

Agenda

1. Call to Order
Roll Call Oral
2. Meeting Minutes
Minutes from February 25, 2021, Meeting (Motion Required) Attachment 2a
3. Guest Communications (Not required due to COVID-19) Oral
4. General Manager's Report Attachment 4
5. Committee Reports
 - a. Administration Did Not Meet
 - b. Finance Scheduled to Meet 3/23
 - c. Operations Did Not Meet
 - d. Personnel Did Not Meet
6. Old Business
7. New Business
 - Trolley Presentation – Brian Trautman
8. Resolution - Roll Call Approval Required

#2021-03-01: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (*PARTA*) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE GENERAL MANAGER, OR HER DESIGNEE, TO PURCHASE UP TO SIX (6) LIGHT TRANSIT VEHICLES (LTVs) OF WIDE BODY CONSTRUCTION, OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT, AND SPARE PARTS FROM TRANSPORTATION EQUIPMENT SALES CORPORATION (TESCO).
9. Executive Session (if needed) – Roll Call Approval Required
10. Adjournment

Next Regular Meeting:

April 22, 2021 @ 7 p.m.
Via Zoom

PARTA
PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

Held Remotely Via Zoom

February 25, 2021

Board Members Participating:

Karen Beck
Jeff Childers
Debbie Davison
David Gynn, President

Virginia Harris
Michael Lewis, Vice President
R. T. Mansfield
Jack Murphy

Frank Vitale
Karen Wise, TPO
Marvin Woods

Staff Participating:

Denise Baba
Marcia Fletcher
Kelly Jurisch

Justin Markey, Legal Counsel
Clayton Popik

Rebecca Schrader
Brian Trautman

Board Members Not Participating:

Marge Bjerregaard (2nd unexcused absence)
Richard Brockett (1st unexcused absence)

Morgan Tipton (1st unexcused absence)

Guests Participating:

None.

CALL TO ORDER

President David Gynn called the *PARTA* Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7 p.m. He asked Ms. Marcia Fletcher to call the roll.

Ms. Fletcher then called the roll, and **a quorum was participating.**

Mr. Gynn noted that Ms. Claudia Amrhein was not participating in the meeting tonight because her husband was taken to the hospital as an emergency with a heart issue. He said she wanted to stay close to her phone since she was not able to go to the hospital with him because of the pandemic. She will keep the Board updated when he comes home or if it becomes more serious. He does not recall her ever missing a meeting. He said Ms. Amrhein informed him that Ms. Kelly Jurisch and Mr. Brian Trautman would stand in for her and answer every question.

Ms. Jurisch and Mr. Trautman said they would do their best.

Mr. Gynn said next is the minutes from the January 28, 2021, meeting. He asked for a motion for approval. Ms. Karen Beck made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, which was seconded by Ms. Virginia Harris. Mr. Gynn asked if there were any questions or discussion about the minutes. Hearing none, he asked all those in favor of approval to say aye. He said any opposed, please say no. Hearing no opposition, he said the **motion to approve the minutes, as presented, passed unanimously.**

GUEST COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Gynn said there were no Guest Communications because of COVID-19.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Gynn said he hoped everyone had a chance to read the General Manager's report. Tonight's meeting will probably be a little shorter than usual so if anyone did not have a chance, they should take the extra time to read Ms. Amrhein's report, as well as the Transit Trends that were attached. She points out that this is a critical time for funding. The current budget, which is expiring, funds transit at \$70 million. The proposed budget will fund transit at \$7.3 million, which is about a 90% decrease. If anyone has any influence with legislators, they are urged to do what they can before that budget passes. Her other attachments had to do with the history of rental at Kent Central Gateway (KCG) and where it is now. At the last PARTA Board meeting, a resolution was approved for her to enter into an agreement with the City of Kent for additional use. Those negotiations are ongoing and there are many unknown pieces. He asked if there were any questions for Ms. Jurisch or Mr. Trautman or if they had anything to add.

Ms. Jurisch said Ms. Amrhein just asked her and Mr. Trautman to do what Mr. Gynn did, which was to point out how critical it is right now for lobbying for the budget and that PARTA has had representatives and senators from Portage County on site talking about the budget process and how things are moving. Everyone is hopeful that changes will be made.

Mr. Gynn said he talked with Ms. Amrhein about how many legislators don't use public transportation other than airplanes and yet the people who rely and depend on public transportation are not able to run for public office to make an effective change. So, it may not be a surprise that the people who make the decisions do not have an affiliation with the people who need the services. He applauded PARTA for having the legislators visit and said it was good to hear some of their comments about PARTA's services. This is really a big operation and to see it firsthand was very good for transit week. Ms. Amrhein is very willing and always has time for questions or to chat. He suggested Board members email or call her. He said she places her role and responsibility to the Board very high and would take time for a call even if it is just for information or to offer an opinion.

Mr. Frank Vitale asked Ms. Jurisch what she thought was behind this drastic cut in the budget.

Ms. Jurisch said one of the things that has been brought up is the \$4 million in CARES Act money that covered transit centers during this time when the revenues coming in had decreased. The CARES Act money will not carry PARTA through the next several years, but the state money would. This is what needs to be pointed out to the legislators.

Mr. Trautman reminded everyone that a gas tax increase was passed a year or two ago in the state of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) was counting on quite a big increase in revenues based on that gas tax increase. When COVID-19 came and travel was so drastically reduced, the revenues into ODOT were obviously reduced, which is reflected in this budget. Unfortunately, it is nothing new that transit ends up taking a hit when it comes to budget cuts. Ms. Amrhein, in her role with the Ohio Public Transit Association (OPTA), along with several other general managers, testified in Columbus. There was an update yesterday on an OPTA call with all the transits in the state and the lobbyists said unequivocally that the work of Ms. Amrhein and the others who testified drastically moved the needle and had a high impact. They expect to see some revenues come back into that line item. It is not expected to be \$70 million but there has been talk about \$56 million or \$54 million. It is, without a doubt, directly related to bringing in the representatives and the work that Ms. Amrhein has been doing in Columbus. She would never say that, but that has been very much a part of the impact of what has made a difference.

Mr. Gynn said Ms. Amrhein's report also notes that a legislator was quoted as saying that Ohio has one of the most up-to-date fleets that can be found anywhere; therefore, no more funding. One of the other statistics in her report is the amount that Ohio spends annually on transit compared to nationwide. In 2018, Ohio spent 63 cents per person per capita and the average was around \$85 per person per capita. As important as transit is, it is shameful how little Ohio spends on it.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Gynn said the Administration Committee did not meet and was not scheduled to meet this month.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Gynn said the Finance Committee met and did a wonderful review of last year as reflected in the minutes that were sent out. He then turned the meeting over to Mr. Mike Lewis for his report.

Mr. Lewis thanked Mr. Gynn and said the Finance Committee reviewed year-end and comparison numbers. He said he would start with some information and then would call on Ms. Rebecca Schrader to give the yearly comparison. Overall, Operating Revenues plummeted, which was reflected in the revenue variance to budget. The biggest one was KSU Revenues, which was down \$672,002 compared to budget. Farebox & Ticket Sales was down \$148,722. Sales Tax Revenues was \$343,248 over budget. The CARES Act money was a big help this year with everything that had to be done to be compliant, safe, and continue operating during COVID-19. The expenses were well managed. A couple things went over budget to stay compliant, such as Professional/Tech Services and Capital Maintenance Service. Employee Health Insurance was slightly over due to a change that came after the budget was prepared. Year-to-date, which was the end of year, looked pretty good. The budget year-to-date was \$663,673. Actual was \$5,591,511, of which a little bit over \$4 million was from the CARES Act. More money is expected in 2021 to help moving forward. He then asked Ms. Schrader to give the yearly comparisons. He noted that Ms. Schrader reminded everyone that the reports are unaudited so there might be slight changes after they are audited but most are spot on.

Ms. Schrader shared her screen and said Ms. Fletcher did email these reports out late this afternoon. The comparison spreadsheet shows 2018, 2019, the budget for 2020, and actual year-to-date 2020. Comparing 2019 to 2020, Farebox decreased 48.3% and Agency Cash Grants and Reimbursements decreased 40.3%. Agency Cash Grants and Reimbursements increased 25.3% comparing 2018 to 2019. KSU Revenues decreased 26.3% from 2019 to 2020, which is a large dollar amount. State Capital Maintenance Assistance was all over the board. In 2018, it was \$240,218, and then it was \$194,962 in 2019. In 2020, part of the state funds came from a competitive grant through the OTP2 program. Usually, State Capital Maintenance Assistance is somewhere around \$200,000. Decreasing that by 90% would greatly impact the budget. Federal Capital Maintenance Assistance fluctuated back and forth from \$800,000 to \$1 million. Sales Tax Revenues increased by 6.4% from 2019 to 2020. From 2018 to 2019, it decreased 2.1%, which is why the budget is very conservative. In 2020, Other Revenues came in from the extra maintenance for Family & Community Services and Head Start and selling old buses that had reached their useful lives. The Bureau of Workers' Comp refunded about \$70,000 at the end of the year, which she forgot to mention at Tuesday's Finance Committee meeting, but she added it as a note in the Finance Committee minutes.

