

**Agenda**

1. Call to Order Oral  
Roll Call
2. Meeting Minutes Attachment 2a  
Minutes from March 25, 2021, Meeting (Motion Required)
3. Guest Communications (Not required due to COVID-19) Oral
4. General Manager's Report Attachment 4
5. Committee Reports  
    a. Administration Scheduled to Meet 4/22 via Zoom  
    b. Finance Scheduled to Meet 4/20 via Zoom  
    c. Operations Did Not Meet  
    d. Personnel Did Not Meet
6. Old Business
7. New Business
  - Presentation on East Main Street Project by Clayton Popik
8. Resolution - Roll Call Approval Required

**#2021-04-01: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF APPLICATIONS WITH THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA), AN OPERATING ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, FOR FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZED BY 49 U.S.C. CHAPTER 53, TITLE 23, UNITED STATES CODE, AND OTHER FEDERAL STATUTES ADMINISTERED BY THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA).**

**#2021-04-02: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF APPLICATIONS WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (ODOT) FOR FY 2022 TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE GRANTS. THESE GRANTS MAY INCLUDE THE OHIO ELDERLY AND DISABLED TRANSIT FARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, THE URBAN TRANSIT PROGRAM, THE OHIO TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (OTP2), THE SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (SECTION 5310), AND THE OHIO RIDES TO COMMUNITY IMMUNITY PROGRAM.**
9. Executive Session (if needed) – Roll Call Approval Required
10. Adjournment

**Next Regular Meeting:**  
**May 27, 2021 @ 7 p.m.**  
**Via Zoom**

***PARTA***  
**PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**

**Held Remotely Via Zoom**

**March 25, 2021**

**Board Members Participating:**

Karen Beck  
Marge Bjerregaard  
Richard Brockett  
Jeff Childers  
Debbie Davison

David Gynn, President  
Virginia Harris (arrived at 7:06 p.m.)  
Michael Lewis, Vice President  
R. T. Mansfield

Jack Murphy  
Morgan Tipton  
Frank Vitale  
Marvin Woods

**Staff Participating:**

Claudia Amrhein  
Marcia Fletcher  
Kelly Jurisch

Justin Markey, Legal Counsel  
Clayton Popik

Rebecca Schrader  
Brian Trautman

**Board Members Not Participating:**

Karen Wise (2<sup>nd</sup> excused absence)

**Guests Participating:**

None.

**CALL TO ORDER**

President David Gynn called the *PARTA* Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. He asked Ms. Marcia Fletcher to call the roll.

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

Mr. Gynn thanked everyone for coming and reminded everyone that this is an open meeting. He expressed his appreciation for those individuals who log in and listen to the Board meetings.

Mr. Gynn said the next item was the minutes from the February 25, 2021, meeting. He asked for a motion for approval. Ms. Marge Bjerregaard made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, which was seconded by Mr. R. T. Mansfield. Mr. Gynn asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, he asked all those in favor to say aye. He asked those who disapproved to say nay. 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 thanked Ms. Claudia Amrhein for her very thorough General Manager's report this month and asked if she had anything to add.

Ms. Amrhein shared some good news. She said she heard about an hour ago that yesterday the Ohio Senate passed the transportation bill, which was concurred by the House. Funding for public transit was increased from the \$7.3 million that was introduced by the Governor's office to about \$70 million total, which is a combination of General Revenue Funds (GRF) and federal flex dollars, but it is equal to the last two (2) year budget. This was a huge win.

Mr. Gynn thanked Ms. Amrhein for her trips to Columbus testifying on behalf of all the transit agencies in Ohio.

Ms. Amrhein said a lot of people put work into this. Now it goes to the Governor's office where it could be vetoed but she is confident that it will not. She asked if there were any questions.

Mr. R. T. Mansfield asked if the Governor had a line-item veto that he could use.

Ms. Amrhein said she thinks he does but the Senate voted 33 to zero and there were eight (8) in the House who voted against it. The whole transportation budget, which transit is a small slice of, was overwhelmingly supported. Stay tuned.

Mr. Gynn said he appreciated the positive publicity included in the Board packet, as well as Ms. Amrhein's comment about Transit Driver Appreciation Day and how it is not just for the transit drivers but all the transit employees. He expressed his appreciation also.

Ms. Amrhein said it is good to have a day that is set aside to show transit employees how much they are appreciated.

Mr. Gynn asked if there were any questions for Ms. Amrhein. Hearing none, he moved on to the committee reports.

### **ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

Mr. Gynn said the Administration Committee did not meet this month. They will meet next month prior to the Board meeting at 6:30 p.m. to serve as the Nominating Committee.

### **FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

Mr. Gynn said the Finance Committee met this month and he asked Mr. Mike Lewis to present the January and February reports.

Mr. Lewis thanked Mr. Gynn and said the January and February reports were covered at the Finance Committee meeting on Tuesday at 11:30 a.m. Ms. Rebecca Schrader first covered a clarification on the Yearly Comparison report between Capital Maintenance Service and Other Materials and Supplies. The budget compared to year-to-date was off significantly because of an accounting correction. Other Materials and Supplies was moved to Capital Maintenance Service.

Moving on to the finance reports, Mr. Lewis said *PARTA* looked good for January and February. In January, \$139,400 was collected from the Elderly & Disabled Fare Assistance grant. January had a gross operating surplus of \$262,560. Sales Tax Revenues continued above budget, which was nice to see. Other than that, things were pretty much in line for this time of the year. Moving on to the February report, most things were in line. There were a lot of software renewals totaling \$21,491, which was reflected in Other Services. Gross operating still ended up at a surplus for the year-to-date period of both months combined at \$386,424, of which \$123,864 was the February amount. Everything else was in line.

Mr. Lewis then moved on to the *PARTA* Capital Finance Report. He said February showed a federal draw down of \$14,955 for part of the five (5) LTV buses through OTP3, along with \$343,200 through 5307 grant funding. The Bus Storage Facility had a draw down of \$400,003 and that is nearing completion. The Restricted funds were at \$2,940,797, which is money set aside for upcoming projects. Overall, *PARTA* looked good.

Moving on to the Kent Central Gateway (KCG) parking graph, Mr. Lewis said 8,024 cars parked in the deck in January 2020. There were 4,534 in January 2021. By April 2020, there were 785. In 2019, there were 10,639 by April. After spring break, Kent State University (KSU) will be going virtual, which will cause some of these numbers to go down again. Hopefully by the time some of the summer events kick in downtown, those numbers will be better than last year in May, June, and July. Year-to-date was doing better. There were some accounts payables that came through since the meeting on Tuesday that changed things a little bit. Prior to those, accounts payables were just above the red but when adjusted, year-to-date was at \$5,078 in the red for February.

Mr. Gynn asked if there were any questions or if anyone from the Finance Committee had anything to add. Hearing nothing further, he thanked Mr. Lewis for his report.

Mr. Lewis said there is one other thing. The Finance Committee reviewed and discussed Resolution 2021-03-01, which was recommended for forwarding to the Board for approval.

### **OPERATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT**

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

### **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT**

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

### **OLD BUSINESS**

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

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Gynn said under New Business, Chief Operating Officer Brian Trautman will provide a presentation on trolleys.

Mr. Trautman pointed out that the KCG numbers for last month were better than they have been. He said they are still in the red but headed in the right direction. Ms. Amrhein asked him to do a short presentation on *PARTA*'s next five (5) year bus procurement that went out on the street this week but more specifically the portion that will allow a streetcar to be reintroduced. Streetcars have long been part of transit systems. He shared a picture of the last Interurban streetcar in downtown Kent, Ohio, in 1932. He said many of the streetcars or trolleys were replaced by urban buses and rails were replaced by rubber tires. The streetcar, however, never lost its classic look or flavor with the American people. He shared a picture of people waiting in line to ride a trolley. He said one of the most difficult aspects today for *PARTA*, which has been discussed many times, is trying to get the select or choice riders to ride public transit. Last year, just before the pandemic hit, he went to Wisconsin to visit a streetcar company called Hometown Trolley. They, along with others, are now producing a streetcar that has a twin as an urban bus, which means they are building a streetcar and an urban bus using the same chassis, drive lines, and componentry. This is important because when it comes to managing maintenance, one of the higher costs is inventory and how that is rolling over. His goal is to roll inventory over by value about two (2) to three (3) times a year. More inventory must be carried when there are more types of vehicles in the fleet. The significance of having two (2) different types of vehicles using the same chassis is very important when it comes to managing inventory. The other part is there are two (2) distinct types of buses that are running on the

