Minutes

RTA Board of Trustees Meeting

9:00 a.m. September 24, 2024

Board Members: Koomar (Chair), Welch (Vice Chair), Elder, McPherson, Pacetti, Sleasman, Weiss

Not present: Biasiotta, Love, Lucas

Staff: Birdsong Terry, Burney, Caver, Dangelo, Davidson, Fields, Flannery, Fleig, Ford-Marshall, Freilich, Ganther, Garofoli, Gautam, Gibbons, Hudson, Jones, Jupina, Kirkland, Schipper, Schmitt, Talley, Togher, Walker-Minor, Young

Public: Buford, Folmar, Gibbons, Katusin, Loh, Rosenberger, Zhang

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. There were seven (7) Board members present. Sophia Stern, Executive Assistant, Administration and External Affairs, filled in for Theresa Burrage for this meeting.

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

Minutes

The minutes from the August 27, 2024, Board Meeting had been previously distributed and reviewed, and asked whether there were any additions and/or corrections. There were no corrections. It was moved and seconded. The minutes were approved.

Public Comments – Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

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

1. Shawndra Folmar – Shawndra was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in August 2021 at the age of 33. Paratransit helped her adapt to her new condition. RTA's paratransit service convinced her not to move out of state. The service gets you everywhere you need to go.

2. Jason Zhang – Westlake, OH – Jason heard there were plans to phase out articulated buses. Route 51 has bad crowding, taking 5-10 minutes at a stop. The 55 and 22 use articulated buses on weekdays and those routes would see crowding without the artics at certain times. During the recent rail shutdown, the 66R bus was at crush capacity. He's heard of the plan to address crowding, but there is an operator shortage so additional buses are added when crowding gets so bad, it is unable to board. Sixty-foot buses should replace the buses being phased out. This would relieve crowding and improve travel times. By having a pool of 60ft buses you do not need more operators for an additional run. This adds flexibility for unpredictable increases in passengers that an additional scheduled run can't account for. Eliminating these buses will increase costs, reduce on time performance and hurt ridership.

3. April Buford – Cleveland, OH – Operators are not allowed to leave the vehicle to assist her when they pick her up at her home due to an operator being bitten by a dog at her home. She suggested they meet her in the driveway. On September 11, an operator from GC Logistics was rude to her. Dispatch changed her pick-up time without notifying her or the operator. She

was told she was a problem. Some operators take a smoke break or are on the phone when they are supposed to assist her. Ms. Terry said they would follow up with her.

4. Airric Stewart – The note keeping for these meetings is inefficient. The phone survey is still not working. There should be a survey set up for Paratransit riders.

   Mr. Davidson, Director of Paratransit said the phone survey is random. It has been tested and works as designed. It asks three questions and thanks the caller for their feedback. Ms. Terry added that there are several ways to send comments; via email, phone, in person and by letter. She encouraged customers to send in their comments and suggestions. Staff are managing the concerns. The phone survey is for additional input. She asked staff to allow customers to opt in or out of the survey and ensure the survey is equitable and follows industry standards.

5. Isaac Shimsky-Agosto – Cleveland, OH (webform) - Earlier this year, RTA added a bus shelter on Adelbert Road, near the intersection with Euclid Avenue. It has made that stop a lot more comfortable to use. It is a big shelter with a bench long enough for multiple people to use, without being on top of each other. You are protected from wind in all directions. Under certain conditions, I used to walk further to another stop, but there is no need to do so anymore. I recommend that RTA expand the use of shelters like this all over the region.

Committee Reports

Mr. Sleasman reported that the Ad Hoc Technology Committee met September 16, 2024 at 4 p.m. It was a robust meeting about fare collection, EZfare, smart cards, open payments and account-based ticketing. The meeting and minutes are posted online.

Ms. Welch announced that the Civilian Oversight Committee (COC) meets tonight at 5 p.m. Mayor Koomar added that the Audit Committee meets Nov. 6. He encouraged Board members to attend to get an overview of the Internal Audit Department activities.

Introduction of New Employees/Promotions

Ms. Ford Marshall introduced the new employees and promotions. There were 33 new hires and 4 promotions. Ms. Terry introduced Chad Schmitt who is a new hire in the Legal Division.

Introduction of Resolutions

A. 2024-70 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-73 with Stephen J. Hall DBA Firelands Vending to provide Authority-wide vending services for a period of three years with two, one-year options (Revenue Generating, Variable amount based upon sales), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Pacetti, seconded by Mayor Weiss and approved by unanimous vote.

B. 2024-71 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-094 with WSP USA Inc. for Ticket Vending Machine consultant services in an amount not to exceed $173,716.94 for the base contract and in amounts not to exceed $88,085.66 and $117,970.09 for option years 1 and 2, respectively, for a total contract not to exceed $379,772.69 (General Fund, Management Information Services Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Sleasman, seconded by Ms. Welch and approved by unanimous vote.

C. 2024-72 - Authorizing Contract No. 2024-138 with Splash Business Intelligence, Inc. to provide annual maintenance and support services for a period of one year in an

amount not to exceed $105,131.25 (General Fund, Management Information Services Department budget), the adoption of which was moved by Ms. Welch, seconded by Ms. Pacetti and approved by unanimous vote.

