

PARTA
PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

PARTA ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
2000 SUMMIT ROAD
KENT, OHIO 44240

October 26, 2017

Board Members Present:

Jerry Beach
Dominic Bellino, Vice President
Rick Bissler, President
Marge Bjerregaard

Richard Brockett
Jeff Childers
Brian Gray
David Gynn

Tim Lissan
R. T. Mansfield, TPO
Frank Vitale

Staff Present:

Claudia Amrhein
Marcia Fletcher
Frank Hairston

Kelly Jurisch
Katherine Manning
William Nome, Legal Counsel

Brian Trautman
Rebecca Schrader

Members Not Present:

Virginia Harris (excused)
Pete Kenworthy (excused)

Jeremy Moldvay (excused) Karen Wise (excused)

CALL TO ORDER

President Rick Bissler welcomed everyone to the October 26, 2017, PARTA Board of Trustees meeting and called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. An oral roll call followed, and a quorum was present.

Mr. Bissler said the meeting minutes from the September 28, 2017, Board meeting were distributed, and he entertained a motion to accept the minutes. Ms. Marge Bjerregaard made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. David Gynn seconded the motion. **Motion to approve the minutes, as presented, passed unanimously.**

GUEST COMMUNICATIONS

None.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Bissler said the General Manager's report was distributed, and he asked Ms. Amrhein if she would like to highlight anything in her report.

Ms. Amrhein said there are two (2) resolutions on the agenda that will be discussed in more detail later in the meeting. The good news is that some additional funding was received through the state of Ohio that will enable PARTA to execute additional alternates for the CNG Fueling Station

project. Following the presentation of the resolutions, another overview will be shared following up on last month's presentation. This overview will go into more detail about the Demand Response service and thoughts about how to restructure that service to be more resilient moving into the future. She said she would be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. Vitale said Ms. Amrhein's report states that PARTA will be getting five (5) buses for \$413,000. He asked if those were big buses.

Ms. Amrhein said those five (5) buses are LTVs, the light transit vehicles.

Mr. Bissler noted that those buses are 100% funded. Usually, the funding is an 80/20 split, which means PARTA must use 20% of its own funds.

Mr. Vitale asked why amending the Clean Energy contract may result in a deduct change order.

Ms. Amrhein said it has to do with Dominion's contract to connect the high-pressure line to the fueling station and running the line that PARTA spent over a year negotiating. The question is who's going to build out the portion of the line not covered in the contract with Dominion, which included 300 feet of approximately 500-600 feet total distance. The Clean Energy contract includes an allowance to complete the line since they'll already be on site. Dominion now wants to own the entire line and may want to perform the extra work, requiring an amendment to their contract, which would mean Clean Energy would do less or very little of this work. That cost savings would then be deducted from Clean Energy's project budget. The reason this resolution is being brought forward is to add the ability to spend more with Clean Energy, but it's out of an abundance of caution. It's possible it won't be necessary to go beyond the original budget, but that won't be known for a few months.

Mr. Vitale asked if that was a big number.

Mr. Trautman said it should come in on the low side at about a \$60,000 credit.

Mr. Vitale asked about the five (5) year contract with the Redmon Group.

Ms. Amrhein said that contract is for a Passenger Information Display System, which will display real time bus location arrival and departure information on display panels at the Kent Central Gateway.

Mr. Bissler pointed out the information in Ms. Amrhein's report about the Veterans Day Ceremony at the Kent Central Gateway. The buffet lunch will start at 11 a.m., but the program itself starts at 2 p.m. at the Memorial. He encouraged the Board to attend. Also, he noted the change in time for the November Board meeting, which may change again due to a conflict with the speaker. He said this speaker comes highly recommended.

Ms. Jurisch said the November Board meeting will be at the regular time – 7 p.m.

Mr. Bissler then moved on to committee reports.

FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

This committee did not meet.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Bellino said the Finance Committee met and there wasn't a lot of activity in September even though there are several pages of detailed minutes. Quite a bit of time was spent on the first resolution. He noted the report in front of them that starts to show year end projections. Some of the numbers are off compared to budget, but there has been a lot of discussion along the way so there's nothing that's a surprise. The almost \$1 million surplus will be carried forward to the Capital budget for upcoming projects. There was a discussion about missing the health insurance budget number again, which is in the minutes, and the objective to do a better job budgeting for that line item expense next year. There was also a lot of discussion on the CNG resolution. Please note that the next Finance Committee meeting will be November 9 at 3 p.m. This is the budget meeting, which usually lasts about three (3) hours. Everybody is encouraged to attend, and dinner will be served. There's a lot of information that comes out of that meeting.