same chassis but used in different applications. Over the last year, there have been several different examples brought on site for the maintenance crew to look over. There are many new features that allow for better access to componentry and for repair. He shared a photograph of the back side of the driver's dashboard that opens for repairing or changing out modules. He said the new streetcars are modern and low floor in design, which is significant. They have been electronically updated and upfitted with modern propulsion systems and are fully ADA compliant. These new changes, while keeping the vehicle historically correct, are valuable accomplishments. One significant add this year was his request to build buses with the ability to pull in fresh air from the outside. This company worked with his request, along with subcontractors, to offer a new HVAC system that introduces at least a 50% fresh air blend into the interior of the vehicles. Another unique feature of this trolley manufacturer is a removable side panel window that is replaced with a storm window insert, which will create a more attractive and open environment, and will help attract more choice riders. He shared a photograph that showed the only two (2) tools that are needed to replace the window. He said eight (8) bolts are removed on the inside of the vehicle and then the whole panel of windows comes out and is replaced by a storm curtain. It also has a guardrail to keep riders from falling out. The storm window has a roll down panel so if there is inclement weather, it can be zipped shut and becomes a plastic panel on the side in the summertime. The removable panel windows open the interior of the bus, making it airier. One of the big concerns right now in transit is how to keep a social distance. That openness provides for a good atmosphere inside of the bus. Trolleys have withstood the test of time. Today's modern trolleys provide riders with a safe, fun, and alternative way to get around town. This reintroduction of a streetcar to the PARTA system is designed to be attractive and novel. Conceptual conversations have brought much excitement from the City of Kent and businesses struggling to invite patrons back in for business. Internal theoretical route design conversations led to excitement for the possibilities that using a trolley could bring to PARTA. This could mean choice ridership and more parkers in the deck, which would be a win for all. This would add just another way that PARTA continues to work to promote sustainable communities. Stocking brake parts, air suspensions, and other parts one time for two (2) different types of vehicles over the next five (5) year procurement period is a big deal. In most places where trolleys are running, there is increased ridership because people like the trolleys. A lot of people want to use the trolleys for special events because of the nostalgia that they bring. They would add a different element to the downtown Kent area especially coming out of this pandemic. KCG can be the hub for the trolleys, which would bring people there to park. At the same time, if the City of Kent moves forward with closing some of the roads in the downtown area for outside eating, the trolleys will provide a source of transportation around the parameter. Downtown business owners and the City of Kent have provided positive feedback. He asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Jack Murphy asked how a trolley compares capacity-wise to one of PARTA's standard buses.

Mr. Trautman said with the handmade wooden seating, the capacity might be a little bit better. He shared a photograph of the two (2) forward facing seats flipped up, which are the ADA tie down locations that must be maintained in all vehicles.

Mr. Frank Vitale asked about the cost of a trolley compared to a regular bus and if they would be used in the winter.

Mr. Trautman said the cost might be less than a transit bus. Hometown Trolley is a company that is probably accustomed to 20 buses as a big order but all the buses, regardless of who manufactures them, must go through FTA testing in Pennsylvania called an Altoona test, which simulates a 12-year life cycle on buses. Before FTA money can be spent on a vehicle, it must meet the FTA standards. Because Hometown Trolley is not a big manufacturer, there should be some value on the underside. The trolleys would be used in the winter. The specifications were written for a stainless-steel chassis, battery box, and step wells.

Mr. Jeff Childers asked if these will be replacement buses or added to the fleet.

Mr. Trautman said they will be replacement buses.

Mr. Gynn asked what the estimated time was from ordering to being on the road.

Mr. Trautman said he did not know that yet. That is part of the procurement evaluation that he and Ms. Schrader put together every time for a bus procurement. Delivery, because of COVID-19, will rate high on that system. Influencers decide where grant money will be funneled. In this procurement, he specifically wrote a specification that includes diesel, CNG, and hybrid electric. If electric buses become something that the FTA wants to funnel money to, PARTA will be in the game at that point for the next five (5) years. Other transits that do not have a specification or a bid out there that they have awarded that includes electric buses will be out of the game. This will enable PARTA to steer procurements where the grant dollars tend to flow the best. The grants are rated and awarded based on the criteria that they put forth as the most valuable, which is the same way PARTA does it when rating a bus procurement. This procurement will allow for all three (3) of those aspects, which is very important moving forward.

Ms. Virginia Harris asked if the price would be the same to ride the trolley as it is to ride the bus.

Mr. Trautman said the fare and collection equipment will be the same. The trolleys will be used to target choice audiences. They will initially run Thursday through Saturday/Sunday to attract people who are going out to dinner and spending some time out on the town. Even though there is a three (3) level parking deck downtown, people still say there is no parking downtown. If people get the idea that they can park at KCG and take the trolley anywhere they want to go downtown, it becomes novel and is a big deal. When he was in San Francisco, he can remember waiting 45 minutes to take a trolley ride up and down the side of a hill.

Mr. Murphy asked how often the trolleys would stop at the same location.

Mr. Trautman said currently, the Interurban runs on about a 30-minute headway. If the trolleys start to catch on and there are two (2) or three (3) trolleys in a systematic loop servicing a condensed area at a certain time of the day, it might be every 15 minutes or every 10 minutes. That will be gauged based on the demand. The downtown Kent area was doing superbly before COVID-19 came into play. He thinks the trolley will help bring that back. He said the idea is not to put a trolley in play that is only going to be running in the downtown area on the weekend. They will be used all day long, every day. There is clearly a difference in jumping on a trolley versus jumping on a transit bus. There is a trolley company in Cleveland called Lolly the Trolley that has been successful for quite a long time. It may catch on and more trolleys may be added to the fleet. The trolleys will still last 12 years, the same as an urban bus, will still be ADA compliant, have a low floor application, and meet all the criteria of the FTA.

Mr. Childers asked who else was running these trolleys and how many were expected in the next five (5) years.

Mr. Trautman said Blue Water, Michigan, is one. He has a list of others. On all proposals with manufacturers, they are asked to provide a list of end users. He and Ms. Schrader call them and ask them what problems they have had, if delivery was on time, what the after-sale support was like, if parts were difficult to get, who they use for after-market support as far as a dealership goes, if they are using a dealership, what the training program was like, how the warranty was, etc. These are all the questions asked before a contract is awarded. As far as how many trolleys were expected in the next five (5) years, it will depend on a couple different things. If the trolleys are successful, they may be looked at again on the next procurement. It will also depend on grant money. Grant money is in place right now in the TIP to buy, over the next five (5) years, seven (7) buses. The order being discussed tonight is for three (3) of those seven (7) buses. The next four (4) could be either buses or trolleys. It might be that the trolleys are overwhelmingly successful and more will be added. It might be that the trolleys do not do as great as hoped and more buses will be added. This contract gives the option to go either way.

Ms. Morgan Tipton said this is a brilliant idea and she is very excited. She asked if these trolleys would be circulated elsewhere in Portage County or used for special events or in other downtown areas in the county.

Mr. Trautman said the Interurban route is where these trolleys will probably spend the bulk of their life, which services everything from UH Portage all the way to Stow/Kent. It would also probably end up running on the Raven in Ravenna. In Kent, it would be the Suburban North, which runs from Kent Roosevelt High School south. The only time they might be dedicated would be when a particular audience was being targeted. He imagines when the trolleys start running in Kent, that Ravenna will be interested. He hopes that is a problem that PARTA will have because that would be a good problem.

Mr. Murphy asked if there was any specialized training or license that the drivers will need with these trolleys.

Mr. Trautman said no, drivers are always given specific familiarization training on all the different styles of buses. Each driver will have to spend some time with the trainer going through that vehicle to identify where the switches, electrical shut offs, etc. are located. The trolley is a bus with the same brake system, propulsion, etc.

Mr. Marvin Woods asked if the trolley would start out at KCG so a person could drop their car off and get on the trolley; and if so, would it drop them back off at KCG.

Mr. Trautman said yes, the trolleys would start out at KCG, which most fixed routes do now. The only one that does not frequent KCG currently is Windham/Garrettsville, but it meets up with the Interurban at UH Portage. All the routes will use KCG because that is the hub, that is the transit center, that is where the public restrooms and ticket office are, and it is staffed.

Mr. Gynn asked if there were any questions on this great presentation.

Mr. Mansfield asked if the maintenance facilities would need to be upgraded anywhere near the extent that was done for CNG if any of these buses use the hybrid electric system.

Mr. Trautman said no. He has investigated this quite a bit. The most difficult thing about the hybrid electric will be learning about battery cycles for a nickel cadmium (NiCad) battery, how often those need to be swapped out, and getting a program for having those remanufactured and brought back in. They are not going to be fully electric. The hybrid electric has a small generator set inside of it that keeps the batteries charged when needed. A fully electric vehicle would either need to be plugged in or run on rails or wire. It also charges the batteries while braking. As the vehicle is using the braking system, it uses that centrifugal force of the vehicle to charge the batteries. There will be some training for the mechanics, but he has a great crew and is not worried about that at all.

Mr. Gynn thanked Mr. Trautman for his presentation and moved on to the resolution.

### **Resolution**

Mr. Gynn introduced 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).**

Mr. Gynn said this resolution was recommended by the Finance Committee and he asked for a motion for its approval.