Moving on to the expenses, Ms. Schrader said Operators Salaries and Wages decreased by 11.4% for 2020 and Students Salaries and Wages decreased by 44.4% because there was not as much service on the road. There was a lot of service on the road for county but some of the demand was down. Because of online classes, virtual classes, and the campus being closed, there were not as many student routes as normal. Capital Maintenance Service did not go over budget, some things just got moved around. There was a budget change toward the end of the year, which she will discuss in more detail with the Finance Committee during Old Business next month because it is a little complicated. Overall, expenses decreased 5.9%, which helped with the surplus.

The next report, Ms. Schrader said, shows the same data with some different comparisons. Operating Revenues include Farebox, Agency Cash Grants and Reimbursements, and KSU Revenues. Out of the \$14 million in Total Revenues for 2020, \$2 million is Operating Revenues. In 2018, it was \$2.8 million; and in 2019, it was \$2.9 million. Operating Revenues decreased 30% from 2019 to 2020. In 2018, Operating Revenues paid 31% of the operating expenses. In 2020, Operating Revenues paid 24% of expenses. The expenses were still there but there was less revenue from the operating side, which is important to know. Sales tax is one of the biggest revenue generators. In 2018, 56.5% of Total Revenues was from sales tax. In 2020, because of the CARES Act money, sales tax was 41.3% of Total Revenues. Taking out the \$4 million of the CARES Act money, sales tax would have been 86.7% of Total Revenues. That is how much PARTA relies on that revenue stream. Those are the major points. She then stopped sharing her screen and turned the meeting back over to Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Vitale noted that taking out the \$4 million from the CARES Act, Total Revenues still total \$10 million. Somebody in the state house could look at that unaudited statement for the period and say the CARES Act gave PARTA \$4 million more in Total Revenues. In previous years, PARTA had revenue of \$10 million and was able to stay afloat. At first glance, it looks like PARTA would have been in the same place revenue wise without the CARES Act money.

Ms. Schrader said monthly expenses are about \$600,000. PARTA was lucky that sales tax continued to trend the way it did. Sales tax revenue was much less in many counties. That money was used to continue paying wages and keep buses on the road during this time. If revenue is not consistent, looking out five (5) years, PARTA will not be able to sustain its operations at that same level. Additionally, local match is still needed for capital projects.

Mr. Lewis said State Capital Maintenance Assistance was a jump of about \$700,000. At first glance, Mr. Vitale is right, but it is the adjustments within those numbers, whether it be the wages that were paid or the expenses that decreased. The revenue money shifted. PARTA counts on those top three (3) line items, which were down. Trying to get those back was more concerning.

Mr. Trautman said one of the things to take away from what this shows with the CARES money is what it means next year. The 86.7% of what Total Revenues would have been without CARES money is what PARTA will be going up against in the future because CARES Act money was a one-time deal, and it covered a situation where revenue from Kent State University (KSU) decreased. The contract was still in place, but PARTA was not running the hours that it originally contracted for with them. PARTA lost its revenue stream with Portage County Job and Family Services (PCJFS) and Portage County Board of Developmental Disabilities (PCBDD) because it was not doing anywhere near the amount of transportation for them as previously. The CARES Act money came in at a time when PARTA was being asked to stay on the road and keep people moving to and from essential services. It did fill in that gap. The problem, and the thing to keep in mind from an operational standpoint, is what that will look like next year if PARTA does not recover with KSU, PCJFS, and all the supplemental contracts. What is that going to do for PARTA when it comes to an operating expense with that kind of a deficit. That is what must be considered navigating forward because those monies may or may not be there.

Mr. Lewis thanked Mr. Trautman and said if there are no other questions, this is a great segue into the Capital Finance Report. There were some expenses that were booked in December. The biggest one was the purchase of three (3) of the five (5) buses, two (2) of which arrived in January. Those will show up on next month's reports. Invoices were booked for the Bus Storage Facility and the Wash Bay. As to the Restricted money, there is \$2.9 million set aside. About \$1.6 million of that is for Future Capital Projects and the rest is already accounted for. He asked if there were any questions on PARTA. Hearing none, he moved on to KCG.

Mr. Lewis said everybody knows what is going on at KCG because everything has been the same throughout the year. The end of year numbers were as expected at \$135,820 under budget. The variance to budget for revenues was \$275,399 under budget because of Hotel Overnight Parking, Monthly Parking Passes, and Daily Parking Revenue. He hopes that KCG can start coming back out of that in the second

half of the year as things start to get to a new normal. On the expense side, things were pretty much in line. They were reduced where they could be. The only one that was over was Other Services, which had to do with some changes with the security company. He then asked Ms. Schrader to share her screen and talk about the yearly comparisons.

Ms. Schrader shared her screen and said Hotel Overnight Parking decreased 60% and Daily Parking Revenue decreased 73% from 2019 to 2020. Luckily, Monthly Parking Passes stayed relatively the same. That helped a lot, as well as the Retail Revenue and 2nd Floor Revenue. Total Revenues decreased 41%. Parking Revenue, which includes the top three (3) line items (Hotel Overnight Parking, Monthly Parking Passes, and Daily Parking Revenue), decreased 45% from 2019 and 2020. Salaries and Wages decreased 7%. Employee Health Insurance increased 27%. Professional/Tech Services, Other Services, and Other Materials and Supplies decreased. Total Expenses decreased 10% from 2019 to 2020. There was a \$135,820 Operating Deficit with the Depreciation Expense at \$58,546 for a total Gross Operating Deficit of \$194,365, which will be shared between the City of Kent and PARTA.

Mr. Lewis asked if anybody had any questions on KCG.

Mr. Vitale asked why PARTA owned KCG and why they did not sell it. He said it is a beautiful building but does not look like something PARTA should be in. He asked why it could not be sold to KSU because the hotel, university, and city are the biggest users of it.

Mr. Trautman said right before COVID-19 hit, KCG was starting to make a profit. It would be hard and a rash decision at this point to say PARTA should abandon ship because of a deficit situation with KCG. KCG has some other potential that is being worked on right now when it comes to the first floor and some of the empty spaces. Ms. Amrhein is working on a project with RLB Phoenix and if it plays out the way it is being mapped out, PARTA will make more money than what was being made under the Master Agreement with RLB Phoenix but that is all just conjecture at this point. The deck was poised to be profitable in 2020. He understands from a business point of view where Mr. Vitale is coming from but trying to gauge the deck and its success potential and/or ratio based on 2020 would be a mistake. He asked why KSU would step up to the plate and buy a \$25 million facility right now when they have 75% to 90% of their students working online.

Mr. Vitale said nobody knows how this is going to unfold but it appears that more people will be working from home. Many are going to come back, but the reality is things have changed. The hotels will never be what they were before. If someone is working from home, they do not need to go to the parking garage. PARTA's customers do not go to the parking garage. They come on the buses.

Mr. Trautman said KCG is more than just three (3) levels of parking. It also is a transfer center for buses. Without getting into too much long-term planning discussion, he has been doing a lot of research on and spec writing for some open sided trolleys and other things that look toward attracting choice ridership. The downtown area is not going to just fold up and go away. The investment in downtown is phenomenal, and it is a great place to be. Other facets of transit are being looked at that will give PARTA more of a long-term sustaining presence than just line and demand response service. PARTA is developing HVAC systems with Thermo King and Trane that have infrared systems inside that are killing germs that are going through the air conditioning systems. There are all kinds of things going on in the industry right now that will allow for changes in people's perspective and approach to transit, hotels, etc. Hotels are not going to fold up and go away. They are going to figure out a way to keep people safer and more comfortable. Now would be a horrible time to try to sell KCG.

Mr. Vitale said maybe PARTA should get some partners to share in the loss, break even, or whatever might come of it.

Ms. Jurisch noted that PARTA does have that partnership with the City of Kent (it is referred to as the Waterfall Account).

Mr. Jack Murphy asked when the last rate increase was and if that would help with the deficit. He asked if surrounding garages did something similar and how they accounted for those kinds of deficits.

Mr. Trautman said there have been rate increases the last three (3) years. He just put this information together for Ms. Amrhein because *PARTA* has a meeting tomorrow at 10 a.m. with the City of Kent to go over last year. He is sure she would share that information with anyone who wanted to look at it. It shows what was increased and what stayed the same based on COVID-19. *PARTA* tried to balance that out a little bit with the partners based on their situation and whether they were in a loss revenue state and what they could handle at the same time because even with the hotel, everyone has been trying to help each other whenever and however they can because people are struggling at different times. The hotel is coming back. There are more people and sports teams staying there now, and charter buses are appearing on Erie Street from time to time. That has not been seen for a while. The Crooked River Arts Council did cancel some of the earlier summer festivities, but he does not think they have cancelled the entire summer.