Mr. Bissler encouraged everyone, especially those who have never been to one of the budget meetings of the Finance Committee, to attend.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

This committee did not meet.

OPERATIONS/PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

This committee did not meet.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Bissler said the Personnel Committee met on October 4, and he asked Mr. Gynn to give his report.

Mr. Gynn said the detailed minutes of that meeting were distributed. The committee met with Ms. Amrhein, who sends the committee members a copy of her yearly review before the committee meets. In that review, she points out PARTA's accomplishments, what she was most proud of, and her biggest problems. She then answered any questions the committee had. The committee then went into Executive Session and discussed how pleased they were with all the work Ms. Amrhein is doing during this transition year, how proud they are that she has a staff of people who all are working for the benefit of PARTA, and how pleased they were with her performance. He pointed out that Ms. Amrhein's compensation is by contract from last year.

Mr. Bissler asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he thanked Mr. Gynn and asked if there was any Old Business.

PUBLIC RECORDS COMMISSION REPORT

This committee did not meet.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Bissler then presented Resolution #2017-10-01, which has already been discussed.

#2017-10-01: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AMENDING THE CONTRACT AWARDED VIA RESOLUTION #2017-07-01 TO CLEAN ENERGY, A CALIFORNIA CORPORATION, TO FINALIZE DESIGN PLANS AND BUILD THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS (CNG) FUELING STATION.

Mr. Bissler entertained a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. R. T. Mansfield made a motion, which was seconded by Ms. Marge Bjerregaard.

Mr. Bissler asked if there were any questions.

Hearing none, a roll call vote was taken as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Jerry Beach - Yes | Brian Gray - Yes | Frank Vitale - Yes |
| Dominic Bellino – Yes | David Gynn - Yes | Marge Bjerregaard - Yes |
| R. T. Mansfield - Yes | Richard Brockett – Yes | Rick Bissler - Yes |
| Timothy Lissan - Yes | Jeff Childers – Yes | |

Mr. Bissler then moved on to the next resolution.

#2017-10-02: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE GENERAL MANAGER TO CONTRACT WITH REDMON GROUP INC. FOR SYSTEMS INTEGRATION SERVICES, HARDWARE, SOFTWARE, INSTALLATION, ONGOING MAINTENANCE, AND 24/7 TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR THE PROVISION OF AN INTEGRATED PASSENGER INFORMATION DISPLAY SYSTEM (PIDS) FOR PARTA'S TRANSIT SERVICE.

Mr. Bissler entertained a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. David Gynn made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Brian Gray.

Mr. Bissler asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Vitale asked if this system could be expanded to other facilities.

Ms. Amrhein said that was originally the intent; however, to add additional displays at this point, a different procurement would have to be done. Once the grant is closed out, it can be marketed to other locations.

Ms. Schrader said the system can be built on other locations.

Mr. Bissler said it would be prudent to see how it operates first.

Mr. Mansfield asked where the displays will be located, and if the information displayed will also be available on line.

Ms. Amrhein said five (5) displays will be purchased. One (1) will be in the passenger waiting room area at the Kent Central Gateway; plans are being finalized for at least one (1) on either side of the bus bays; and the remaining three (3) will be placed in the best locations possible.

Almost at the same time, with a different pot of money, some passenger amenities will be added. Eight (8) benches will be placed in the bus bay area, along with some vending machines. The information that will be displayed is already available on line. It's the same information that can be pulled up a phone, computer, or tablet. It'll just be displayed on a 60" monitor. It's also capable of being programmed to include other messaging, such as information about services or the weather.

Mr. Bellino said advertising can also be sold on those display panels.

Ms. Amrhein said advertising can be sold on the display panels, but the Transit Advertising Policy would have to be consulted to make sure it is appropriate advertising. Advertising is currently sold on buses.

Mr. Bissler asked if there were any other questions.