**Motion:** R. T. Mansfield **Second:** Karen Beck

Mr. Gynn asked Ms. Amrhein to discuss this resolution.

Ms. Amrhein thanked Mr. Gynn and said this resolution is straight forward. According to the Light Transit Vehicle (LTV) replacement schedule, up to six (6) vehicles will be replaced this year off the contract that was awarded in 2020 to TESCO. It is funded through federal funds and local dollars. The retiring buses will be replaced with these new buses.

Mr. Gynn asked if local sales tax would be used as local match.

Ms. Amrhein said yes.

Mr. Childers asked if the local match was 20% and said his notes show that the last time these buses were purchased, the cost was \$79,600. This time it looks like the cost will be about \$94,000 for each one. He asked if the cost went up \$15,000 just in the last couple years.

Ms. Amrhein said yes, local match is 20%. Some state funds may also be involved and some of that will be local match that has been set aside in Restricted. The last buses cost \$94,000 also and the same resolution was used.

Mr. Trautman said the one thing to keep in mind is that in all the contracts that have years on them, there is a Producer Price Index (PPI) that is cited. Each year of the contract, if the PPI goes up a certain amount, it is automatically applied to the price of the bus.

Mr. Richard Brockett asked what happens to the old buses when the replacements come in.

Ms. Amrhein said they are sold competitively on eBay.

Mr. Brockett asked how much they were sold for and what they do with the buses.

Ms. Amrhein said one was sold last week for a little over \$5,000, which meant it had to be reported to the FTA because \$5,000 is the limit. People buy used buses all the time and use them for whatever they want. Also, people need them for the wheelchair lift. There is still life in the buses for less concentrated use.

Mr. Trautman said a lot of buses are sold to churches. When the LTVs are sold, they have somewhere between 275,000 miles and 400,000 miles on them, a lot of them are on their second or third transmission, and some of them are on their second engine. The whole secret is selling them when the depreciation meets the maintenance cost.

Mr. Gynn asked if there were any other questions. Hearing none, he asked for a roll call vote.

<b>Roll Call:</b>	<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>		<b><u>Yes</u></b>	<b><u>No</u></b>
Virginia Harris	<u>X</u>	_____	Marvin Woods	<u>X</u>	_____
Debbie Davison	<u>X</u>	_____	<b>Karen Wise</b>	<b>EXCUSED</b>	_____
Jeff Childers	<u>X</u>	_____	Frank Vitale	<u>X</u>	_____
Richard Brockett	<u>X</u>	_____	Morgan Tipton	<u>X</u>	_____
Marge Bjerregaard	<u>X</u>	_____	Jack Murphy	<u>X</u>	_____
Karen Beck	<u>X</u>	_____	Mike Lewis	<u>X</u>	_____
R. T. Mansfield	<u>X</u>	_____	David Gynn	<u>X</u>	_____



Mr. Gynn said the motion was approved unanimously. He said there is no need for an Executive Session. He asked Mr. Justin Markey if he had anything to add.

Mr. Markey said he did not.

Mr. Gynn asked if the staff had anything to add.

Ms. Kelly Jurisch provided an update on PPTAFI and said the annual golf outing, scheduled for May 21, would not be held this year.

Mr. Gynn asked if there was an alternate way to raise the funds that would normally come from the golf outing.

Ms. Jurisch said solicitations will go out to the businesses that normally support the golf outing asking for donations.

Mr. Gynn thanked Ms. Jurisch for the announcement and asked if anybody else had anything to add.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Hearing nothing further, Mr. Gynn asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Marge Bjerregaard made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Mike Lewis. Mr. Gynn asked all in favor to say aye. He asked any opposed to signify by saying no. Hearing no opposition, the **motion to adjourn passed unanimously**.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,




Marcia Fletcher  
Executive Assistant

**PARTA**  
**2000 Summit Road**  
**Kent, Ohio 44240**

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**GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

**TO:** PARTA Board of Trustees   
**FROM:** Claudia B. Amrhein, General Manager  
**DATE:** April 2021

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**Committee Meetings and Resolutions.** The April agenda includes resolutions required annually to authorize state and federal grant filings. The finance committee will meet remotely via Zoom on Tuesday, April 20, at 11:30 a.m. to review March financial reports.

The administration committee will meet remotely via Zoom on Thursday, April 22, at 6:30 p.m. to review Resolutions #2021-04-01 and #2021-04-02 to authorize grant application submissions to ODOT and FTA in fiscal year 2022. In addition, the administration committee will consider board officer nominations for President, Vice President, and Temporary Presiding Officer (TPO) for one-year terms beginning in July.

Clayton Popik will provide an overview of the project we submitted to Congressman Tim Ryan on short notice for consideration in FY 2022 transportation appropriations. See below for further details. This month's report does not include a "Transit Trends" feature. I am working with Denise Baba to improve the design and plan the content going forward.

**Audits, Deadlines, and Changes.** April continues to be filled with compliance requirement deadlines, grant submission deadlines, and changes to processes. The annual financial audit began on April 5 and auditors will continue working on-site until Friday, April 16. National Transit Database (NTD) reporting now includes new COVID-related data points. The COVID data is due April 16 and monthly thereafter and ridership information is due April 30. Grant applications for state grant funding also are due April 30. The virtual Triennial Review "site visit" is scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, April 19 and 20. The reviewer carved out two (2) hours to enable us to hold and attend the finance committee meeting on Tuesday.

**RLB Phoenix Lease Agreement.** Discussions over the terms for releasing RLB Phoenix from the retail space agreement are ongoing and cooperative. RLB has agreed to allow the Kent City Health Department to move into the vacant space while contract discussions continue. The terms for the one-year lease arrangement with KCHD were included in the March board packet.

**Annual Federal and State Grant Award Resolutions.** Resolutions #2021-04-01 and #2021-04-02 are template resolutions required annually by FTA and ODOT to authorize the filing of applications for federal and state transportation assistance grant funding each fiscal year. The grant dollars we receive through these funding sources support the day-to-day delivery of transit services.

**#2021-04-01: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF APPLICATIONS WITH THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA), AN OPERATING ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, FOR FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZED BY 49 U.S.C. CHAPTER 53, TITLE 23, UNITED STATES CODE, AND OTHER FEDERAL STATUTES ADMINISTERED BY THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA).**

The federal resolution remains the same as previous years and encompasses federal transportation grants that flow through FTA, including any pandemic-related operating assistance. In addition, another potential funding source became available in March when Congress reinstated the use of "earmarking" that allows Congress members to request federal dollars for local projects. See the enclosed Cleveland Plain Dealer

article for more background on the history of earmarks. In the early 2000s, earmark funding awarded to KSU to study parking deck locations eventually paved the way for *PARTA*'s TIGER Grant award which funded Kent Central Gateway construction.

Congressman Ryan accepted applications for projects within a short timeframe, with submissions due by April 7. The City of Kent and KSU submitted a joint request for \$2 million to support the planned East Main Street improvements project. The project will begin at the Kent Central Gateway intersection and extend east to Horning Road. It will redesign the corridor as a four-lane tree-lined boulevard with a side path for bicycles, wide sidewalks, and improved pedestrian crossings.

Clayton worked with the Kent City Engineer Jim Bowling to develop *PARTA*'s complementary request for funding to support improved accessibility for non-vehicle transportation along the corridor. If awarded, this grant will fund improvements for seven (7) bus stops along E. Main St. that serviced 60,194 passenger trips across five (5) routes in 2018-2019. The total project cost is estimated at \$475,000, with 80% federal support. A graphic of current bus stops, routes, and ridership data is included in this packet.

**#2021-04-02: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (*PARTA*) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF APPLICATIONS WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (ODOT) FOR FY 2022 TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE GRANTS. THESE GRANTS MAY INCLUDE THE OHIO ELDERLY AND DISABLED TRANSIT FARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, THE URBAN TRANSIT PROGRAM, THE OHIO TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (OTP2), THE SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (SECTION 5310), AND THE OHIO RIDES TO COMMUNITY IMMUNITY PROGRAM.**

The ODOT resolution has been modified to include the recently announced "Rides to Community Immunity" COVID-19 vaccination transportation funding. In addition, Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities – Section 5310 funding – also is included in the ODOT resolution. This is a change from previous years when the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) handled 5310 grant management.

**Service Reports. Ridership.** (*Coronavirus closures began March 2020*). Total county fixed route and DART ridership decreased by 53.13% through March, as compared to March 2020 with total county service performing 45,093 trips as compared to 96,215 trips performed through March 2020. County fixed route service has decreased by approximately 55.98% as compared to last year, with 35,812 trips completed through March as compared to 81,348 trips completed through March 2020. DART service has decreased by 37.57% through March as compared to March 2020, with 9,281 trips completed as compared to 14,867 trips completed through March 2020.

Overall ridership, including campus service, decreased by 77.35%, with campus down by 90.53%. Total system ridership totaled 63,424 as compared to 280,038 through March 2020.