Ms. Jurisch said they have pushed off any festivities until July. There is hope in 2021 for KCG.

Mr. Murphy said some other organizations are still trying to plan events downtown this year.

Mr. Lewis concurred and said other groups are looking later into the year, after July. One of the numbers that jumped out at him was the number of cars that go through KCG. January 2020 had 8,024, February had 9,642, March had 5,082, April had 785, and May had 1,535. The cars need to get back through the deck to get that number up. He thinks that will work over time but it was a hit to 2020, which is something that cannot be planned for. He asked if there were any other questions.

Ms. Schrader said one other thing to point out is that KCG was not eligible for federal or state grants and it was not eligible for any of the PPE loans.

Mr. R. T. Mansfield said so much grant money was received for KCG, he does not think there is any way in the world the assumption should be that there are not many strings attached to that grant. There is no selling this garage. That is never going to happen. People are starting to get vaccinated. Everyone just needs to have some patience and things will get better.

Mr. Gynn said this year was abnormal. KCG has become a little more profitable every year. No one knows what is going to happen, but everyone can be relatively sure that it is going to improve in the next year. He thanked Mr. Lewis for his report.

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Gynn said the Operations Committee did not meet and was not scheduled to meet.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Gynn said the Personnel Committee did not meet and was not scheduled to meet.

OLD BUSINESS

Moving on, Mr. Gynn said there was no Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Gynn said there was no New Business.

Resolutions

Mr. Gynn said there were no resolutions. In the next few months, there will be resolutions for a temporary lease agreement and transit bus and construction contract awards.

Mr. Gynn said he does not believe there is any reason for an Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Gynn asked Mr. Justin Markey and the staff if they had anything to add. Hearing nothing further, he thanked the staff for their hard work and asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Mike Lewis made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Jack Murphy. Mr. Gynn asked all those in favor to say aye. Those opposed, say no. Hearing no opposition, the **motion to adjourn passed unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.


Respectfully submitted,



Marcia Fletcher
Executive Assistant

PARTA
2000 Summit Road
Kent, Ohio 44240

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: PARTA Board of Trustees 

FROM: Claudia B. Amrhein, General Manager

DATE: March 2021

Committee Meetings and Resolutions. The March meeting agenda includes a resolution to authorize the purchase of replacement light transit vehicles (LTVs). The finance committee will meet remotely via Zoom on Tuesday, March 23, at 11:30 a.m. to review February financial reports and Resolution #2021-03-01.

#2021-03-01 A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE GENERAL MANAGER, OR HER DESIGNEE, TO PURCHASE UP TO SIX (6) LIGHT TRANSIT VEHICLES (LTVs) OF WIDE BODY CONSTRUCTION, OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT, AND SPARE PARTS FROM TRANSPORTATION EQUIPMENT SALES CORPORATION (TESCO).

Replacing Light Transit Vehicles. Resolution #2021-03-01 authorizes the purchase up to six (6) LTVs, optional equipment and spare parts from TESCO in 2021 for a cost not to exceed \$564,000. This is the second purchase from the small bus contract awarded to TESCO in May 2020. The new vehicles will replace small buses running beyond their useful life that are programmed for replacement in the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Transit Bus Request for Proposals (RFP) Issued. During the March meeting, Chief Operating Officer Brian Trautman will present an overview of the RFP recently issued to solicit proposals for a new, five-year transit bus construction contract. The specification package calls for bus manufacturers to quote CNG, clean diesel, and hybrid electric propulsion systems for both transit buses and trolley buses, creating flexibility in bus builds when grant funding is targeted toward specific fueling options.

New Bus Garage Serves as Vaccination Site. The new bus garage became a vaccination clinic on March 18 through a cooperative arrangement with AxessPointe Community Health Centers, Inc. Over 500 community members, including some eligible PARTA employees, received the first dose of the Moderna vaccine.

The day went smoothly with PARTA staff preparing the site, directing traffic, and providing a shuttle to the bus garage. AxessPointe staff worked in conjunction with volunteers from NEOMed, Kent City Health Department, KSU Nursing, and Kent Fire Department. The clinic will return on April 14 to provide another first dose clinic and on April 15 to administer second doses to those vaccinated on March 18.

Transit Driver Appreciation Day (TDAD). While the vaccination clinic was taking place, we also celebrated the work of transit drivers and all transit employees who keep communities moving every day. In conjunction with AVI Food Systems, our vending machine company, employees enjoyed a continental breakfast and boxed lunch. We are grateful for the work all our employees do to ensure transit runs smoothly even in the times of stress and change we've experienced since the global pandemic altered many aspects of our service.

Funding Allocated for Transportation to Vaccination Sites. Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) recently announced \$7 million to support transportation to vaccination sites through its "Rides for Community Immunity" program. Lack of transportation ranks as a primary reason many individuals

are unable to get the COVID-19 vaccine. The funding will be allocated to transit authorities in counties with public transit and to health departments in areas without, on a reimbursement basis for operational expenses related to COVID vaccination efforts. PARTA is eligible to submit up to \$97,000 in eligible activities for reimbursement through this grant program.

Kent City Health Department Short-Term Lease Agreement. At its March 17 meeting, Kent City Council accepted terms for a short-term lease to facilitate a COVID-19 vaccination site in downtown Kent. KCHD currently occupies the second floor of the Kent Central Gateway and proposes to amend the current lease with PARTA to include the vacant retail space for a one-year period. The amendment also includes rent increases for the second and third years of the second floor lease. Because the retail spaces are part of a larger agreement with RLB Phoenix Properties, LLC, I am working with real estate attorneys recommended by Board Attorney Justin Markey and Barbara Rhoades from Ohio Transit Risk Pool (OTRP) to review the current master tenant lease agreement and outline our options for facilitating the short-term lease with KCHD. The terms of the amendment are included in this packet.

Transportation Budget Moving Through Ohio Senate. In early March, the Ohio House of Representatives passed an amended version of the FY 2022-2023 transportation budget. The amendment increased general revenue funding (GRF) for public transit by roughly \$16 million, boosting it from \$7.3 million to \$23 million in each year of the budget. On March 10, public transit leaders testified before the Senate transportation committee about the need for stable and predictable state funding. The committee voted to increase the GRF allocation by \$13.8 million, bringing the total to \$37 million.

In the coming weeks, the Senate will pass the amended budget or some version of it. The next phase of consideration will involve a committee to negotiate a final transportation budget. The budget adopted by the General Assembly then moves to on to Governor DeWine for his signature.

Service Reports. (*Coronavirus closures began March 2020*) *Ridership.* Total county fixed route and DART ridership decreased by 61.09% through February, as compared to February 2020, with total county service performing 27,417 trips as compared to 70,460 trips performed through February 2020.

County fixed route service has decreased by approximately 63.91% as compared to last year, with 21,519 trips completed through February as compared to 59,620 trips completed through February 2020. DART service has decreased by 45.59% through February as compared to February 2020, with 5,898 trips completed as compared to 10,840 trips completed through February 2020.

Overall ridership, including campus service, decreased by 83.17%, with campus down by 93.75%. Total system ridership totaled 37,530 as compared to 222,993 through February 2020.

On-Time Compliance. ADA Complementary Paratransit Service. ADA on-time compliance was 94.72% in February as compared to 98.3% in January. Of 530 trips, 28 were performed late, with the latest running 31 minutes behind.

General Public (non-ADA) DART. On-time performance for general public, non-ADA trips decreased to 86.73% for February, as compared to 88.71% in January 2021.

Vehicle Preventative Maintenance (PM). On-time compliance with established PM inspection schedules was 100% in February as compared to 97% in January 2021.

Parking Deck. Parking continues to inch upwards, increasing by 10% in February as compared to January. Total cars using the deck in February totaled 4,982 as compared to 4,534 in January. This equates to a 48% decrease as compared to February 2020, when 9,642 cars parked in the deck.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. If you have any questions prior to the Board meeting, please feel free to contact me by calling (330) 676-6315, or by e-mail at Amrhein.c16@partaonline.org.

Transit Trends

The Bus Coalition: A Growing Movement to Increase Federal Investment in Transit Buses and Bus Facilities



The Bus Coalition is an advocacy organization that supports funding for federal transit bus and bus facility programs. With over 350 coalition members and supporters and a footprint in 44 states and the District of Columbia, TBC includes small, medium and large transit agencies, state transit associations and bus manufacturers and suppliers.

Working with our champions in Congress, TBC successfully increased funding for bus programs in the FAST Act by more than \$1 billion and more recently increased bus funding by \$790 million in the FY18 and FY19 Omnibus Appropriations bills. Working in concert with APTA and CTAA, our shared mission is to highlight the needs and benefits of bus transit and ensure bus programs are adequately funded at the federal level.