Hearing none, a roll call vote was taken as follows:

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Jeff Childers - Yes | Richard Brockett – Yes | Marge Bjerregaard - Yes |
| Frank Vitale - Yes | Brian Gray – Yes | R. T. Mansfield - Yes |
| Timothy Lassar - Yes | Dominic Bellino – Yes | Rick Bissler - Yes |
| Jerry Beach - Yes | David Gynn - Yes | |

Mr. Bissler said there is no reason for an Executive Session, so he called on Ms. Katherine Manning and Mr. Brian Trautman for the service overview.

Ms. Manning said at last month's Board meeting, there was a lot of discussion about different options and services at PARTA. This month, the presentation will hone in specifically on demand response services and some options moving forward.

Current Scenario. In 2016, Demand Response service cost PARTA over \$3.6 million to maintain and provide. There has been a decline in contracts and cuts have been made to the sales tax base. New options are being reviewed to operate and fund Demand Response service with the goal to create a resilient and sustainable Demand Response service to continue providing the services to people who need it most moving forward from now and into the future for long term planning.

Demand Response. Demand Response service is anything that is not a fixed route service. Smaller buses are used, and trips are scheduled one (1) to three (3) days in advance. This is not the same as ADA complementary paratransit service, which is within ¾ mile of a fixed route. Demand Response service is countywide, but is not a taxi service. PARTA provides a public service that is funded through sales tax in Portage County.

History of PARTA's DR Service. Demand Response service started in the mid-1990s and expanded countywide when the first ¼% sales tax was passed in 2002. This was also piggybacked on the contract service with the DD Board. Demand Response service is also called Dial-A-Ride, DART, and Shared-Ride. There are currently 35 smaller buses utilized for this service. Contract clients, the general public, and all ADA clients are integrated into these buses.

DR Service Components. The components of this service include set hours of service, covering certain service areas on certain days of the week, trip booking, and a fare structure.

Days & Hours of Service/Service Area. Currently, countywide service runs Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Different days service different areas. Freedom, Hiram, Nelson, and Windham are serviced on Mondays and Wednesdays; Charlestown, Palmyra, Paris, Atwater, Deerfield, and Edinburg on Tuesdays and Thursdays; and the rest of the county Monday through Friday, along with contract clients.

Fare Structure. Demand Response pricing has been the same since the mid-1990s when it was first instituted. The cost to PARTA for each trip is \$37.73, which continues to go up every year. Full fare for a single ride is \$4. Most of the riders are elderly or disabled or fall into the ADA category within ¾ mile of a fixed route. Those riders pay a reduced fare of \$2. Ticket books of 10 are also available at a 25% discount for \$30. Elderly or disabled and ADA ticket books of 10 are available for \$15, which represents a discount on top of another discount.

Ms. Manning asked if there were any questions at this point.

Mr. Bellino asked if the fare pricing was per trip.

Ms. Manning said a trip is going from point A to B. It does not include returning to point A.

Trip Booking. Ms. Manning said all trip booking is first come, first served and booked one (1) to three (3) days in advance. Whoever calls in first gets that priority.

Proposed Ideas for Restructuring. Senior staff have spent the last nine (9) months talking to drivers and dispatchers trying to figure out how the Demand Response system can be more resilient, sustainable, effective, and long term continue serving those people who need it most.

DR Varies Greatly Across Ohio. Reaching out to other Ohio transit agencies, it was discovered that all of them are required to provide ADA transportation, which is an FTA rule; Demand Response transportation varies; few provide countywide transportation for everybody; fare structure is varied; some have a flat fee; some charge based on how far the rider is going; some have out-of-county rates; and different contracts are available with different providers in different ways. PARTA is unique in that it only provides in-county service.

Hours of Service. As previously mentioned, current hours of service for Demand Response are Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and peak service is around noon. One of the things being looked at is remodeling hours of service by flattening and extending that service to Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 1 a.m. and adding Saturday service from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. By adding evenings, early mornings, and some Saturday service, operating hours would be kept the same, but there would be less buses offered in the middle of the day.