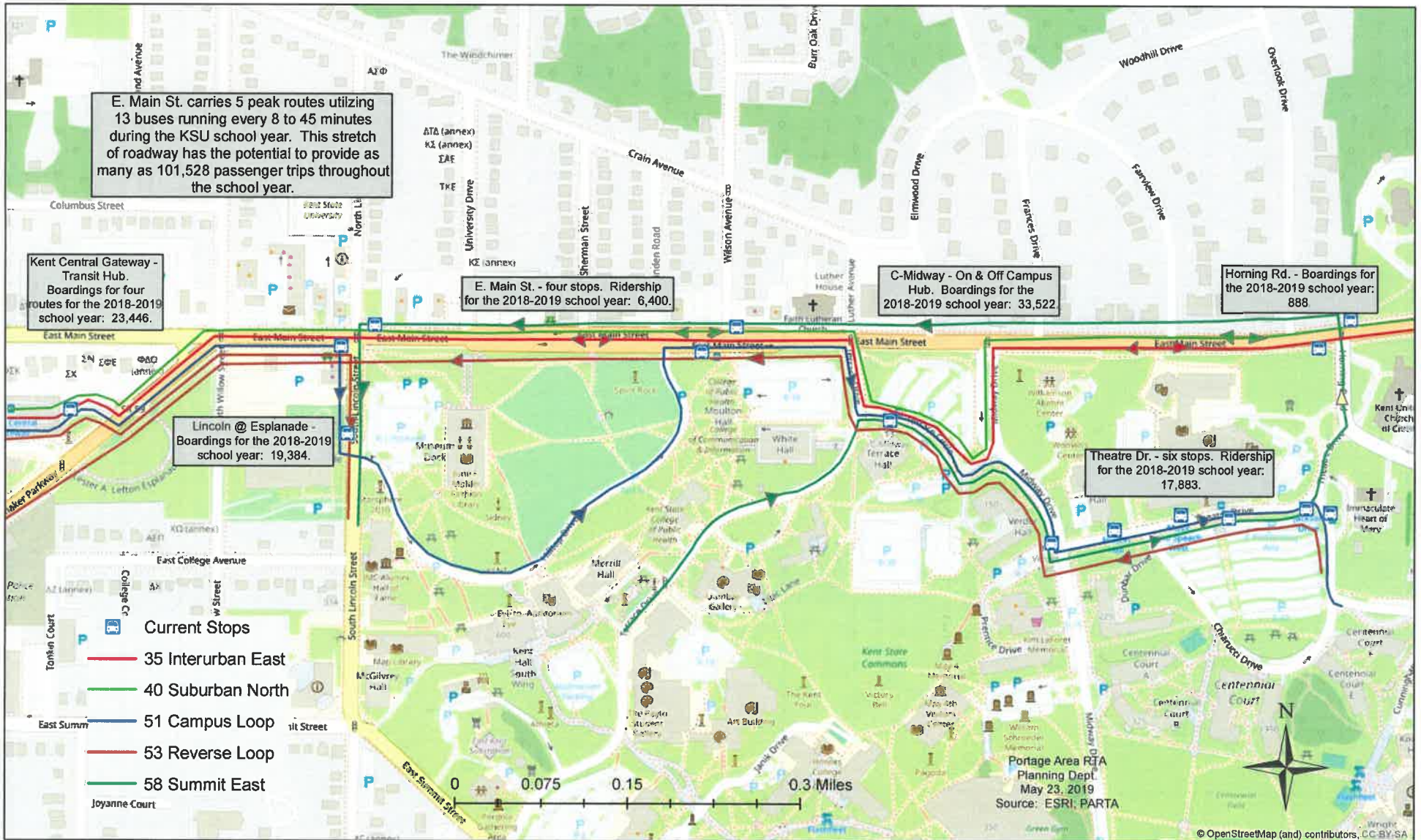
**On-Time Compliance.** *ADA Complementary Paratransit Service.* ADA on-time compliance was 96.94% in March as compared to 94.72% in February. Of 620 trips, 19 were performed late, with the latest running 24 minutes behind. *General Public (non-ADA) DART.* On-time performance for general public, non-ADA trips improved slightly to 87.03% for March, as compared to 86.73% in February 2021. *Vehicle Preventative Maintenance (PM).* On-time compliance with established PM inspection schedules was 99% in March as compared to 100% in February 2021.

**Parking Deck.** Parking improved significantly in March, increasing by 35% as compared to February and by 33% as compared to March 2020. Total cars using the deck in March totaled 6,738 as compared to 4,982 in February and 5,082 in March 2020.

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](mailto:Amrhein.c16@partaonline.org).



## Current PARTA Service Along E. Main St.





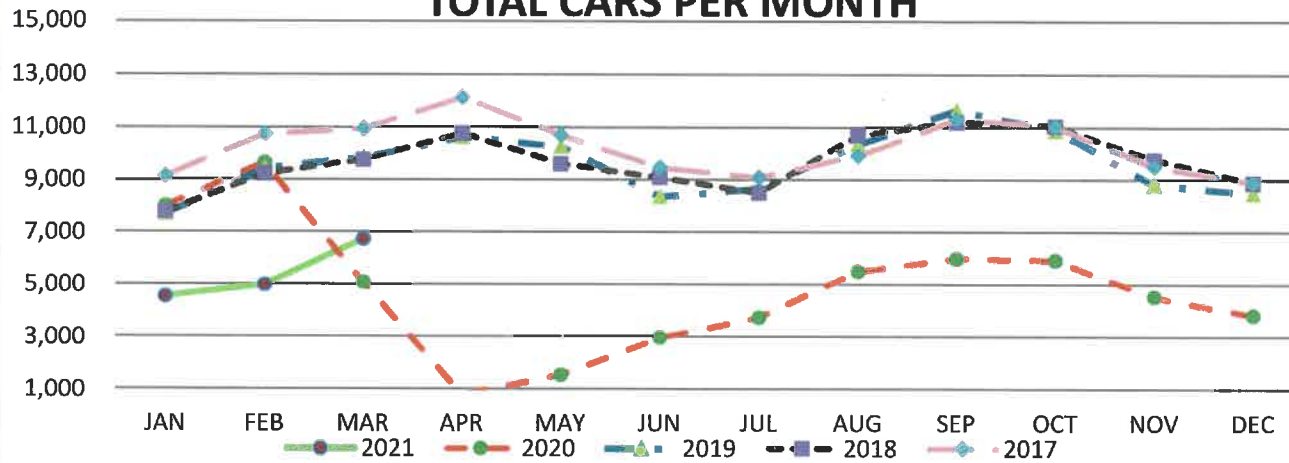
# KENT CENTRAL GATEWAY PARKING SUMMARY - March 2021

6 Month Lookback						
	Monthly	Transient	Total	Cars/Day	Last	Last Year
Oct-20	3,876	2,062	5,938	198	-1%	-45%
Nov-20	3,093	1,445	4,538	151	-24%	-49%
Dec-20	2,565	1,263	3,828	123	-16%	-55%
Jan-21	2,953	1,581	4,534	146	18%	-43%
Feb-21	3,238	1,744	4,982	178	10%	-48%
Mar-21	4,181	2,557	6,738	217	35%	33%

## Annual Comparison

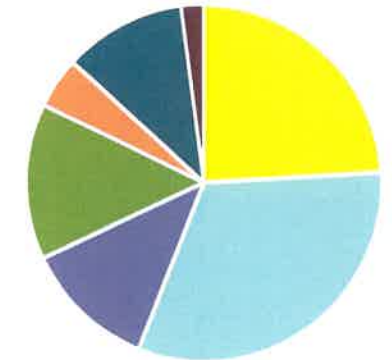
	2021	2020	2019
JAN	4,534	8,024	7,707
FEB	4,982	9,642	9,424
MAR	6,738	5,082	9,836
APR		785	10,639
MAY		1,535	10,268
JUN		2,961	8,371
JUL		3,730	8,672
AUG		5,502	10,352
SEP		5,996	11,657
OCT		5,938	10,888
NOV		4,538	8,812
DEC		3,828	8,505
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,254</b>	<b>57,561</b>	<b>118,373</b>
	-28.5%	-50.0%	