The Need for Additional Bus Investment

According to 2018 NTD data, the percentage of buses operating past useful life has increased 48% while buses operating past 15 years increased a whopping 104%. In addition, bus fleet size has shrunk by 22% (16,304 buses) in just four years.

The 22% reduction in fleet size directly corresponds to the 19% reduction in service hours and a 12% reduction in ridership. The FAST Act included some new funding for bus programs and restored the competitive grant account. Despite the modest success in the FAST Act, more investment is needed to bring bus transit agencies to a state of good repair and start adding buses back into service.

Funding for Future Bus Replacement - PARTA

Establishing a long-term funding plan for transit bus replacement is essential. Between 2024 and 2027, funding to replace 11 transit buses is needed to keep the fleet operating within its useful life. This accounts for approximately 1/3 of our fleet of 34 transit buses.

Bus transit is an integral part of American mobility and opportunity in small and large communities alike. PARTA and other transit authorities work with TBC to raise awareness of bus and bus facility funding needs by speaking to and meeting with members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

Buses by the Numbers



TRANSIT TRIPS MADE ON BUSES = 51%

BUS RIDERS WITH HOUSEHOLD INCOMES BELOW \$50,000 = 69%



WHERE BUSES, PARTS AND SUPPLIES ARE MANUFACTURED = 29 STATES

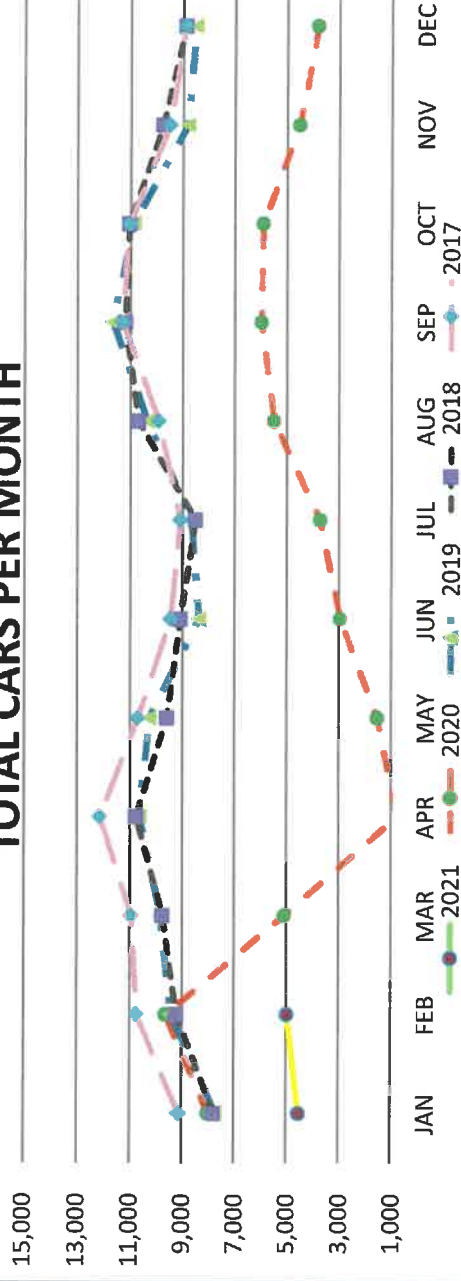


KENT CENTRAL GATEWAY PARKING SUMMARY -

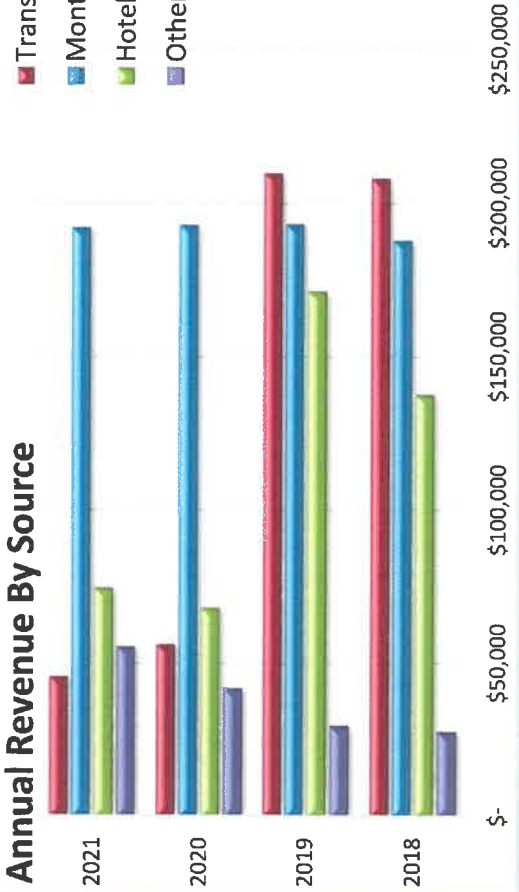
February 2021

6 Month Lookback					
	Monthly	Transient	Total	Cars/Day	Last Year
Sep-20	3,962	2,034	5,996	200	-49%
Oct-20	3,876	2,062	5,938	198	-45%
Nov-20	3,093	1,445	4,538	151	-49%
Dec-20	2,565	1,263	3,828	123	-55%
Jan-21	2,953	1,581	4,534	146	-43%
Feb-21	3,238	1,744	4,982	178	-48%

TOTAL CARS PER MONTH

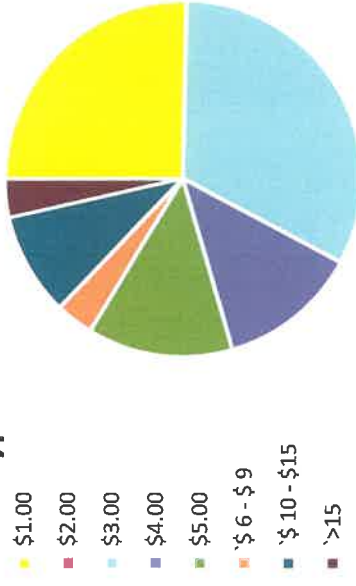


Annual Revenue By Source

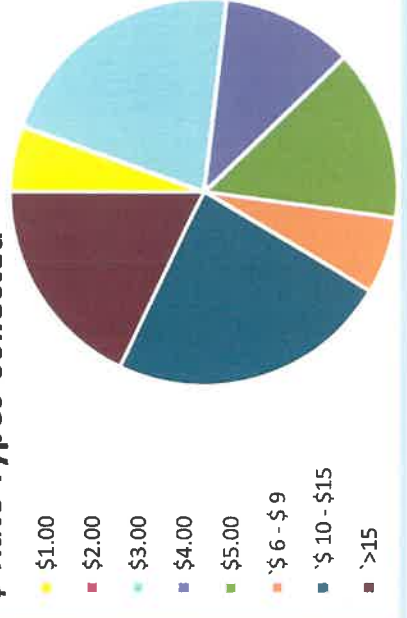


	Annual Comparison	
	2021	2020
JAN	4,534	8,024
FEB	4,982	9,642
MAR	5,082	9,836
APR	785	10,639
MAY	1,535	10,268
JUN	2,961	8,371
JUL	3,730	8,672
AUG	5,502	10,352
SEP	5,996	11,657
OCT	5,938	10,888
NOV	4,538	8,812
DEC	3,828	8,505
TOTAL	9,516	57,561
	-46.1%	-50.0%

Rate Types Collected



\$ Rate Types Collected



RESOLUTION #2021-03-01

A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (*PARTA*) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE GENERAL MANAGER, OR HER DESIGNEE, TO PURCHASE UP TO SIX (6) LIGHT TRANSIT VEHICLES (LTVs) OF WIDE BODY CONSTRUCTION, OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT, AND SPARE PARTS FROM TRANSPORTATION EQUIPMENT SALES CORPORATION (TESCO).

WHEREAS, the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (*PARTA*) has identified the need to purchase replacement Light Transit Vehicles (LTVs) of wide body construction for LTVs that are beyond their useful life and are included in the AMATS approved Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); and

WHEREAS, *PARTA* conducted a formal procurement through RFP#LTV2020-1, which was issued on February 18, 2020, and after reviewing the RFPs, found that Transportation Equipment Sales Corporation (TESCO) LTVs represent the best overall product and price for *PARTA*; and

WHEREAS, *PARTA* plans to place a second order under RFP#LTV2020-1 with TESCO for six (6) LTVs, optional equipment, and spare parts; and

WHEREAS, funding for this second order will come from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) through the 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Funding program and the 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities program; and from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) through the Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2); and

WHEREAS, *PARTA* will utilize local sales tax revenue as local match and to supplement the grant funding in the event unexpected contingent expenses arise; and

WHEREAS, *PARTA*'s plan is to order LTVs, optional equipment and spare parts from TESCO, in accordance with *PARTA*'s TIP, each year beginning in 2020 through 2025 depending on the availability of funds. This represents the second order placed in accordance with this plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED by the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (*PARTA*) Board of Trustees that:

The General Manager, or her designee, is hereby authorized to execute said contract with Transportation Equipment Sales Corporation (TESCO) for the second order under this plan for six (6) LTVs, optional equipment, and spare parts, for a cost not to exceed \$564,000.

