

## Minutes

### RTA External & Stakeholder Relations & Advocacy Committee Meeting

9:00 a.m., December 17, 2019

**Board:** McCall (Chair), Lucas (Vice Chair), Bibb, Byrne, Welo

**Other members:** Joyce, McCall, Pellet, Serrano

**Not present:** Moss

**Also Present:** Astolfi, Battle, Becker, Bell, Benford, Bennett, Beveridge, Birdsong, Bitto, Brooks-Williams, Burney, Campbell, Carter, Cernoi, Chandler, Ciesla, Dangelo, Davidson, Davis, Flannery, Freilich, Garofoli, Gautam, Gibbons, Gibson, Gray, Jaszczak, Jones, Kaweck, Kirkland, Leftkowitz, Lewis, Lincoln, Lipton, Loh, Manus, Martin, McBride, McCarthy, Metcalf, Montgomery, Mothes, Opett, Penning, Pickett, Ponder, Raskin, Ross, Rudman, Schipper, Shaffer, Sims, Singh, Smith, Stocking, So, Sohrabian, Solomon, Sopko, Sutula, Tarter, Taylor, Togher, Tucker, Urban, Vukmanic, Walker, Wiehe, Williams, Winn, Woodford, Zeller

Chief McCall called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The secretary called the roll and reported that four (4) committee members were present. Rev. Lucas arrived after the roll call. New Board member Luz Pellet introduced herself. Ms. Pellet took her oath of office to be officially sworn in. Ms. Pellet is a Clevelander. She works for Xerox Corporation on the software side, which she has been with for 20 years. Mayor Weiss of Shaker Heights will join the Board in March. He was in the audience.

#### System Redesign Study

Jarret Walker of Jarrett Walker and Associates and Joel Freilich, director of Service Management presented on the System Redesign Study. This is the final presentation to the Board. For the past year, Jarrett Walker has assisted RTA in leading the community through an engagement process to gauge values and to map those values on transit maps. In the 1<sup>st</sup> survey, the study questions include: Is the design of the bus network right? Does it reflect today's values and priorities? If not, how should it be revised? The process was built around learning about the public's priorities for future service planning. There was three cycles of outreach in which a question was asked and the answers were used to proceed.

The most critical tradeoff is whether the transit system wants a **high ridership goal**, which arises from a network of high frequency. The highest ridership plan involves not going to low ridership areas. This is measured by low density and low walkability. The opposite of the ridership goal is a **coverage goal**. The priority would be to give a little coverage to everyone. Routes would not be able to run frequently. This is a hard tradeoff. They asked the public how they feel about the tradeoff. They were split down the middle, 42% preferring either and 15% to stay how it is. They drew up two network alternatives for each goal. The current network has little high frequency service. They include Red Line, Blue and Green Line, Harvard Line, MetroHealth Line and HealthLine. There are very few spontaneous routes. The **high ridership alternative** showed that it was easy to get to lots of different places, but it recedes with the current budget.

They also did an **extreme coverage alternative**. It would keep the current service area and extend service to requested areas like Olmsted Falls and Chagrin Falls. By spreading it out, it is spread thin. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> survey, half of the public preferred the high frequency network, 1/3 preferred the coverage network and 20% are in the middle.

They developed concepts for **no new resources** and another **with resources**. The rules would be focused on ridership and no reduction of coverage area. In both concepts, they won't eliminate all service anywhere, but may reduce the frequency to a low demand area. The expanded funding concept starts with 25% more vehicle hours or +\$30 million. The current funding concept shows significant expansion in the frequency network, access to 11% more jobs in 60 minute, and there are more one seat riders. The Detroit and Lorain lines, south Broadway and Kinsman have increased to 15 minutes. The 93<sup>rd</sup>/105<sup>th</sup> line as a cross town going to Lakeshore to E. 222 is a frequent line. They substantially revised the Trolley network because they run on top of bus routes for long distances. All the Park-N-Rides continue to be served with downtown service, but not always via the freeway. The expanding funding concept shows access to 38% more jobs accessible within 60 minutes.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> survey asked the public if the **current funding concept** is a good way to spend the budget and if the **expanded funding concept** is a good way to expand service and has the balance of weekday and weekend service. By a 2-1 margin respondents said the current funding concept looked like a good way to spend the budget. Half of the negative responses was from suburban, west side users complaining about losing Park-N-Ride express service. All current funding service changes are controversial. More hearings would be conducted before implementation. By a 5-1 margin respondents said the expanding funding concept looked like a good way to expand service. One problem that can't be solved with the existing budget is the inadequacies of weekend service. Fifty-nine percent (59%) said the balance was right. The balance between weekday and weekend service is historical when there was less activity on the weekends.