## TOTAL CARS PER MONTH

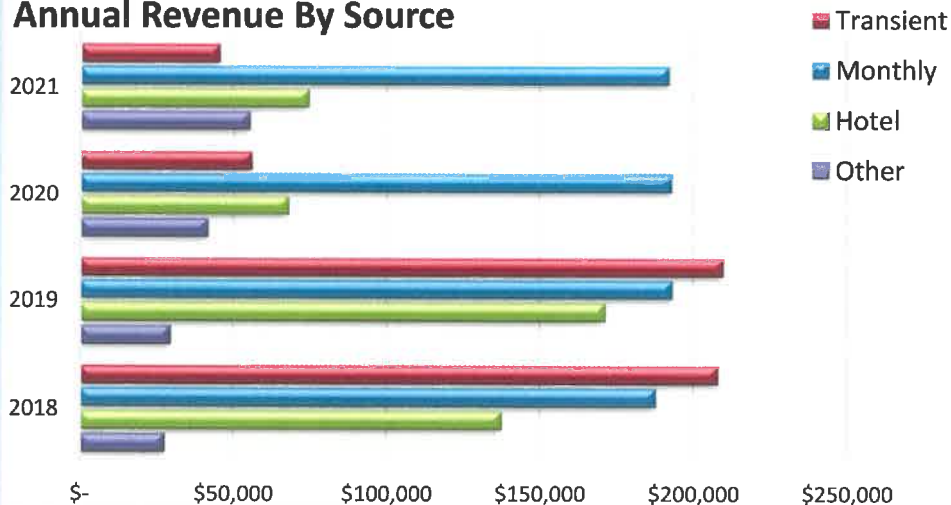


## # Rate Types Collected

- \$1.00
- \$2.00
- \$3.00
- \$4.00
- \$5.00
- \$6 - \$9
- \$10 - \$15
- >15

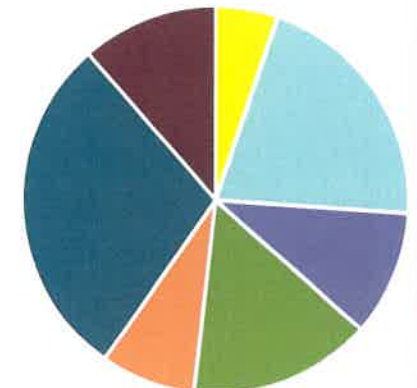


## Annual Revenue By Source



## \$ Rate Types Collected

- \$1.00
- \$2.00
- \$3.00
- \$4.00
- \$5.00
- \$6 - \$9
- \$10 - \$15
- >15



**RESOLUTION #2021-04-01**

**A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF APPLICATIONS WITH THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA), AN OPERATING ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, FOR FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZED BY 49 U.S.C. CHAPTER 53, TITLE 23, UNITED STATES CODE, AND OTHER FEDERAL STATUTES ADMINISTERED BY THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA).**

**WHEREAS**, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has been delegated authority to award federal financial assistance for a transportation project; and

**WHEREAS**, the grant or cooperative agreement for federal financial assistance will impose certain obligations upon the applicant and may require the applicant to provide the local share of the project cost; and

**WHEREAS**, the applicant has or will provide all annual certification and assurances to the FTA required for the project; and

**WHEREAS**, the applicant is the Designated Recipient as defined by 49 U.S.C. §5307 (A)(2).

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

1. The General Manager, or her designee, is authorized to execute and file an application for federal assistance on behalf of the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for federal assistance authorized by 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53, Title 23, United States Code, or other federal statutes authorizing a project administered by the FTA.
2. The General Manager, or her designee, is authorized to execute and file with its application the annual certification and assurances and other documents the FTA requires before awarding a federal assistance grant or cooperative agreement.
3. The General Manager, or her designee, is authorized to execute grant and cooperative agreements with the FTA on behalf of PARTA.

**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 April 22, 2021.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
David Gynn, President  
Board of Trustees

\_\_\_\_\_  
Attested

**RESOLUTION #2021-04-02**

**A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF APPLICATIONS WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (ODOT) FOR FY 2022 TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE GRANTS. THESE GRANTS MAY INCLUDE THE OHIO ELDERLY AND DISABLED TRANSIT FARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, THE URBAN TRANSIT PROGRAM, THE OHIO TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (OTP2), THE SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (SECTION 5310), AND THE OHIO RIDES TO COMMUNITY IMMUNITY PROGRAM.**

**WHEREAS**, the State of Ohio, through its FY 2022 programs, has made available funds to assist public transportation systems in Ohio; and

**WHEREAS**, the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) is the transit operator for Portage County and will coordinate transportation service with local agencies, under the Ohio Rides to Community Immunity Program, to provide rides for testing, vaccines, and other COVID-19 related trips regarding this program; and

**WHEREAS**, PARTA is presently providing transit service and observing all federal and state rules regarding these programs.

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

1. The General Manager, or her designee, is hereby authorized to file applications and execute contracts for the FY 2022 Ohio Elderly and Disabled Transit Fare Assistance Program, the FY 2022 Urban Transit Program, the FY 2022 Ohio Transit Partnership Program, the Specialized Transportation Program (Section 5310), and the Ohio Rides to Community Immunity Program on behalf of the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA).
2. The General Manager, or her designee, is authorized to furnish such additional information as the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) may require in connection with these applications.

**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 on April 22, 2021.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
David Gynn, President  
Board of Trustees

\_\_\_\_\_  
Attested



## Earmarks that let Congress members direct money to local projects will resume over objections from some Ohio Republicans

Updated Mar 15, 2021; Posted Mar 15, 2021



Ohio members of Congress regularly earmarked money for maintenance and land acquisition expenses at Cuyahoga Valley National Park when Congress allowed the practice. (Thomas Ondrey/The Plain Dealer)

The Plain Dealer

By [Sabrina Eaton, cleveland.com](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. - A proposed "[Bridge to Nowhere](#)" that would have connected a small Alaskan city with a nearby island became a focus of outrage more than a decade ago over a process called "earmarking" that let Congress members request federal dollars for local projects.

Critics said earmarks funded boondoggles and promoted corruption. Former House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio called them "a symbol of a broken Washington," when he banned them in 2011 after scandals where legislators like [California Republican Randy "Duke" Cunningham](#) traded projects for payoffs.

Democrats who took control of Congress this year have a different view of earmarks. Before the ban, Ohio legislators earmarked money for bridges all over the state, including Cleveland's Fulton Road and Woodland Avenue bridges and restoration of a bridge at Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Ohio hospitals, universities and business groups also got earmarked money from Congress to pay for auditoriums, laboratories, bike paths and theater restorations.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, who the Center for Responsive Politics indicates [sponsored or co-sponsored 74 earmarks totaling \\$121.3 million in the year before the ban](#), "believes that that if they're done right, earmarks are another tool for securing funding for Ohio projects and priorities," a spokeswoman said. "He believes we should use every tool we have to get resources to Ohio communities, so long as the process is fair and transparent."

Last month, the chairs of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees [announced they'll reinstitute](#) earmarks in upcoming spending bills, limiting them to no more than one percent of discretionary spending and limiting each Congress member to 10 funding requests. Democrats say doing so will return control of federal spending to Congress from the executive branch, while Republicans including Ohio's U.S. Sen. Rob Portman and Rep. Jim Jordan want the ban to continue.



“Instead of reviving earmarks, Congress should be pushing to ban them permanently, and I’ve consistently supported legislation to do so,” said a statement from Portman, [who worked to put congressional earmarks online](#) when he headed the Office of Management and Budget during George W. Bush’s presidency. “At a time of record debt, it is more important than ever to eliminate unnecessary and wasteful spending once and for all.”

Jordan, of Champaign County, and Republican Warren Davidson of Miami County [signed a recent letter](#) urging the funding committee chairs “to strongly oppose resurrecting what is widely considered one of the most wasteful and corrupt practices in Congressional history,” observing the practice was “marred by infamous earmarks like the Alaskan ‘Bridge to Nowhere,’ an indoor rainforest in Iowa, a Teapot Museum, and absurd research projects like one analyzing goth culture.”

Citing statistics from the taxpayer watchdog group Citizens Against Government Waste, the letter says earmarks “help enable Washington’s spending addiction” and notes that Congress has doled out more than [111,000 earmarks](#) worth more than \$375 billion since 1991. A database of earmarks from the group [shows Jordan sought two earmarks](#) when the practice was allowed: \$98,400 for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project in Findlay and \$2.4 million for research and development of a “friction stir welding program” at a U.S. Army tank plant in Lima. Earmarks haven’t been allowed during Davidson’s years in Congress.

A coalition of taxpayer watchdog groups including Citizens Against Government Waste, National Taxpayers Union and Taxpayers for Common Sense [sent a letter](#) to members of Congress last month urging rejection of earmarks. The letter called them “one of the most corrupt, inequitable, and wasteful practices in the history of Congress” and said “dressing them up as ‘member-directed spending’ will not change anything.”

“Earmarks are a lazy, unfair, and corrupt way to circumvent the authorization and appropriations process,” said the letter, which observed that members of the House and Senate appropriations committees have been responsible for a disproportionate share of earmarks. “They are not a path to unity; they are a road to fiscal ruin for taxpayers.”

Bainbridge Township Republican Rep. Dave Joyce, a senior member of the Appropriations Committee that makes funding decisions, is more sympathetic to reinstating earmarks. He notes that he wasn’t yet elected when Republicans eliminated earmarks back in 2010, but said he believes “it was the right response to the instances of corruption we were seeing at the time.”