CERTIFICATION:

The undersigned duly qualified Board President, acting on behalf of the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (*PARTA*), certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Board of Trustees held on March 25, 2021.

Date

David Gynn, President
Board of Trustees

Attested

ADDENDUM TO LEASE AGREEMENT

This Addendum made and entered into this _____ day of _____, 2021, is by and between the KENT CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT (referred to as "Health Department" or "Tenant") and PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (referred to "PARTA" or "Landlord").

WHEREAS, the Health Department and PARTA have entered into an Agreement dated August 1, 2020 ("Agreement") for the lease of space located at 201 S. Erie Street, Suite G, Kent, Ohio 44240; and

WHEREAS, the Health Department and PARTA want to amend the Agreement as set forth in this Addendum.

NOW THEREFORE, for good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, the Health Department and PARTA hereby amend the Agreement as follows:

1. Rent: The Parties agree to amend the Agreement by adding the following:

Effective on April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022, the annual base rent will increase by \$1.00 per square foot. The new monthly rent will be Two Thousand Thirteen Dollars and 10 Cents (\$2,013.10) including the fees described in Paragraph 2, below.

Effective on April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, the annual base rent will increase by \$1.00 per square foot. The new monthly rent will be Two Thousand Two Hundred Eighteen Dollars and 10 Cents (\$2,218.10) including the fees described in Paragraph 2, below.

2. Utilities/Cleaning/Snow Removal: The parties agree to amend the Agreement by adding the following language:

Effective for contract years beginning April 1, 2021 and April 1, 2022, Landlord will add a maintenance fee of \$1.50 per square foot to the base yearly rent at an amount of Three Hundred Seven Dollars and Fifty Cents per month. The maintenance fee represents operating expenses incurred by Landlord for the performance of enhanced, COVID-19 compliant janitorial services for the second floor Suite G spaces.

The maintenance fee includes janitorial labor for cleaning and sanitizing, plus purchasing and restocking the goods, materials, and supplies utilized for and consumed by Tenant. The maintenance fee does not include increased utility usage for which tracking is still incomplete. Landlord will continue tracking utility usage and janitorial operating expenses and may increase or decrease such fees, if warranted, in subsequent contract years.

Tenant also maintains the right to have the maintenance of the spaces provided by a third party upon thirty (30) days' notice to the Landlord.

3. Additional Space to be Leased. The Health Department has a need for additional space owned by PARTA. The Parties agree to the following:
 - a. PARTA shall lease Suite E, 201 S. Erie Street, Kent, Ohio 44240 to the Health Department for a term of 12 months beginning on April 1, 2021 and ending on March 31, 2022.
 - b. Rent will be in the amount of One Thousand Nine Hundred Twenty-Five Dollars and No Cents (\$1,925.00) which includes PARTA's cost for maintenance and cleaning.
 - c. The Health Department will pay for the electrical upgrade needed for the space.
 - d. The terms and condition of the Agreement shall apply to the lease of Suite E.
 - e. The Parties agree to review the status of the lease of Suite E during the fourth quarter of the lease term.

All other terms of the Agreement that have not been specifically amended herein shall remain in full force and effect.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, each party, by its duly authorized representative has executed this contract effective as of the day and year first written above.

KENT CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

PARTA

By _____

By _____

(print name and title)

(print name and title)

CERTIFICATE OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW

Approved as to form and correctness.

Hope L. Jones
Director of Law

Dated: _____

CERTIFICATE OF THE DIRECTOR OF BUDGET AND FINANCE

To the City Manager/Director of Public Safety:

I hereby certify that the amount required to meet the City's obligation under this contract has been lawfully appropriated and is in the treasury or in the process of collection to the credit of an appropriate fund free from any previous encumbrance.

Rhonda C. Hall
Director of Budget and Finance

Dated: _____

STATE FUNDING THREATENED



PARTA reaction to proposed state transportation budget cuts. Claudia Amrhein, PARTA general manager, discusses the business in a garage at the headquarters in Kent on Tuesday. LISA SCALFARO

PARTA decries the plans for cuts to public transportation

Kaitlyn McGarvey

Record-Courier
USA TODAY NETWORK

If approved, a proposed 90% cut to state funding for public transportation in Ohio could make it harder for local authorities to fund projects and maintain fleets.

Nearly 1.2 million rides are provided by the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority every year, according to PARTA General Manager Claudia Amrhein. The agency serves Summit and Portage counties. Though annual

operating expenses are largely supplemented by a .25% local sales tax, funding from the state is still incredibly vital, she said.

DeWine's budget proposal for 2022 and 2023 would earmark \$7.3 million for public transportation. That's compared to \$70 million in 2020 and 2021.

Amrhein says it's not clear what the immediate impact would be if the budget is approved as is, but said the agency would not be able to apply for funds through the state as it has over the past two years.

When local money is freed up by

state funding, Amrhein said the agency tries to set aside money it will need to match federal grants. The state, by providing more funding, allows PARTA to spend fewer local dollars on match requirements. For funding to be unstable year to year makes it hard to plan for the long-term, she said.

In 2022, PARTA will begin work on plans to replace 20 of the big buses in its fleet. In 2025, those buses will reach 12 years in age and be at the end of their expected lifespan. Without stable, ad-

See PARTA, Page 2A



Kelly Jurisch, PARTA chief of staff, explains the changes in buses in the past year at the garage in Kent. LISA SCALFARO

PARTA

Continued from Page 1A

equate funding, the organization may have to stretch the life of those buses out longer.

"Maintaining our vehicles is so critical because we will have to draw out the lifecycle of some of them because we will not have the funds to replace them all at once," PARTA Chief of Staff Kelly Jurisch said. "Hopefully we can replace eight to 10 of them at a time. But we will have to draw out the life cycle of some of our buses."

For State Fiscal Year 2020, more than \$1 million was provided to PARTA to assist with projects and maintenance. Notably, that money was used to offset part of the local match needed to construct a storage facility for the organization's large buses. The facility, completed in December 2020, keeps the fleet sheltered from Ohio's icy and cold weather and also makes daily vehicle preparation easier.

Amrhein, who is also president of the Ohio Public Transportation Association, was one of a few people who spoke before the Ohio House of Representatives Finance Committee in mid-February. There, she asked legislators to reconsider the proposed cuts.

PARTA is considered to be a hybrid of urban and rural transit models. Though the organization has fixed routes, community members rely on it for transportation to specific destinations as well, she said. People depend on Ohio's public transit system to get them to dialysis and medical appointments as well as to the grocery store. It is also known those same populations are experiencing difficulties accessing COVID-19 vaccine sites.

Slashing of state funding for public transit would also disproportionately impact populations like the disabled and elderly. Amrhein said that of the 25,000 door-to-door rides given by PARTA since March 2020, 80% were for people who are part of vulnerable populations.

In talking with legislators, Amrhein said, it seems the proposed cut is associated with the CARES Act funding public transit was provided at the federal level. That money was received, she said, but it was used for a different purpose. Those funds, which have since been spent, were meant to keep transit running during the pandemic.

Amrhein said, ideally, she would like to see the \$70 million restored and a revenue source for public transit identified. In 2014, the Ohio Department of Transportation performed a study on the needs of transit systems across Ohio. The study recommended the state strive to provide 10% of transit spending across the state. That would contribute toward a total state funding goal of \$185 million by 2025.

Allocating \$70 million in SYF 2020 and SYF 2021 was a good start, Amrhein said. Predictable funding for transit at the state level, she emphasized, is very important and ultimately what OPTA is working towards.

PARTA anticipated a drop in sales tax because of the pandemic but that did not come about, Amrhein said. In fact, it actually came in a little higher. Though in "good shape" now, it is unknown what the future will bring.

"We're still doing the numbers on our contracts for service," Amrhein said. "We're about 40% lower in revenue in terms of what we projected. It helped to offset that, but, long term, we don't know whether those contracts are going to come back fully."

OPTA has met with local legislators, sometimes twice, to stress the need for transit funding. An amendment is currently circulating to change that proposed amount to \$56 million. State Reps. Gail Pavliga and Diane Grendell and State Sen. Jerry Cirino have been very receptive, Amrhein said.