In summary, no new resources are now available for service expansion. Because of that, they concluded that to reflect the values and priorities expressed by the public, RTA should shift to the current funding concept. The CFC would give access to 11% more jobs in 60 minutes, 167,000 more people located close to frequent service and a slight expansion of coverage for 8,400 more people. The expanded frequent network would include Detroit, Lorain, Kinsman, E. 105<sup>th</sup>/Lakeshore, more one-seat rides, improved downtown/trolley circulation and Park-N-Rides to serve downtown, but not always with the freeway.

Chief McCall said the Board will continue the discussion. She likes the expanded coverage, with turn up weekend service and reworking the trolleys. It would increase ridership in the long run. She doesn't want to start from what can be afforded, but from what service they want to provide and work backward to create a balance. There will be hearings. This will eventually be brought to the Committee of the Whole. They hope to look at it during their retreat. Mayor Clough and Ms. Birdsong concurred. RTA will look into what is best for the community and business. Ms. Birdsong suggested there be a plan, vision and goal. The plan needs to be sustainable.

Mr. Bibb asked if there was another transit agency with similar issues. If so, what decision did they make? And are there best practices JW recommended. Mr. Walker said that most TAs are dealing with the basic outlines; historically low gas prices and rise of competition with ride share services are pushing ridership downward. Exempted cities are Houston and Richmond,

which is dramatically increasing riders with BRT and redesigning their network without added resources. Houston's ridership is flat given that ridership has fallen in other Texas transit agencies. They took the Houston Board through a process before they designed the network. Houston told them what balance of ridership and coverage they wanted. Their existing system was 55% justified by ridership and 45% not. He took them through the process and meetings. They decided to shift to ridership by 80/20 and a lot of coverage disappeared. There was a lot of spot loss of coverage in hard to get to places. The result was lots of public hearings and only two board members didn't want to proceed because they were not there early on. He suggested the public be asked what they prefer and how to shift priorities.

Chief McCall said they need to understand what role Jarrett Walker will play in taking the next step. Ms. Birdsong said RTA will look at next steps and who to involve and what needs to be tweaked. Mayor Welo asked what it would take to access 25% more jobs versus the 11%. Mr. Walker said more money is needed to increase access to jobs and with the ridership/coverage tradeoff. Mayor Welo asked if there has been any alliances in transit where large employees partnered with the agency to ensure service to their businesses. Jarrett explained that in California they have a law that says if you are an employer of a certain size, you have to have a program to get people to work. Also the Board could put out a clear message, which is politically supported, that it can't be responsible for the problem anymore. Jobs have moved out of the city to save money, but transit system can't be solely responsible for that.

#### Public Committee (1 minute)

1. Diane Howard – Cleveland, OH – Member of NOBLE and CPT. They are prepared to participate in RTA's future outreach activity to gather comment on RTA's Strategic Plan, System Redesign and Fare Equity studies. Because these studies and related outreach activity will impact riders, neighborhoods and communities, NOBLE strongly advocates that RTA work with community anchor institutions to organize, publicize and engage local residents in its local outreach sessions regarding these critical plans and studies. She submitted rosters of Community Development Corporations and Senior Centers throughout Cuyahoga County. They must be provided the opportunity to publicize and participate in community outreach activity that RTA uses to gather public input on the Pillar Studies.
2. Dana Beveridge – Cleveland, OH - Member of CPT. She thanked the Board, staff and Jarrett Walker for this study. Only 15% of riders support the current network. RTA has an opportunity to improve bus service for its riders. She asked the Board to make a motion to implement the redesign and move forward with the next steps for community engagement. Chief McCall said the Board will take more comments before they make a motion to implement anything. Ms. Birdsong agreed with Chief McCall and emphasized the need for intentional planning.
3. LaQuita Worley-Bell – Cleveland, OH – She is the Outreach chair for CPT. She requested the #8 weekend service be restored and for it to go past University Circle Rapid Station on the weekends. She has to take the #15 to get to the #48 on the weekends. They have to transfer to the #11 to get back to Buckeye. She invited