“However, when done responsibly, earmarks provide more efficient benefits to local communities across a wide range of issues including infrastructure projects, economic development initiatives, law enforcement training, and education programs,” said a statement from Joyce. “It’s also important to note that earmarks don’t create new spending. They simply ensure that Congress, which was given the power of the purse by the Constitution, is the entity allocating authorized funding instead of the Executive Branch. Who better to direct funding to your district than your Member of Congress as opposed to a random government bureaucrat? As long as there are strict rules to ensure transparency and prevent any misuse, I would not oppose reinstating earmarks. The benefits that member directed spending would provide local communities cannot be overstated as we work to restore our way of life and rebuild our economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Toledo Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur, who chairs the Appropriations subcommittee that funds energy and water projects, argues that restoring earmarks will allow Congress members “to bring their knowledge and experience to the decision-making.” Kaptur sponsored or co-sponsored 57 earmarks worth \$71.3 million in fiscal 2010, [the Center for Responsive Politics says](#), ranking 28th out of 435 representatives.

“Members want bipartisan reforms that will produce a small number of projects with strong community support, a transparent process where no member’s family can benefit and where projects are audited to ensure money was spent as planned,” said a statement from Kaptur. “Community Project Funding is a critical reform that will make Congress more responsive to the people.”

Niles-area Democratic Rep. Tim Ryan, who chairs an Appropriations subcommittee that funds the government's legislative branch, is similarly sanguine. In the fiscal 2010, he sponsored or co-sponsored 39 earmarks totaling \$35.4 million, ranking 111th out of 435 representatives, [the Center for Responsive Politics indicates](#). Losing the ability to bring home that money "hurt a lot of our communities," says Ryan, and restoring earmarks will provide "a lot of opportunities to bring back more and more money to our communities."

Ryan acknowledged there were occasional instances of corruption amid thousands of congressionally directed earmarks over the years, and says their perpetrators were prosecuted and imprisoned. He argues a few cases of abuse shouldn't taint thousands of legitimate projects that helped local communities, and that Congress members who advocate for district interests in Washington have a deep understanding of their long-term needs.

"We don't want to rely on some formulaic program for our communities to have to only appeal and apply for grants," said Ryan. "Members of Congress should have some say in directing some amount of money back to the district to address the most pressing needs. That's what the earmarking allows to happen, and if you somehow abuse that you should get prosecuted."

# The Portager

**Today is March 19, 2021.**

## *Covid-19*

### **More vaccines need more space**

The Portage County health department is opening a **mass vaccination site at Kent State's Field House** on March 23. The site will replace the NEOMED location and will be able to accommodate more people as vaccine eligibility expands.

#### **What you need to know:**

- The Field House vaccination site will be open every Tuesday this spring.
- The vaccine is free, but registration is required. [Go here](#) to register to be scheduled for an appointment.
- Starting today, vaccine eligibility is open to anyone aged **40 and up** and anyone with certain conditions including cancer, COPD, obesity and chronic kidney or heart disease.
- Both the **Moderna** and **Pfizer** vaccines will be available at the clinic.
- PCHD expects to vaccinate around 2,500 people on the site's opening day.

Starting March 22, **PARTA** will offer free rides to vaccination clinics in Portage County. The service is by appointment only. Call 330-672-7433 to schedule a ride.

# The Portager

**Today is March 22, 2021.**

## *News briefs*

### **'Elusive harbingers of spring'**

Move over groundhogs; we're talking about salamanders. Spotted salamanders go underground for most of the year, emerging only when conditions are just right in the early spring.

Ideastream went out with biologists from **Hiram College** to catch some of the amphibians, testing local frogs, newts and salamanders for possible fungal infections.

### **More news:**

- **Portage County vaccinated 500 people** at the PARTA bus garage mass vaccination clinic on Thursday. Kent State's TV2 reported from the site.
- **Ohio State Highway Patrol** said a 72-year-old Ravenna woman was killed in a car crash on state Route 14 in Edinburg on Friday, 19 News reports.
- We posted a correction on this report of the **Nelson trustees** meeting. The levy on the May 4 ballot is a five-year, 1-mil renewal levy. We incorrectly reported it as a \$1 million levy.

# Ohio hits 1 million COVID cases in just over a year



**Kent Health Commissioner Joan Seidel administers a vaccine at last week's COVID-19 vaccine clinic held at the PARTA garage on Summit Street in Kent.** LISA SCALFARO

## **Randy Ludlow**

The Columbus Dispatch  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine said he never saw a million coming, not during the early days of the pandemic as cases only began to periodically pop up around the state.

Recording 1,444 new COVID-19 in-

fections, the pandemic total surpassed 1 million cases on Monday, slightly more than year after the first three confirmed cases were announced on March 9, 2020.

"I didn't have any idea we would have had a million Ohioans infected," DeWine said Monday at his coronavirus news briefing. "Absolutely no idea."

One in every 12 Ohioans has con-

tracted coronavirus over the past year, with the state imposing a series of stay-at-home, curfew, mask and other orders in a lengthy bid to check the spread of COVID-19.

While cases have plummeted dramatically from their December peak, the pace of progress has stalled out,

**See COVID-19, Page 5A**

# COVID-19

Continued from Page 1A

leaving DeWine and health officials concerned as infectious variants continue to pop up in increasing numbers across the state.

Following weeks of steady declines, new infections effectively flat-lined last week in falling only 1.5% as Ohio ranked 33rd among the states in spread of the virus, according to federal figures.

Meanwhile, with limited testing, Ohio now has 128 cases of the more-contagious B.1.1.7 variant of the virus that causes COVID-19, up from 91 on March 14 and 33 on March 7.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the higher total of B.1.1.7 variant that originated in the United Kingdom on Sunday. Ohio officials have said they expect the variant will become the dominant strain in the state.

However, Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff, chief medical officer of the Ohio Department of Health, said Monday that Ohio now has recorded 173 cases of virus variants, including two new strains that originated in California.

"We're all eager after what has been a very long haul to get our lives back ... but we have not reached the finishing line yet," Vanderhoff cautioned, calling on Ohioans to continue wearing masks and practicing social distancing.

Earlier Monday, during a visit to a Youngstown vaccination site, DeWine authorized health departments and other vaccine providers to give shots to anyone age 16 and older at their discretion if they cannot fill appointment slots this week or next.

DeWine said a minority of Ohio's 1,300 vaccine providers have not been able to fill all their appointments and the new guidance does not change eligibility guidelines, but gives providers flexibility to get doses into arms if appointments are going unfilled.

Currently, COVID-19 vaccines are available to individuals age 40 and older and those with certain health conditions, such as cancer, heart disease or obesity.

**"We're all eager after what has been a very long haul to get our lives back ... but we have not reached the finishing line yet."**

**Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff**

chief medical officer of the Ohio Department of Health

Rural health departments around Central Ohio have reported inoculating Columbus residents willing to travel after not finding appointments close to home.

Starting March 29, all Ohioans ages 16 and older will be eligible for a vaccine. DeWine said Thursday that Ohio will receive a boost of 100,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine next week – in line with the newly eligible Ohioans. The state will soon launch several mass vaccination sites, including ones in Akron, Cincinnati and Columbus.

State health officials reported 1,444 new cases on Monday to increase the total number of COVID-19 infections to 1,001,194. The death toll among Ohioans, amid a state reporting change, remained at 18,340 or about 1.8% of all cases. Older residents age 60 and above account for 93% of the deaths.

The state reported 78 new admissions of virus patients, leaving 854 in hospitals, a 74% decline from two months ago.

After 36,133 additional doses went into arms, the state reported Monday vaccine starts totaling 2.8 million, or 24% of Ohio's population. A total of 1.6 million, or 14% of the population, has received second and final shots.

DeWine also announced revised COVID-19-related visitation rules on Monday for nursing homes and assisted-living facilities, including instructing operators that visitation is mandatory and must last at least 30 minutes. Visitors also can enter residents' rooms and vaccinated residents can touch visitors if they wear masks.

*Reporter Jessie Balmert contributed to this story.  
rludlow@dispatch.com  
@RandyLudlow*





**PARTA's Dial-A-Ride service available for free trips to and from Portage vaccination clinics.** LISA SCALFARO

## **PARTA offering free ride to vaccination clinics**

Special to Record-Courier  
USA TODAY NETWORK

PARTA's Dial-A-Ride service is providing free rides to vaccination sites around Portage County beginning Monday. Free rides will be in effect for trips riders take to and from scheduled COVID-19 vaccination appointments and are available on a first-come-first-served basis, subject to space availability.

"We are doing what we can to remove transportation barriers to assist local health agencies in their efforts to make vaccines widely available," said PARTA General Manager Claudia Amrhein. "PARTA has been up and running throughout the pandemic as an essential service provider and we are well positioned to coordinate transportation for vaccination efforts."