Amrhein and other advocates for Ohio's public transit systems are preparing to speak before the Ohio Senate Finance Committee in the coming week. The budget is expected to go before the governor by March 31.

kmcarvey@recordpub.com

Also published in Canton Repository (3/7) and Akron Beacon Journal (3/9)

March 7, 2021

Letter: Public transit agencies urge Ohio lawmakers to restore funding

Record-Courier

Gov. Mike DeWine's budget as introduced in early February would deal a devastating blow to public transportation in Ohio and the people it serves. Funding for public transit in the proposed state budget was slashed by nearly 90% compared to funds appropriated by the General Assembly just two years ago – down from \$70 million to \$7.3 million. This cut was not because of budgetary issues or lack of need.

According to the Ohio Department of Transportation's Transit Needs Study, the state should allocate \$200 million per year to public transportation. The American Society of Civil Engineers recently gave Ohio's public transit infrastructure a "D" grade. Due to the lack of clear dedicated funding, transit spending in Ohio is set in the two-year state budget. This creates volatility in funding as demonstrated by the proposed budget and does not allow transit systems to plan long term.

Public transit creates opportunities for independence and provides access to community resources for those with no other means of transportation. One SARTA rider stated that without public transit, they would miss life-sustaining medical treatment. Another passenger uses our services to get their children to school and without it, they would not have access to childcare.

METRO and PARTA have riders with similar stories to tell. Public transit is the lifeline of our communities. Without reliable public transit, Ohioans would miss critical medical appointments, students would not be able to get to school, and people would be unable to make daily essential trips.

The COVID-19 pandemic solidified the essential nature of public transit. PARTA, SARTA and METRO provided more than 6 million trips in 2020 for those who rely on public transportation to get to work, school, medical appointments, the grocery store, and fulfill other life-necessary trips. While the federal COVID relief packages provided much needed, short-term assistance during this unprecedented year, public transportation agencies have been faced with a drastic increase in operational costs and reduced revenues that will take years to return to pre-pandemic levels, if they ever do.

PARTA, SARTA, and METRO are pleased the Ohio House of Representatives' Finance Committee restored some of the transit funding cut from the budget. We strongly encourage the Ohio Senate and Governor DeWine to support this move. If not, thousands of Ohioans will not be able to make their life-necessary trips and many jobs will be at risk. Ohio needs transit, now more than ever. Restore transit funding to save Ohio transit.

Claudia Amrhein, general manager/CEO PARTA (Portage County)

Dawn Distler, CEO METRO (Summit County)

Kirt Conrad, executive director/CEO SARTA (Stark County)

NAACP says Kent meeting comments evidence of racism

Kaitlyn McGarvey Record-Courier
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Portage County NAACP has sent a letter to Kent City Council, objecting to comments made by a councilman regarding 'the type of clientele' a city health clinic at the Kent Central Gateway would bring downtown.

According to the letter by NAACP President Geraldine Hayes-Nelson, Councilman Garrett Ferrara said, "I think we have to make sure that we have to define what the clinic does and the type of clientele that we want down there with all the other businesses down there."

The comments in question were made by Ferrara during a March 3 committee meeting during which council was discussing expanding services offered at the city's health department, which is located in the Central Gateway facility.

Though she applauded council's ultimate decision to expand services, Hayes-Nelson wrote, "Last week's statement from Mr. Ferrara reveals that, indeed, the structural racism that has historically manifested as redlining and sundown towns is alive and well in our community. We can and should do better."

Hayes-Nelson said she felt similarly upset during a Kent council meeting that took place on Sept.16. At that time, Hayes-Nelson, along with other members of the NAACP and Kent Interfaith Alliance, spoke to city council about addressing racism in the city. Hayes-Nelson said they were told that Kent does not have a racism problem.

Hayes-Nelson cited meeting minutes where Ferrara said he was going to oppose the motion. He said he believed Kent had proven time and time again to be an inclusive, caring community and that creating a commission to proactively deal with racism, hatred and diversity may end up creating more divisiveness. He added that he thought it was only relevant because of the national events at that time, but that he did not believe there was systemic racism in Kent.

Hayes-Nelson further wrote that the NAACP is dedicated to promoting peace and unity in the community. She

See MEETING, Page 3A

Meeting

Continued from Page 1A

concluded by asking Kent City Council to use the recent events as a teachable moment and urged them to revisit the request for a standing commission to address systemic racism.

On Monday, Ferrara called the issue "disappointing."

He said the country is in the middle of a pandemic and is focused on providing immunizations -- something he said council agreed it wanted the clinic to be used for. He, however, also wanted to know what other plans Kent City Health Commissioner Joan Seidel had for the clinic in the future.

The issue, he said, was about whether the city wanted a drug rehabilitation clinic in downtown Kent. He did not perceive race playing into that conversation whatsoever.

Ferrara said he supports drug rehabilitation clinics and the people that use their services, but he stressed it is important to discuss where those types of services should be placed.

Seidel said that when the Kent City Board of Health declared racism a public health crisis they knew that would be the starting point. Bringing the Health Equities in All Policies to city council



NAACP Martin Luther King Jr. breakfast at Kent United Church of Christ. Dr. Geraldine Hayes-Nelson, President, Portage County NAACP. Lisa Scalfaro, Record-Courier LISA SCALFARO

was the next logical step, she said.

"Planning for a clinic, which could bridge some aspects of access to care during pandemic and then looking to how this clinic might transition to addressing wider health needs in our community as pandemic resolves is important for our community," she said. "The overall health of a community is built on

the health of the individual. The better access to healthcare, including preventative healthcare with activities such as screenings and classes benefits the entire community."

Prior to the quote cited by Hayes-Nelson, Ferrara said he told council that there is "certainly a stigma" about bus stations, public entities, government entities and government clinics in those areas. He told council that it is not something he thinks the city would want in its downtown area.

The stigma he was acknowledging, he later said, was that of drug addicts hanging around the sidewalks outside of a bus station. It had nothing to do with race.

Townhall II, an addiction treatment center located near downtown Kent on North Water Street, has done a great job, Ferrara said. He cited the facility as an example that things can work when they have been planned out properly.

Seidel said the city health department does not want to duplicate services that are already provided to residents.

"We want to fill gaps and enhance services in an equitable way to all who live or work in Kent," she said. "The unanimous vote supporting the clinic both with words and dollars shows that city council is looking to work together for the betterment of all."

When asked if he was opposed to drug rehabilitation services taking place in the health clinic, Ferrara said the city would have to explore if that is the best place for it. Kent City Council meetings as well as commission meetings are ideal for those discussions. Open and free discussion is how they will find the best possible solution, he said, but being fearful of being called a racist complicates the ability to do that.

At the Sept. 16 meeting, the motion to have committee discussion about creating a new city commission to proactively deal with racism, hatred and diversity was approved with the support of every member of council. Though he initially opposed the motion, minutes from the meeting show Ferrara changed his mind after listening to comments made by Councilman Robin Turner.

Prior to his initial comment at that meeting, Ferrara later said, city administration had mentioned other city entities they were already working to address that same issue.

"The fact is that those very issues are being taken serious and being addressed at the highest level by the chief of police, by the city manager, by the administration, Ferrara said. "It seems, to me, to be redundant."

Reporter Kaitlyn McGarvey can be reached at kmegarvey@recordpub.com or on Twitter at [@kaitlynmeg_rc](https://twitter.com/kaitlynmeg_rc)



Photo courtesy of partaonline.org

OPINION

Op-ed: Kent Central Gateway is an asset to the community



[The Portager](http://ThePortager.com)

Mar 11, 2021

By Brian Trautman

Chief Operating Officer, Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA)

Perceptions of public transportation are often at odds with reality. This detachment frequently obscures the true nature of the experience people have with public transit.

Recently Kent City Council Member Garrett Ferrara asserted there is a “stigma” about bus stations. It is unclear where Mr. Ferrara’s assessment of public transit facilities is derived. However, it is important that his assertions do not go unchallenged, particularly as they may relate to the Kent Central Gateway transit center in downtown Kent.

As PARTA’s main transit hub in Portage County, the Gateway serves as a cornerstone in the redevelopment of downtown. It provides residents a multistory parking deck to park cars or catch the bus around town. In addition to the facility being attractive, clean and safe, it offers a centralized location from which a multitude of shops and services can be easily accessed.

There should be no “stigma” around bus stations in general or the Kent Central Gateway in particular. Transit systems throughout the country strive to provide comfortable, welcoming and accessible environments to the public. When these high standards are not met, it can often be attributed more readily to a lack of adequate funding than any other reason.

Public transportation and public transportation facilities are available to serve everyone in the community regardless of their personal circumstances. The ability to move about in society — to get to the grocery store, pharmacy or take care of other life needs — is fundamental to human survival. To perpetuate the notion of a stigma around public transportation facilities is misguided. It is not a reality and it diminishes the value of an important community asset.