Mr. Trautman said the skeletal structure of the Demand Response system was based off a contract with MRDD. MRDD transportation operated long before the sales tax was passed. The MRDD transportation enabled PARTA's buses to be in different parts of the county, which then enabled PARTA to provide general public transportation at the same time, hence the Shared-Ride service. When the sales tax was passed, service was expanded to five (5) days a week, but there wasn't enough demand. That's why it went to two (2) days here and there. The key here is DD is no longer an option. In 2003, subscription rides were at 70% contract and 30% general public. Now it's the opposite: 30% contract and 70% general public. The problem with that is if the contracts aren't there to staple down the system, the money isn't there to support it. Regardless of the sales tax, match money and other monies are still needed to be able to complement the federal dollars coming in. Because that skeletal structure is gone, other viable options have to be pursued in order to provide transportation for the people who need it most. One option is Portage County Department of Jobs & Family Services clientele, who are the people who need it most. The idea is to restructure the system in a way to service clientele, obtain

contracts, and provide the general public with a more accessible system. There are currently two (2) contracts with the PCDJFS, which are being negotiated to provide more service. This year, almost every contract has been re-established and re-negotiated. The only outstanding one right now is with Coleman Adult Day Services. There is no resistance, just logistics. Another option for PARTA is to become a Medicaid provider.

· Prioritized/Tiered Scheduling. Ms. Manning said another option is prioritized/tiered scheduling. Contracts and dialysis would have priority and can call in nine (9) days out and book their trips; elderly and disabled can call in seven (7) days out; and all remaining trips can be booked three (3) days out. The goal is to ensure that transportation is provided to those people who need it most. Travel training will be needed to start migrating able individuals to the fixed route service.

· Fare Structure. This is one of the hardest issues to tackle. Keep in mind that fares have not changed since the 1990s and the cost per trip is \$37.73. New pricing would include potentially increasing full fare to \$8 and adding a \$5 additional charge for full fare over 15 miles; increasing reduced fare to \$3; keeping the ADA fare the same; eliminating any discount on the ticket books; and charging a fee for no shows or late cancels. Based on current ridership, a full fare increase would potentially increase revenue \$50,000 a year; the increase in E & D fare would potentially increase revenue \$33,000 a year; and PARTA could potentially collect an additional \$100,000 a year in E & D state funding. The E & D state funding is based on how much is charged for full fare. The higher the fare, the more money the state provides.

Mr. Trautman pointed out that the information provided is a starting point. Part of the process would include public hearings. Some of the key points that will come back for discussion will come from riders. The restructuring is necessary for the longevity of the organization, at least on the paratransit side. The Demand Response side must be looked at and a new common ground found. As far as charging a fee for no shows or late cancels, the IVR system calls riders the night before their scheduled ride and provides an avenue to cancel. With any change, it is important that PARTA retains its great rapport with the community, which will be taken into consideration with any change.

· Rebuilding Contract Structure. Ms. Manning said all current contracts are being reviewed for cost effectiveness. Potential new contracts are being evaluated to supplement the costs of Demand Response. She pointed out the list of some of the contracts that are being reviewed.

· Next Steps. The next steps will include public input, public meetings, and surveys. Afterwards, final recommendations will be prepared and brought back to the Board for any final changes.

Mr. Bissler asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Mansfield asked how much of a problem no shows and late cancels were.

Mr. Trautman said that represents substantial costs and numbers. An ADA denial or suspension would never be done. In that case, Mr. Carrell Howard, PARTA's Travel Trainer, would explain the process to them. Mr. Howard is phenomenal in the way he talks to folks and gets them to see how important it is that they work within the system. The restructuring will provide an opportunity, not a guarantee, to start curing some of that. There will be some side effects that are important to bring up moving forward. Because not as many buses will be operating, emphasis will be placed on priority scheduling. The Board needs to understand that there will be some backlash. The Demand Response system provides between 450 and 600 trips a day. Flattening the service will allow the same number of trips, but with not as many buses. It is a change and will probably cause some displacement. Hopefully, the displacement will be for hair appointments and things like that.

Mr. Mansfield said he likes the idea of expanding the hours.

Mr. Trautman said he does too, and it also covers PARTA under the ADA rules.

Mr. Gray asked about service on Sundays for retail workers.

Mr. Trautman said right now the contract with PCDJFS is Monday through Saturday. They did ask us to do some Sunday service.

Ms. Manning said if Sunday service is provided, maintenance, dispatch, and other staff would have to be called in to work.

Mr. Bissler said it's not just a driver that would be working on Sunday.