Individuals in need of transportation to vaccine appointments should call PARTA at 330-672-RIDE (7433) to schedule their free trip. Rides are only available to and from vaccination sites and are provided through PARTA's Dial-A-Ride shared ride service.

PARTA is working in cooperation with the Portage County Emergency Management Agency and Portage County Combined Health District on the program. More information about the service can be obtained through the EMA and health district websites and social media or the PARTA website, [www.PARTAonline.org](http://www.PARTAonline.org).

Funding provided through the Ohio Department of Transportation 'Rides to Community Immunity' program is helping to make the free trips available. PARTA is eligible to be reimbursed up to \$97,000 through the program. ODOT is providing \$7 million across all 88 Ohio counties to help get the state's most vulnerable populations transportation to vaccine locations.

# Kent's East Main Street project to kick off in 2025



A roundabout will be created at the intersection of South Willow Street, East Main Street and Haymaker Parkway as part of the East Main improvement project in Kent. PHOTOS BY LISA SCALFARO

## Kaitlyn McGarvey

Record-Courier  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Construction on a project to improve one of the most dangerous corridors in Portage and Summit counties will kick off in 2025, Kent city officials said.

The project, which has been in the planning stages for years, will improve a section of Kent's East Main Street stretching from Willow Street to Horning Road, City Manager Dave Ruller said last month. Improvements include an expanded center boulevard with fewer left turns, wider sidewalks and two roundabouts — one at the intersection of South Willow, East Main and Haymaker Parkway and another at the intersection of Horning Road and East Main.

Officials hope to reduce potential hazards for drivers on East Main, who currently must watch for vehicles stopped for turns as well as pedestrians, said Jim Bowling, Kent superintendent of engineering. He has said the project is similar to large-scale improvements to



One of two new roundabouts in Kent will be added at the intersection of East Main Street and Horning Road.

Summit Street completed in 2018.

The project, Ruller said, will improve more than just transportation along the roadway. The enhanced corridor, once complete, will also showcase buildings on Kent State University's campus.

Construction is expected to begin in 2025 and be completed in two to three years, according to Bowling. For a project this extensive, Ruller said, slow and steady progress will be the key to its success.

That stretch of East Main Street is the worst accident corridor in both Portage County and Summit County, Ruller said. From 2016 to 2018, 12% of all crashes in Kent happened on the 0.8-mile corridor that fronts Kent State, according to Bowling; 15% of all pedestrian crashes occurred there.

The city of Kent is largely collaborating with Kent State and the Portage

See STREET, Page 2A



# Street

Continued from Page 1A

Area Regional Transit Authority on the project. In practice, Bowling said, the city is the lead entity in planning and construction, but both KSU and PARTA are active participants.

For the last 18 months or so, a stakeholder team has met several times a month to discuss project planning, officials said. A group of citizens, property owners and business owners have also participated in discussions. All have provided meaningful input throughout the process, Bowling said.

"It's from listening and identifying as many concerns as possible that the best solution can be found for all those who

live and travel through this area, whether by car, bike, transit or as a pedestrian," Bowling said.

A purpose and needs statement about the East Main Street area improvements laid out the project's goals: The East Main Street project will be considered successful if it jointly improves safety and aesthetics (as a function of safety) for all users; balances vehicular congestion with improvements to other modes of transportation; enhances the adjacent neighborhoods; integrates with KSU's 2018 Gateway Master Plan; and provides reasonable access to adjacent properties and side streets.

To date, Kent has received \$14.6 million in grants due to the severity of the transportation problems along the corri-

dor, city officials said. Thus far, secured funding includes \$5 million from the Ohio Department of Transportation's Highway Safety Improvement Program, \$3.6 million from AMATS Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and \$6.0 million from ODOT's Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Improvement Program.

Bowling said the remaining \$3.4 million cost of the approximately \$18 million project will primarily be supplemented by the city of Kent and KSU per their agreement. All of the previously mentioned funding sources require some type of matching dollars from the local entities. Other funding sources are still being pursued, however.

Ruller said he was encouraged by the first

round of efforts to find funding, saying the success highlighted the safety needs and opportunities being created by the "worthy" project.

"We are extremely grateful to all the people who have donated their time to get informed and assist us on planning these improvements to our city," Bowling said.

Anyone with questions about the East Main Street project or those interested in being involved are asked to contact the Kent Division of Engineering at 330-678-8106.

*Record-Courier columnist David Dix contributed to this report. Reporter Kaitlyn McGarvey can be reached at [kmcgarvey@record-pub.com](mailto:kmcgarvey@record-pub.com) or on Twitter at [@kaitlynmcg\\_rc](https://twitter.com/kaitlynmcg_rc).*

## VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

### State budget lets public transit ride on

Supporters of public transportation spoke, and the Ohio legislature listened. A new transportation budget investing \$8.3 billion over the next two years was approved with bipartisan support in both the Ohio House and Ohio Senate. House Bill 74 allocates \$70 million in public transit funding.

Gov. Mike DeWine's budget as introduced in early February slashed funding for public transit by nearly 90%. Through the extraordinary advocacy efforts of public transit agencies, their partners and other stakeholders, funding was ultimately increased by the legislature. On March 31, DeWine signed the transportation budget without exercising his line-item veto authority.

Absent proper funding, the future of public transportation in Ohio would be an uncertain one.

CEOs from area transit agencies — Dawn Distler, Claudia Amrhein and Kirt Conrad — joined others in testifying to the Ohio House Finance Committee and the Ohio Senate Transportation Committee in support of increased funding. A key point in testimony was the essential nature of public transit. It is a lifeline for many Ohioans, particularly the elderly and disabled. Ohio's public transit systems provide millions of trips every year which allow the most vulnerable individuals in our communities to enjoy the freedom of mobility many others take for granted.

Metro, PARTA, and SARTA are thankful to the legislature for recognizing the importance of investment in transportation. The state allocation for public transit allows thousands of Ohioans to continue making life-necessary trips and provides transit workers with job security. It's undeniable: Ohio needs transit.

*Dawn Distler, CEO of Metro Regional Transit Authority of Summit County; Claudia Amrhein, Portage Area Regional Transit Authority; Kirt Conrad, Stark Area Regional Transit Authority*

# 2 join Hattie Larlham Foundation Board of Directors

Special to Ravenna Record-Courier  
USA TODAY NETWORK



**Amrhein**

Claudia Amrhein, general manager of the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority, and Julieann Brandle, president and founder of Metis Construction Services, Inc., have been appointed to the Hattie Larlham Foundation Board of Directors and will each hold a three-year term.



**Brandle**

"We are privileged to welcome Claudia and Julie," said HLF Board President Bruce Hearey. "Both bring strong leadership, a commitment to community, and fiscal responsibility to our organization. These will be invaluable assets as we continue to expand our mission and grow to meet the needs of the children and families we serve."

Amrhein joined PARTA in 2004 as the director of

human resources. She has served at the organization's general manager since 2014. Claudia is a graduate of Kent State University, where she earned both her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees. She also maintains two professional human resources certifications.

In addition to her board membership with the Hattie Larlham Foundation, Claudia holds positions on local and state-wide boards, including Ohio Public Transit Association, Ohio Transit Risk Pool, NEORide Council of Governments, Portage County Transportation Improvement District, Ohio Health Transit Pool, Children's Advocacy Center of Portage County and Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study.

Claudia and her husband Jack live in Kent and are the parents of two adult sons.

Brandle founded Metis Construction Services, LLC in Kent in 2009. Metis is a NWBOC- certified female owned and operated commercial general contractor offering renovation, ground-up, and facility maintenance project services throughout Ohio and recently

Illinois and Pennsylvania. Julieann earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Bowling Green State University. She has been a licensed Realtor since 1995 and has worked with Stouffer Realty since 2002.

In addition to her recent appointment to the HLF Board of Directors, Brandle is an active member of CREW (Commercial Real Estate Women) Akron, as well as the Rebuilding Together Portage County Advisory Council. Additionally, she holds roles with Greater Akron Chamber, Akron Urban League, Rotary Club of Akron, and Rotary District 6630.

The Hattie Larlham Foundation Board of Directors is led by President Bruce Hearey, Esq., Shareholder, Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, P.C.; and Vice President Ronald Kotkowski, co-owner, Lakeside Sand and Gravel.

A full listing of the Hattie Larlham Foundation and Hattie Larlham Boards of Directors can be found at [www.hattielarlham.org](http://www.hattielarlham.org).

# PARTA, other agencies, pleased with public transit funding

**Claudia Amrhein** PARTA CEO  
**Dawn Distler** METRO CEO  
**and Kirt Conrad** SARTA CEO

Supporters of public transportation spoke, and the Ohio legislature listened. A new transportation budget investing \$8.3 billion over the next two years was approved with bipartisan support in both the Ohio House of Representatives and Ohio Senate. The bill allocates \$70 million in public transit funding.