Ms. Birdsong to join her on a ride along on the #8. Dr. Caver said he would also come along.

4. Justine Smith – Cleveland, OH – She attended two community meetings. She urged RTA not to take too long to implement changes. She suggested the additional meetings be scheduled in the spring and implemented in 2020. Her friend has a 45 minute – 1.30 hour round trip commute to CSU due to lack of frequent service.
5. Maryann Ross – Strongsville, OH – She became a member of CPT after attending the Cleveland Rising Summit. Growing up she rode the buses when service was more frequent from Old Brooklyn to downtown. It was more convenient back then. She'd like changes made to the current system. The system redesign needs to be implemented. Improved weekend service would help those in the medical field who work on weekends and evenings. Improving the system would help the aging community. It would decrease pollution and decrease poverty by helping people get to their jobs. This would make the city more attractive to live.
6. Marcus Manus – Cleveland, OH – Chair for CPT. He is in the 20% that is in the middle between the ridership and coverage goal. He works in Rocky River. The ridership concept would make it hard for him to get to work. Strongsville, Solon, Avon and Westlake has major job centers.
7. Lynn Solomon – Cleveland, OH – Member of CPT. She is in favor of the redesign. She uses the #79. The #45 would take the place of the #79 in the redesign. This change would enable the #45 to run every half hour. The #24 would replace the #81 and would run every half hour. This would make it easier for riders to get to Steelyard Commons. The #14 replacing the #5 service would run every half hour.
8. Brian Taylor – Cleveland, OH – He does not drive. He rides the #22 and #83. He'd like the new design implemented this spring to give people the chance to relocate if their service is cut. Foresight is holding up the service.
9. Bernie Oakar – Olmsted Township, OH - He is a retired operator and a member of CPT. He likes the frequency concept. RTA can't stay status quo and continue to loss ridership. Laketrans voted to tax themselves to keep transit.
10. William Tarter – Broadview Heights, OH – He asked the Board to give feedback from people leaving in the Breskville/Broadview Hts area. Under the current funding proposal, the #77F would shift to a 60 minute frequency. Many people use that bus to get to work. Currently it runs every 30 minutes. An idea from the Cleveland Rising Summit and in Kansas City was to offer free fares to increase ridership. He asked if any study examines the expansion of funding as a way to increase ridership that includes fare elimination. Chief McCall mentioned the Fare Study and whether increased taxes would be considered to expand. One model showed expanded frequency needs more money. She doesn't believe RTA will get to a free service. Transit is a user service. She encouraged him to share any study that looks at free service.

11. Chris Stocking – Cleveland, OH – He sang a holiday jingle in support of the system redesign study. The lyrics are included in the file. Chief McCall thanked him for his creativity and highlighting things that are important to the Board.
  
12. Deborah Gray – Cleveland, OH – Service on the #8 and #11 are needed. This bus has changed from the #50 to #58 to #8. It's confusing to the community. More meetings with the residents is needed. The residents lobbied to restore the #50 when it was up for cuts. She thanked Eric Johnson for assisting with a senior fare price issue at CMHA.

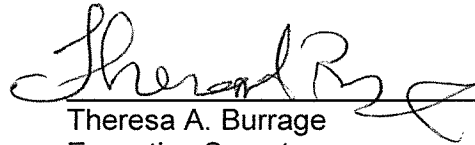
Chief McCall challenged the public to give input on areas staff should include in the next cycle of public meetings.

Chief McCall adjourned the meeting at 10:20 a.m.



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



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Theresa A. Burrage  
Executive Secretary