Mr. Brockett asked if these changes would reduce the \$3.6 million that is being spent.

Mr. Trautman said the answer to that will lie in time. He anticipates that there will be a cost savings, but he doesn't know how much. Using an eight (8) mile per gallon diesel engine compared to a 13 to 14 mile per gallon 3.7 Ford transit vehicle that's getting almost 1-1/2 times the fuel mileage will start to play out.

Ms. Manning said contracts will help supplement that cost, such as the NET and SET contracts with PCDJFS. Funding for transportation has moved in the state to Medicaid or Jobs and Family Services and others so lower income people can access funding for transit. PARTA then must be able to accept these different pots of money.

Mr. Vitale said he has some handouts that show revenue from Demand Response is \$387,000 and the expenses are \$4 million. He asked if that reflected total revenues from the whole system.

Ms. Amrhein said no, that's just a sample of two (2) contracts over the last 10 years.

Mr. Vitale asked how many Medicaid people there are in Portage County and what the drawback would be to service Medicaid patients at \$19 a ride.

Ms. Manning said there are approximately 30,000 people on Medicaid in Portage County. The biggest drawback is that Medicaid recipients who are paying \$19 cannot ride with anybody who is paying less than that.

Mr. Trautman said other drawback is that there would be additional requirements: training, different auditing, different mandates from Medicaid, and different hours of operation. Changes would have to be made to the current union contract, which has specific guidelines. There are a lot of things that come into the logistics side. Medicaid is only willing to pay what PARTA is charging for the same trip, since PARTA operates a Shared-Ride service. It would fit nicely, but will not create the opportunity for more general public passengers because those passengers are only going to be paying the flat rate fee. The Board must decide whether PARTA is about money or people, or both. There may be a happy medium. Segregation has never been something that PARTA does. Everybody rides together and gets the same opportunity.

Ms. Amrhein said PARTA has always integrated its service.

Ms. Manning said other counties are providing Medicaid billing and doing it effectively. Conversations have taken place with the state to try to get the rule changed, but that hasn't gone very far.

Ms. Amrhein said the other counties that are providing Medicaid billing do not provide countywide Demand Response like PARTA does. That's the key. Transits that do not provide countywide Demand Response are not trying to cover the whole county. PARTA's model is to cover the whole county. The difference is those transits are only providing ADA service and then running separate buses for Medicaid.

Mr. Trautman said it's a change in the approach, but, at the same time, there is a balance at PARTA that's necessary. There's a reason PARTA is a vital part of the community and well-respected, and it isn't because PARTA went after the dollar. It's because PARTA was operating through an MRDD contract and people wanted more. They voted and passed a levy so PARTA could do more. PARTA can't lose sight of what originally brought it to the place it is now. It's important to keep PARTA's fundamentals strong. Many of the providers of Medicaid service are running buses that have snow tires on the front of them, the brakes are junk, etc. The state is intending to step in soon and audit the buses. Eventually, unfortunately, what's going to happen is somebody's going to have a failure. Nobody can beat PARTA. However, there is a balance in what PARTA does versus what somebody else is doing just to get Medicaid dollars and make a profit. PARTA does not make a profit. That's the key. He asked Mr. Vitale if he thinks PARTA should be servicing Medicaid people.

Mr. Vitale said no, he's not saying that. Figure out a way to do that in addition to the other business. PARTA is the best equipped and is all about serving the poor.

Mr. Bissler said the Board needs to let the staff do their job. As Mr. Trautman said, the Medicaid billing is being considered. All of what is being presented is still in the studying phase.

Mr. Bissler asked if anyone else had any questions.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing none, Mr. Bissler called on Mr. Frank Hairston.

Mr. Hairston said tomorrow is the Ghoulish Luncheon at PARTA and all are welcome. November 10 is the Veterans Ceremony and Congressman Ryan, Senator Eklund, Representative LaTourette, and Commissioner Christian-Bennett will be attending. Board members are invited to attend.

Mr. Bissler thanked Mr. Hairston and asked if there was anything else for the good of the order. Hearing nothing further, he entertained a motion to adjourn.

Mr. R. T. Mansfield made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Marge Bjerregaard seconded the motion. **Motion to adjourn passed unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Marcia Fletcher
Executive Assistant