ODOT helping fund transit rides to vaccination clinics Rides for Community Immunity program launched in all 88 counties

March 12, 2021 | [ODOT](#)



COLUMBUS – As COVID-19 vaccination efforts ramp up across Ohio, the Ohio Department of Transportation is providing extra funding to help local transit agencies and health departments to ensure all eligible Ohioans can get to vaccination sites.

“We want to make sure all Ohioans who want the vaccine have equal ability to get the vaccine,” said Gov. Mike DeWine. “Equity includes having access to transportation services.”

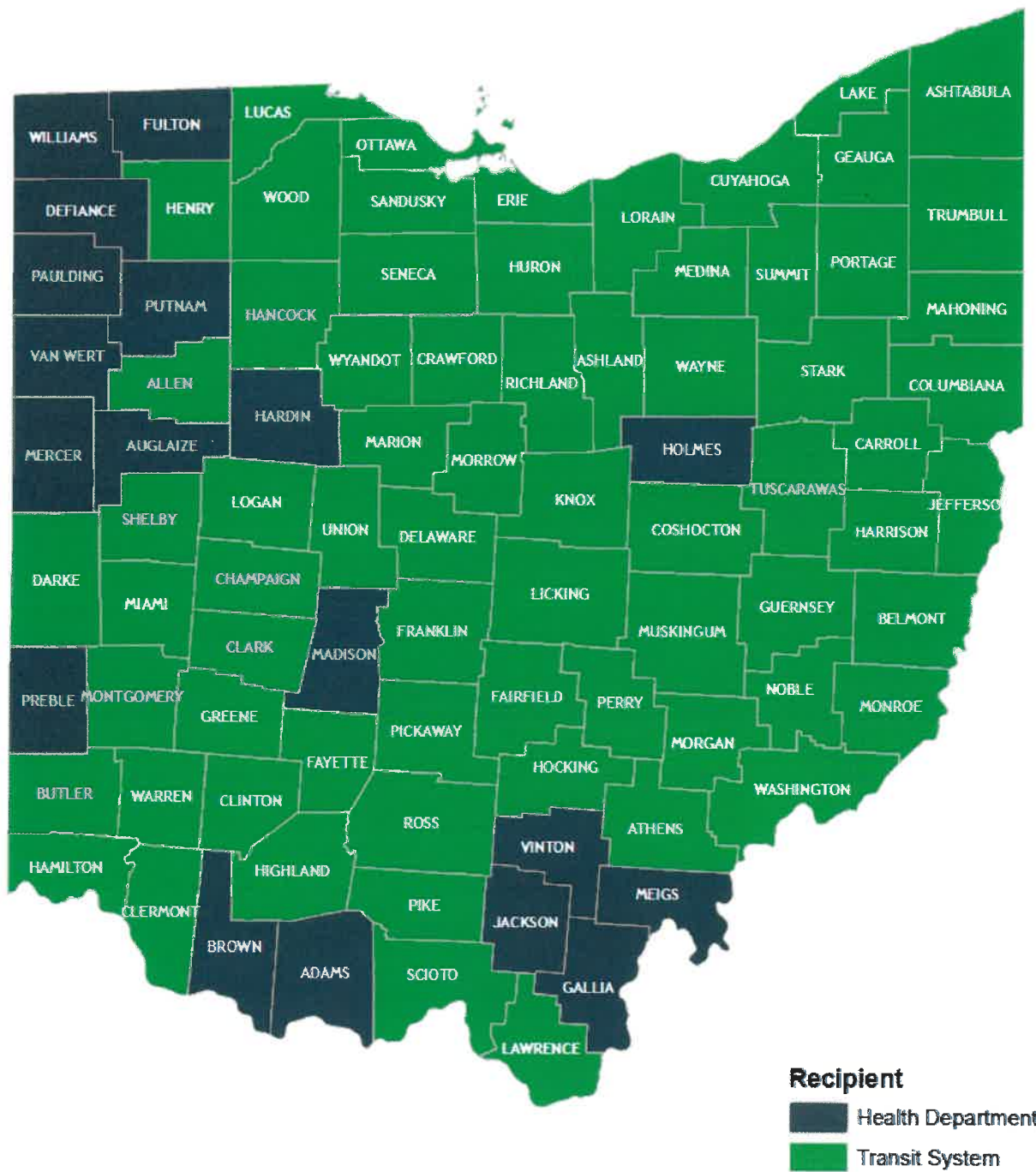
The Rides for Community Immunity program will provide \$7 million distributed across all 88 counties to help get Ohio’s most vulnerable populations transportation to vaccine locations. For the 70 counties that have public transit programs, ODOT will be awarding the funds directly to public transit agencies. In the 18 counties that do not have transit service the funding will be given to the county health department and can be used for purchased transportation services.

“Transportation should not be a hurdle to any eligible Ohioan who wants to be vaccinated. We’re doing everything we can to make sure that access is available to all Ohioans, not just those with a vehicle or that live near a vaccination site,” said ODOT Director Jack Marchbanks.

All public transit recipients will work with their local county health department and local emergency management agency to identify the best way to use these funds. Local officials could leverage existing investments, such as offering vouchers for transit passes, or use these funds in conjunction with other transportation resources to help cover any additional cost that may be associated with keeping our communities healthy.

“Governor DeWine’s decision to provide additional funding targeted to support transportation to vaccination sites will help public transit agencies address the challenges of identifying and reaching those communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19,” said Claudia Amrhein, General Manager/CEO of Portage Area RTA and President of the Ohio Public Transportation Association. “As public transit providers continue serving our communities through this pandemic, we are well positioned to coordinate with public health departments and county EMAs to facilitate access to vaccination sites.”

Funding will be distributed based on the most recent U.S. Census data and will not require any type of local match. Ohioans who have transportation needs are encouraged to reach out to either their local public transit agency or health department for details specific to their area.



Health clinic eyed for downtown Kent

Kaitlyn McGarvey

Record-Courier

USA TODAY NETWORK

Kent health officials are hoping to create a clinic on the ground floor of Portage Area Regional Transportation Agency's Central Gateway facility in downtown Kent that could eventually offer a number of health services to the community.

The city's health department has been leasing space on the second floor of the East Erie Street facility for about six months. Amending the terms of the lease would allow the department to open a clinic on the ground floor.

Kent City Health Commissioner Joan Seidel has envisioned a clinic on the ground floor of the building for some time and space recently became available for one, City Manager Dave Ruller said. The Gateway facility would be an ideal location because of its nearby parking deck and bus station.

Seidel said it would be great to have more room and flexibility in options to offer the community. She said initially the department would use the space for COVID-19 services. Down the road,

See CLINIC, Page 2A

Clinic

Continued from Page 1A

options could become more diverse including blood pressure screenings, blood sugar screenings and healthy cooking demonstrations. It could become a revenue source for the city, she said.

Ruller recently asked City Council to approve the amendment to the original lease agreement and let the city work through the additional details. The city is currently looking to utilize that space only until the end of 2021, which council unanimously supported. Council will vote whether to approve the item at its next full council meeting on Wednesday.

However, comments made at the March 3 council meeting by Councilman Garret Ferrara about a "stigma" regarding bus stations and whether a clinic is something the city would want in downtown

Kent has caused PARTA to challenge perceptions of public transit.

The stigma Ferrara was referring to, he later said, was that of drug addicts hanging around the sidewalks outside of a bus station.

In response to those comments, Brian Trautman, PARTA's chief operating officer, penned a statement challenging perceptions of public transportation. Those perceptions are often at odds with reality, he said. That detachment frequently obscures the true nature of the experience people have with public transit.

There should be no "stigma" around bus stations in general or the Kent Central Gateway in particular, Trautman wrote.

"Transit systems throughout the country strive to provide comfortable, welcoming, and accessible environments to the public," he said. "When these high standards are not met, it can often be attributed more

readily to a lack of adequate funding than any other reason."

Public transportation and its facilities are available to serve everyone in the community regardless of personal circumstances. The ability to move about in society, such as to get to the grocery store or pharmacy, is fundamental to human survival.

In a later interview, Ferrara said he spoke with representatives of PARTA to understand their concerns and clarify his comments. He said he did not mean to disparage the Kent Central Gateway and apologized for the misunderstanding. The building critical to the success of the community going forward, he said.

"The intent of my comment was to ensure that we focus on the long-term planning of the downtown area, including the Central Gateway, well beyond the pandemic," Ferrara said.

The Portage County NAACP also objected to Ferrara's comments.

NAACP President Geraldine Hayes-Nelson wrote in a letter to council, "Last week's statement from Mr. Ferrara reveals that, indeed, the structural racism that has historically manifested as redlining and sundown towns is alive and well in our community. We can and should do better."

At the March 3 council meeting, Seidel said the Gateway was ideal because it can easily bring people to the clinic's door for a small fee. Plus, being downtown is helpful in terms of other services offered by the department.

"We're not looking to become just solely a clinic," Seidel said. "The Kent Central Gateway is just a great location to operate out of for all of the programs we choose to provide."