D. 2024-73 - Expressing sincere appreciation to the Cleveland Foundation and authorizing the General Manager, Chief Executive Officer to accept a grant for $105,000 for the purpose of sponsoring a fare-free Election Day on November 5, 2024, the adoption of which was moved by Mayor Weiss, seconded by Ms. Welch and approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Andrew Katusin, Program Officer, Grantmaking Initiative, Cleveland Foundation thanked RTA for this partnership. Harvard University says that 66% of people with a car vote and 36% of people without a car vote. This grant ensures that transit is free on Election Day across the county. Ms. Terry thanked the ATU leadership for their collaboration. Clarence King, Union President. Darnell Morris, Vice President. Omeal Mullings, Assistant Business Agent. She thanked the HR team for their hiring efforts, reducing the operator shortfall to 60.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Rajan D. Gautam, Deputy General Manager of Finance and Secretary-Treasurer gave the report. The annual inflation rate had reached a high of 9.1% in June 2022. It has come down to 2.5% in August 2024. The FOMC reduced interest rates to 5% after a 0.5% reduction on September 19. August ridership was 9.1% higher compared to August 2023. Pre-COVID, we are still 5 million rides lower or 23.5%. Through August all modes have seen an increase in ridership.

August 2024 fare revenue is 55.8% above July 2024. This is largely due to a receipt of $1.2 million (based on timing) from CMSD for student passes. This number is 53.2% above budget. As a result of the timing issues, compared to pre COVID passenger fare revenue of $25.6 million, we are $4 million lower or 15.6%. Throughout the Pandemic, sales tax has remained stable. September 2024 receipts were 2.2% lower than September 2023. YTD we are 0.9% higher compared to last year. YTD 2024 versus 2023, 11 of the 23 categories that make up the sales tax base were positive. Online sales remained strong at 11.7% higher. Regular and statewide sales were 0.1% higher and motor vehicles and watercraft were 3.1% lower.

Selected Data

Total Long-Term Debt – 12/31/2023	$ 30.3 million
Average Investment Yield – YTD	4.49%
Cash and Investments	
Unrestricted (General Fund)	$ 33.2 million
Restricted	$345.8 million
TOTAL CASH AND INVESTMENTS	$378.9 million

The Authority makes principal payments on the long-term debt once a year. A payment of $8 million plus interest will be made in December. The total debt service including interest would be roughly $8.7 million. As a measure of protection for investors they set aside monthly amounts and most of that is already covered.

Mayor Weiss asked with the reduction in interest rates by the Federal Reserve Bank, if the plan is to budget interest income lower in 2025. Mr. Gautam said historically they have been conservative.

They will review the budget for 2025 and adjust accordingly. Many of the investments have staggered terms so there may not be a tremendous amount of impact.

General Manager, CEO Report

India L. Birdsong Terry, General Manager, CEO gave the report. Dr. Walker Minor, Deputy General Manager, Administration and External Affairs along with Ohio Public Transit Association (OPTA) leadership met with Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) members, September 4 in Columbus to discuss the 2026-2027 Transportation Budget and increased state funding. Emphases were made for greater flexibility with ODOT funding.

RTA hosted the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA) August 29 at RTA to discuss Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Transit Oriented Development (TOD). RTA is one of the top agencies for BRT. Ms. Terry along with OPTA members met with Governor DeWine's policy staff on September 12, 2024, in Columbus to emphasize transit's role in workforce development, economic growth, increased funding, and stronger state-local partnerships to expand transit access, mobility and equity initiatives. Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) awarded RTA's Baby on Board program the Northeast Ohio Innovative Transportation Solutions award, September 17, at the Great Lakes Science Center. WTS also awarded Ms. Terry the Northeast Ohio Leadership Award at the same event. Both recognitions will be eligible to compete at the International level in 2025.

Thanks to a $105,000 grant from the Cleveland Foundation, RTA will be providing free rides (on all modes) on Election Day, November 5. This grant award will remove barriers so that all residents can participate in the democratic process. RTA also received a grant from the Cleveland Foundation in 2020. In memory of Michael York, former Deputy General Manager, Operations for RTA from 1998-2017, RTA held a dedication ceremony September 6 at the West 117th Street Madison Rapid Station. Mr. York's family, RTA leadership, union members and staff were in attendance. RTA proudly celebrates National Co-Responder & Crisis Responder Week, September 15-21, 2024.

Ms. Terry participated in the Cleveland Leadership Center's (CLC) virtual lunch break series, September 18. The series is available on YouTube. Key points included public transportation in promoting sustainability, connectivity and social equity across Greater Cleveland, advocacy as well as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

President's Report

The Board of Trustees held a retreat last week. They didn't get through the entire agenda, so Mayor Koomar plans to follow up with each board member to get feedback about their committees. He wished Sophia Stern a happy birthday.

Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, October 29, 2024** 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) by selecting the meeting date. The public is welcome to attend in person.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 a.m.

President

Attest:
Secretary-Treasurer