at \$343.6 million. The General Fund meets the one-month operating reserve requirement. Economic conditions, including inflation and consumer sentiment, were reviewed, noting declines due to global events. Mr. Gautam explained timing differences in fare and ridership reporting, and confirmed sales tax assumptions for the 2026 budget included a 2% increase over 2025.

Sales and use tax receipts were 2.5% lower compared to the same month last year but remains 5.1% higher year to date. 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 \$334.6 million, of which \$28.7 million is in the General Fund and meets the one-month operating reserve.

Ms. Pacetti inquired regarding the relationship between ridership and passenger fares. Mr. Gautam stated that there is a relationship between the two, but timing differences is largely the reason for variances.

XIX. General Manager, CEO Report

Ms. India L. Birdsong Terry, General Manager and CEO, began the report by stating that on March 6, the Mastery School of Hawkin visited GCRTA Main Office Building, presenting mock redesign proposals for Blue Line stations as part of an engineering project to understand concepts regarding ADA compliance and preparing infrastructure for the next generation of transit professionals.

CEI Terry served on a panel to with the topic being personal experiences of first-time women CEOs and the ups and downs of balancing life with public transit careers.

The annual Elevating Women Together (EWT) conference was held recently and promoted advancement and development of women at GCRTA.

GCRTA received a \$125,000 grant from NOACA for the Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative, which will support studies of transit patterns and travel origins.

A two-day retreat was held at Corporate College East for top managers which focused on goal setting, engagement and emotional intelligence, which concluded with team-building activities.

CEO Terry and management met with legislative advocacy teams based in Columbus and Washington, D.C. to address transit funding strategies and policy priorities.

On April 17, CEO Terry attended Elevate: Lifting Stories of Hope Gala with the City Mission, which supports transportation for individuals transitioning from homelessness or unemployment. Ms. Pacetti was also in attendance.

CEO Terry attended the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) legislative conference, noting proposed federal budget reductions for transit and providing updates on railcar projects, which remain on schedule and budget.

Public hearings regarding proposed service reductions were held on April 13, 15 and 16, with significant community engagement and media coverage.

Moving to the subject of new railcars, Bryan Moore, Program Manager, advised that the \$450 million budget has not changed. However, due to a manufacturing issue that will be resolved at the factory, the first three vehicles will be delayed to early fall 2026 and the conditional acceptance of the twenty-sixth vehicle is now expected in early fall 2027. There will be no impact to the Red Line schedule.

Dr. Caver addressed the question of whether 54 new railcars is enough to operate the system. He explained that in 2018 GCRTA had about 75 cars. The original program was to replace 75 cars with 60 cars which would have allowed a spare ratio that ensured that the community would never have to buy a new car. This program was envisioned as a one-time generational purchase of vehicles. The original cost was \$240 million and for various factors has grown to approximately \$450 million. Staff does not plan to come back to the Board to ask for any additional money.

Dr. Caver provided a detailed report regarding the operational needs of GCRTA on a typical weekday and days with large events, such as Cleveland Browns games. He noted that on a typical weekday, there are no capacity constraints, and during a Cleveland Browns game day, a total of 38 railcars are needed, which would leave 16 railcars in reserve. When the Cleveland Browns move to Brook Park, a beneficial change for GCRTA is that it will be easier operationally because it is on a linear line already on a train.

Dr. Caver explained that theoretically doubling the frequency of service on a regular weekday would require 34 cars, leaving 20 in reserve. However, there is no demand for that frequency in the near term. Sending every train from Shaker Heights to the airport would require a total of 26 railcars, leaving 28 spares.

Concluding his presentation, Dr. Caver stated that he was confident that 54 railcars would adequately service the community, allow for future growth, develop new routes and effectively service major events.

Ms. Elder questioned how many railcars staff anticipates having as spares. Dr. Caver advised that on the busiest date there would be 16 extra railcars, which is adequate. Casey Blaze,

Deputy Project Manager for the railcar replacement, explained that normal procedures include four cars being inspected every thirty days and washed every nineteen days.

Ms. Elder inquired whether there was a communication plan regarding the number of railcars to the public. CEO Terry explained that the funding for the railcar replacement program was not railcar-number specific. While adjusting to the financial and political environment, this program will replace the railcar fleet, and 54 railcars is operationally sufficient while staying within budget. Staff will be sure to have talking points ready for the public and Board.

Ms. Walker-Minor stated that the new railcars have room for expansion, which means operationally they will send trains to more places with fewer stops. There will be growth irrespective of the number of railcars.

CEO Terry stated that staff would like to provide service for the next three to four generations for Cleveland. However, it is prudent to take a conservative approach and balance that with the ability to continue bus and paratransit service.

Mayor Koomar inquired on average how many railcars are in for maintenance. Mr. Blaze stated that four cars are inspected each day. Dr. Caver further explained that the rail system has a more stringent maintenance procedure. The railcars coming in for inspection are operational and maintenance schedules may be adjusted if there is an event that will increase capacity.

Ms. Pacetti referenced previous Board Meeting discussions in 2025 regarding a recommended excess spare ratio and questioned whether GCRTA would be able to meet state or federal guidance regarding the excess spare ratio in the future with 54 railcars. Previous discussion regarding purchasing 60 cars referenced aligning with a spare ratio.

Staff clarified that according to FTA guidelines there is no recommended spare ratio for rail; it is customized for each agency based upon their operations. However, there is a recommended spare ratio regarding buses. CEO Terry emphasized the importance of balancing operational needs with financial constraints, ensuring the agency can continue to serve the community effectively while preparing for future expansion and maintaining compliance with federal guidelines.

Concluding the report, CEO Terry highlighting the Cleveland Student Technical Enrichment Program (STEP), which aims to inspire future transit professionals through STEM activities. This is an initiative in grades six through nine led by the City of Cleveland Water Department as well as the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District.

XX. President's Report

No items.

XXI. Old Business

No items.

XXII. New Business

No items.

XXIII. Executive Session

Mayor Koomar moved and Ms. Pacetti seconded to go into Executive Session to enable the Board to conference with GCRTA attorneys for information-gathering, fact-finding, and to receive legal advice and to review the negotiations or bargaining sessions with public employees concerning their compensation or other terms and conditions of their employment. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board was in Executive Session from 10:54 a.m. to 12:17 p.m.

Mr. Sleasman moved and Mr. Love seconded to resume the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.


XXIV. Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 19, 2026.

XXV. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mayor Weiss and seconded by Ms. Whigham; the motion was approved by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

Attest:


Secretary-Treasurer


President