Reporter Kaitlyn McGarvey can be reached at kmgarvey@recordpub.com or on Twitter at [@kaitlynmcg_rc](https://twitter.com/kaitlynmcg_rc)

Mass vaccination clinics to be held in Portage

Bob Gaetjens
Ravenna Record-Courier
USA TODAY NETWORK

Two mass COVID-19 vaccination clinics are planned for Portage County in the coming week as Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine has expanded eligibility to those 40 and older starting Friday.

First COVID-19 vaccine clinic planned at PARTA Central Gateway

The first, hosted by AxessPointe, will take place at the PARTA Central Gateway facility at 2000 Summit Street in Kent from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday, according to AxessPointe Chief Executive Officer Mark Frisone.

AxessPointe will have 500 vaccines on hand, Frisone said. There are no appointments available for Thursday's clinic, but Frisone said he hopes to host another clinic in Kent in the near future.



Portage County Health Department Public Health Nurse Mamie Sawyer-Brewer fills a syringe preparing for a recent COVID-19 vaccination clinic at Community EMS in Garrettsville. BOB GAETJENS/RECORD-COURIER

Second vaccine clinic planned at Kent State University Field House

The second, much larger clinic will take place from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Kent State University Field

House, located at 2227 Summit Street in Kent, the university announced Tuesday. The clinics at the field house will continue each Tuesday throughout the spring.

The clinic is open to all Portage County residents who are eligible. According to the announcement, registration is required through the Portage County Health District.

"The health district expects to be able to administer 1,600 shots per day at these clinics," according to information from Kent State.

Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccine will be available.

Kent State also announced that the Ohio Department of Health has approved University Health Services to become a COVID-19 vaccine provider. However, the university has not been notified if or when any vaccine will arrive for distribution at the DeWeese Health Center.

In an email, Manfred van Dulmen, who is heading Kent State's Pandemic Leadership Committee, is urging all

members of the university community to get the vaccine to help return to more traditional campus operations for the fall semester.

Frisone said Thursday's mass vaccine clinic likely won't be the last hosted by AxessPointe.

"I want to get word out because we could easily return to this site in the next couple weeks and vaccinate a whole lot more folks," he said.

He said AxessPointe is one of just three qualified health centers in the state of Ohio with direct access to the Federal COVID vaccine stockpile, which Frisone said should be a "game-changer" for Portage County.

As of Friday, all Ohioans age 40 and up and all those with medical conditions including cancer, heart disease, obesity and chronic kidney disease are eligible for a vaccination.

By March 29, all Ohioans age 16 and older will be eligible.

Reporter Bob Gaetjens can be reached at bgaetjens@recordpub.com and [@bobgaetjens_rc](https://twitter.com/bobgaetjens_rc).

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The first, hosted by AxessPointe, will take place at the PARTA Central Gateway facility at 2000 Summit Street in Kent from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday, according to AxessPointe Chief Executive Officer Mark Frisone.

AxessPointe will have 500 vaccines on hand, Frisone said. There are no appointments available for Thursday's clinic, but Frisone said he hopes to host another clinic in Kent in the near future.

Second vaccine clinic planned at Kent State University Field House

The second, much larger clinic will take place from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Kent State University Field House, located at 2227 Summit Street in Kent, the university announced Tuesday. The clinics at the field house will continue each Tuesday throughout the spring.

The clinic is open to all Portage County residents who are eligible. According to the announcement, registration is required through the Portage County Health District.

"The health district expects to be able to administer 1,600 shots per day at these clinics," according to information from Kent State.

Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccine will be available.

Kent State also announced that the Ohio Department of Health has approved University Health Services to become a COVID-19 vaccine provider. However, the university has not been notified if or when any vaccine will arrive for distribution at the DeWeese



Portage County Health Department Public Health Nurse Mamie Sawyer-Brewer fills a syringe preparing for a recent COVID-19 vaccination clinic at Community EMS in Garrettsville. BOB GAETJENS/RECORD-COURIER

Health Center.

In an email, Manfred van Dulmen, who is heading Kent State's Pandemic Leadership Committee, is urging all members of the university community to get the vaccine to help return to more traditional campus operations for the fall semester.

Frisone said Thursday's mass vaccine clinic likely won't be the last hosted by AxessPointe.

"I want to get word out because we could easily return to this site in the next couple weeks and vaccinate a whole lot more folks," he said.

He said AxessPointe is one of just three qualified health centers in the state of Ohio with direct access to the Federal COVID vaccine stockpile, which Frisone said should be a "game-changer" for Portage County.

As of Friday, all Ohioans age 40 and up and all those with medical conditions including cancer, heart disease, obesity and chronic kidney disease are eligible for a vaccination.

By March 29, all Ohioans age 16 and older will be eligible.

500 doses delivered at AxessPointe clinic

03.19.2021



Nancy Chia, AxessPointe pharmacist, reviews paperwork and asks additional questions to a man waiting to be vaccinated. AxessPointe administered 500 first doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

PHOTOS BY LISA SCALFARO

Bob Gaetjens Record-Courier
USA TODAY NETWORK

Ten thousand doses a week.

That's what Marc Frisone, CEO of AxessPointe Community Health Centers, says the federally qualified health center can access through the Federal COVID-19 Vaccine Stockpile.

The important follow-up question is, "How can I get rid of 10,000 doses?" he said. "Therein lies the problem. The script has flipped."

Now that there are vaccines available, it's a matter coordinating locally to bring together enough people to run a large mass vaccine clinic, he explained.

AxessPointe, with help from the Kent Health Department, Kent Fire Department, nursing students from Kent State University, PARTA and community healthcare workers, was able to administer 500 first doses of Moderna vaccine on Thursday, according to Jennifer Hayes, AxessPointe's chief financial officer.

"We have over 12,000 people who have registered on our website for the vaccine," she said.

The next Portage County AxessPointe clinics will be April 14 and 15, Hayes said. The April 15 clinic will

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Xin Chen, a NEOMED student, administers the vaccine to Elona Palur, of Stow, at the mass vaccination clinic.

Clinic

Continued from Page 1A

administer second doses to Thursday's patients. In the interim, she said there will be several clinics in the Akron area.

The bottleneck now to quickly administering vaccines, explained Hayes and Frisone, is finding enough people to staff the clinic. There's much more to it than just injecting a vaccine and watching people to make sure they don't have an allergic reaction immediately after.

There have to be people to welcome and check eligibility as people arrive, people to give shots, people to fill syringes and people to compile data for the Ohio Department of Health and federal Health Resources and Service Administration. HRSA asks newly vaccinated people to fill out a questionnaire with a series of demographic questions aimed at tracking who's getting the vaccine from federally qualified health centers.

Dr. Magdi Awad, AxessPointe's director of pharmacy services, said part of the challenge of a mass clinic is balancing the need to prequalify and track doses with the need for a smooth, easy process.

"It does put a lot of burden on us to ask our patients to do this and then have to enter it manually," he said of the HRSA questionnaire, which asks patients about their income, sexual orientation, housing status and more.

During their 15-minute post-vaccine observation period, two men said the AxessPointe mass vaccination clinic was well-run.

"It was beyond smooth," said Harry Koester of Akron. "There was a bunch of chair sitting, but that's it."

Sean Mercer of Kent agreed.

"I think it was really good," he said. "I was just reading on Facebook a post about the clinic at [the Wolstein Center at Cleveland State University] being very efficient, and I thought to myself,

"This was pretty darn efficient."

Once inside, patients moved from a registration table where their eligibility would be checked to one of four tables where the vaccine was being administered, to a chair where they could rest for 15 minutes of observation (or 30 minutes, depending on their history with allergies) where Kent State University nursing students compiled data to report to HRSA and the ODH.

Frisone said he's grateful for all the volunteers, as well as PARTA which agreed to provide the bus garage for future mass vaccine clinics, as well.

"PARTA's doing everything we could possibly ask of them in terms of partnership; it's a beautiful thing," he said. "It was nice of them to let us use their facility over and over and over again."

PARTA Chief of Operations Brian Trautman said they had the space and it will provide a service to the community.

"What we've done at PARTA is basically ar-

ranged for them to use our new facility," he said. "It's an indoor bus storage facility out back that is really ideal to facilitate this kind of event where you have a mass group of people coming in."

PARTA Chief Executive Officer Claudia Amrhein said the buses don't need to be inside since the snow and ice of winter have abated.

She said PARTA also can provide free rides to people who need transportation to and from vaccination clinics. She and Hayes are considering how to better identify people registered for the AxessPointe's clinics as they get on the bus.

"Late last week ... Gov. [Mike] DeWine announced \$7 million that they were going to provide for COVID-19 vaccine transportation," she said.

As a local RTA service, she said PARTA is getting \$97,000 of that money to help provide free rides to clinics.

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