

Minutes

RTA External & Stakeholder Relations & Advocacy Committee Meeting

9:00 a.m., December 3, 2019

Committee: McCall (Chair), Lucas (Vice Chair), Bibb, Byrne, Welo

Other Board members: Moss, Joyce

Not present: Clough, Serrano

Also Present: Anderson, Astolfi, Becker, Beveridge, Birdsong, Bitto, Brooks-Williams, Burney, Caver, Cottrell, Cranford, Dangelo, Davidson, Davis, Feliciano, Fields, Freilich, Garofoli, Gautam, Gibbons, Halverson, Jones, Kirkland, Laule, Lewis, Lincoln, Loh, Martin, McGervey, Ponder, Schipper, Schnear, Scott, Shareef, Shariff, Singh, Stocking, Sutula, Tarka, Togher, Ulrich, Vukmanic, Wiehe, Wilson, Winn, Woodford, Young, Zeller

Ms. McCall called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The secretary called the roll and reported that five (5) committee members were present.

Fare Policy Study

Rick Halverson, of LTK Engineering, made the presentation. This is the 3rd presentation about this study. This is one of five Pillar Studies. It is research based and focused on understanding RTA's ridership. How riders are using and paying for the system, suggesting changes to the fares and fare collection to support RTA's goals and improve tools to understand the impact of fare changes. Last year there was an onboard survey of 3,700 people. The focus was to have a statistical understanding of the agency's ridership; how people were using it, how people pay for fares and to meet FTA anti-discrimination requirements. It was followed up with two rounds of public outreach and surveys. They also did a peer review focused on Ohio agencies and similar neighboring agencies. There are conflicts with RTA adopted fare policy goals, which are focused on riders; value of riders, cost of various services, promoting travel and maximizing ridership and agency revenue.

As of the last presentation, there were several key issues identified. The network requires half of all riders to transfer, but a lot of rider's especially low income and minority are paying excessively for transferring. Over half the trips are taken by riders who are best served by monthly or weekly passes. About half of these are paying more than they could because they don't purchase a pass or purchase a weekly or monthly pass. The Park N Ride surcharge of .25 cents adds complexity, but doesn't raise a lot of money. Most transit agencies charge a maximum allowable for Paratransit, which is twice the base cash fare and don't provide passes. RTA has a .25 cent surcharge for Paratransit over the regular cash fare and does provide monthly and daily passes for Paratransit riders. RTA has aging fare equipment that is increasingly expensive factors to maintain and doesn't do a great job in meeting future needs.

Considering these, they did another round of public outreach. Public meetings were held between September and October that addressed the system redesign and fare policy. They were asked to do an opinion survey for riders that was available online. Over 1,000 surveys

were collected. The onboard survey was the most accurate understanding of the ridership. The Actuals were not truly representative of the ridership. They weighted the results to match the onboard survey. About 22% of the surveys collected were from individuals who said they had an income less than \$25,000. They increased the voice of those surveys so they would represent the 47% of riders with income less than \$25,000. They did the same thing based upon race and ethnicity to get a good understanding of the riders.

They asked riders why they don't use certain fare products. For the riders who don't use a monthly pass, the largest group 36% said they don't use transit enough, 31% didn't use it because they couldn't afford it, 26% can't predict their transit use, 5% didn't know where to get the pass and 3% said it was hard to get it. For those who didn't use the 7-day pass, 31% can't predict transit use, 26% don't use transit enough, 25% use a monthly pass, 5% can't afford it, and 3% don't know where to get it. For the 5-trip card, 55% said another RTA product is better, 14% didn't know it included free transfers, 14% can't afford it, 6% say it's hard to get it and 5% don't know where to get it. Riders were asked a list of things they felt RTA should implement and of those options, which is the most important for RTA. They compared the results of all riders against riders with incomes less than \$25,000. Consistent across all riders was to reduce the cost of the All Day Pass.

Immediate low cost change recommendations include improving communications about fare products and how to buy them, making the 5-Trip Farecards available at more locations and revising the 5-Trip Farecards to be fewer trips at the same price per trip. Currently RTA offers a two-trip card, but only in bulk sales. If this was available to the public, it would be a convenient product for riders and more affordable for riders. Important changes with greater financial impact includes to reduce the cost of Adult & Senior/Disabled Day Passes to two boardings (\$5 & \$2.50. Approximate Revenue Loss: -\$1,300,000. Approximate Ridership Gain: 270,000. Other changes include raising the Park & Ride Surcharge, adjusting the Paratransit Fares, especially passes and to reflect higher cost of providing service. Ms. McCall ask if the request to adjust paratransit fares is a request to increase them and if the paratransit riders were surveyed. He said paratransit riders were not surveyed, but this could be done. She recommended paratransit riders be surveyed.

Long term recommendations would be to implement a new fare collection system. Advantages include reducing price transfers with smartcard stored value, regional multi-modal accounts, fare capping/best fare and cloud-based with open architecture. Open architecture enables the agency to purchase some equipment and interface between equipment. So if a company isn't doing its job or their product fails, RTA will have the interfaces. Mr. Bibb asked if RTA is spending more to collect fares and not making enough revenue to affect the bottom line. Rick said this applies to the Park-N-Ride since it is a small revenue increase compared to the additional cost of offering it as a separate product. Increasing the P-N-R cost or eliminating it would be beneficial. Mr. Bibb asked staff if the cost to upgrade to a modern fare collection system is worth the revenue received from fares. Also what is the balance with the rider experience to ensure RTA is generating the right bottom line.

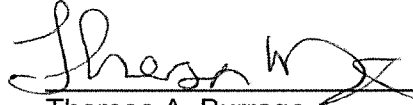
Chief McCall would like something RTA specific. She requested a deeper dive and what is best in class. Other than the open architecture, most of the recommendations they were aware of. Mr. Bibb agreed. He asked how the cost of fare collection balances with the agency revenue goals and the rider experience. Should the existing system be heavily subsidized and/or free to improve rider experience with the anticipation of revenue gains in other streams to balance that out? Ms. Birdsong agreed that the recommendations are at the base level. The Pillar Studies

are all base line. She also expects a deeper dive to see what works operationally and technologically for RTA before a formal recommendation is made. Paratransit customers need to be surveyed. Rev. Lucas added that paratransit rider incomes are challenged. They have special needs for food and medication. The paratransit fares they pay affects their pockets. Ms. Moss requested a copy of the study.

Chief McCall adjourned the meeting at 9:30 a.m.



Floun'say R. Caver, Ph.D.
Interim Secretary/Treasurer



Theresa A. Burrage
Executive Secretary