Governor Mike DeWine's budget as introduced in early February slashed funding for public transit by nearly 90%. Through extraordinary advocacy efforts of public transit agencies, their partners, and other stakeholders, funding was ultimately increased by the legislature. On March 31, DeWine signed the transportation budget without exercising his line-item veto authority. Absent proper funding, the future of public transportation in Ohio would be an uncertain one. METRO, PARTA, and SARTA CEOs Dawn Distler, Claudia Amrhein, and Kirt Conrad joined others in testifying to the Ohio House of Representatives Finance Committee and The Ohio Senate Transportation Committee in support of increased funding on behalf of statewide transit systems and the individuals they serve.

A key point stressed in testimony was the essential nature of public transit. It is a lifeline for many Ohioans, particularly the elderly and disabled. Ohio's public transit systems provide millions of trips every year which allow the most vulnerable individuals in our



**PARTA bus.** LISA SCALFARO

communities to enjoy the freedom of mobility many others take for granted.

METRO, PARTA, and SARTA are thankful to the legislature for recognizing the importance of investment in transportation. Approval of House Bill 74, and its \$70 million allocation for public transit, allows thousands of Ohioans to continue making life-necessary trips. It also provides transit workers with job security and the ability to continue providing robust and efficient services for communities. It's undeniable: Ohio needs transit!

*Claudia Amrhein, general manager and CEO of PARTA (Portage County)*

*Dawn Distler, CEO of METRO (Summit County)*

*Kirt Conrad, executive director and CEO of SARTA (Stark County)*

# The Portager



## Letter: Ohioans Spoke, The Legislature Listened

LETTER TO THE EDITOR · 3 DAYS AGO · 1 MIN READ

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[PARTA \(Portage County\)](#)

Dawn Distler, CEO

[METRO \(Summit County\)](#)

Kirt Conrad, Executive Director/CEO

[SARTA \(Stark County\)](#)

## Stateline

# Need a COVID-19 Vaccine? Visit Your Local Transit Center

STATELINE  
ARTICLE

April 12, 2021

By: [Jenni Bergal](#)

Topics: [Business of Government](#), [Health](#) & [Transportation](#)

Read time: 6 min



A woman receives a COVID-19 vaccine from a nurse at a vaccination site run by Foothill Transit in Covina, California. Transit agencies across the country are giving free rides to vaccine sites and some are hosting clinics in their facilities.

Ringo Chiu/The Associated Press

When Foothill Transit officials opened a new \$24 million, three-level bus depot and park-and-ride garage last March in Covina, California, they figured it would get lots of use.

But about two weeks later, the pandemic hit and ridership plummeted. That left the transit agency with a lot of empty space and no one to fill it for months.

By March, the site was back on its feet—sort of. Working with the city and the Albertsons grocery chain, the transit agency turned the ground floor of its parking garage into a COVID-

19 vaccination site. The transit center has hosted two Saturday clinics and has at least five more planned. Nearly 2,500 people have gotten shots.

“We wanted to have a location where riders could get vaccination access,” said Doran Barnes, Foothill Transit’s executive director. “We also wanted a location that would support the community where this transit center is located.”

Across the country, transit agencies are getting involved in vaccination efforts. Many are giving people free rides to vaccine sites via bus, train or light rail routes, or are using their paratransit fleets for door-to-door pickup. And some, such as Foothill Transit, are turning their facilities into temporary vaccine clinics.

“This is an all-hands-on-deck situation,” said Chad Chitwood, a spokesperson for the American Public Transportation Association, a trade group. “Public transit is finding the best way to help.”

In the early months of the pandemic, Chitwood said, some public transit agencies were providing rides to food banks or offering buses as Wi-Fi hot spots for students who didn’t have internet access. In recent months, they’ve pivoted to vaccines.

At least 451 public transit providers in 45 states and the District of Columbia are providing free transit to vaccination sites, according to Stewart Mader, an independent transportation policy advocate based in Hoboken, New Jersey. He has launched a campaign called [VaxTransit](#) to encourage agencies to use their buses and trains to help provide people without transportation access to vaccines.

Large and mid-sized transit agencies are doing just that, as are smaller rural services operated by municipal and county governments.

Since January, for example, VIA Metropolitan Transit in San Antonio has been providing free rides to anyone who needs to get to a vaccination site, said Jon Gary Herrera, a senior vice president at the agency. So far, more than 1,900 passengers have used its buses or paratransit service.

“It’s the right thing for our community,” Herrera said. “And it helps us recover as well.”

When Mader launched his VaxTransit initiative in early January, he knew of only 15 transit agencies in nine states giving free vaccine rides, he said. Those numbers rose as more vaccines became available to more groups.

“The faster we get people vaccinated, the faster we can get back to normal,” said Mader, the former customer advocate for NJ Transit.



For transit agencies, which have suffered [a devastating loss of riders](#) since many people have been telecommuting or are fearful of taking buses or trains because of COVID-19, free vaccine rides are also good public relations, Mader said.

“Giving people a free ride to the vaccine can change their perception of transit,” he said. “It’s an investment in the future.”

## State and Federal Help

Some states are aiding transit agencies’ vaccine assistance efforts.

In North Carolina, the departments of Transportation and Health and Human Services are [distributing about \\$2.5 million in COVID-19 funding](#) to transit agencies. The money is offsetting the operating costs of giving rides to and from vaccine sites.

In Ohio, the Department of Transportation is providing a total of \$7 million to all 88 counties to [help get the most vulnerable populations](#) to vaccine sites. In most counties, the money will go directly to public transit agencies. In counties that don’t have such services, the funding will go to county health departments for purchased transportation.

The federal government is lending a hand as well.

In Prince George’s County, Maryland, just outside of Washington, D.C., the Federal Emergency Management Agency [set up a pilot vaccine center](#) at a train station last week. Officials expect to be able to provide up to 3,000 shots a day as more vaccines become available.

Federal coronavirus relief money also is helping many transit agencies with their vaccination programs. The Federal Transit Administration has said the agencies can use it to pay for transportation services to vaccine clinics as well as to furnish their own facilities as sites.

## Creative Thinking

Some transit agencies have been creative with the type of spaces they’re using for vaccine clinics.

In Bremerton, Washington, Kitsap Transit converted a parking lot and indoor space at an old strip mall that it used as a park-and-ride site and storage facility.

Since January, Peninsula Community Health Services, a nonprofit health agency, has used some of the space to run a mass vaccination clinic.



“It’s been a huge success,” said John Clauson, Kitsap Transit’s executive director. “Since the onset, folks there have filled up the parking lot to get vaccinated.”

As of April 7, Peninsula has given more than 18,000 shots at the site, according to its CEO, Jennifer Kreidler-Moss.

Kitsap Transit, which runs about 200 buses and five ferry routes, also is providing free door-to-door rides in paratransit vehicles to anyone who needs transportation to get their shots.

In Ohio, the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority used its new indoor bus garage for a mass vaccine clinic last month. Five hundred people [got shots](#).

And it isn’t just small- and medium-sized transit agencies that have launched vaccine efforts at their facilities.

In Georgia, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), the biggest transit system in the Southeast, has gotten involved. It teamed up with DeKalb County and the county health department, which set up a large vaccine site in the parking lot adjacent to MARTA’s Doraville rail station in an Atlanta suburb.

The Doraville site, which opened in mid-February, had administered nearly 13,000 shots as of April 1, according to Eric Nickens, a spokesperson for the DeKalb County Board of Health. It operates every weekday and on Saturday mornings.

MARTA also is partnering with Delta Air Lines to provide free shuttle service for the public from its College Park station to a vaccine site at the airline’s flight museum in Fulton County.



The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority teamed with DeKalb County to set up this large vaccine site in a parking lot adjacent to its Doraville rail station in Georgia.

DeKalb County Board of Health

And the transit agency plans to expand the vaccination program to its Indian Creek rail station—which is in a lower-income area—as vaccines become more widely available, said Luz Borrero, MARTA’s chief administrative officer.

“We want to make vaccinations more accessible to low-income people,” she said. “This site is particularly important because of that.”

MARTA, which has five rail routes, 110 bus routes, and light rail and paratransit services, serves a population that is, for the most part, “economically disadvantaged,” Borrero said.

“We believe we have a role to play in ensuring that those people who are transit-dependent can access vaccination sites more easily,” she said.

## ‘A Lot of Logistics’

At Foothill Transit, which runs 39 bus lines and covers 22 cities in a suburban area in eastern Los Angeles County, agency head Barnes agrees that accessibility is the key.

Its Covina Transit Center, a covered open-air parking facility, was designed for commuters to drive in and catch an express bus into Los Angeles. The transit agency also was hoping to lease 4,400 square-feet of retail space in the center to a restaurant.

COVID-19 changed all that. The retail space is empty, and many commuters have been teleworking. So it made sense to convert part of the garage into a vaccine clinic, Barnes said.

“We never in our wildest dreams envisioned this facility being used for any kind of vaccination activity,” he said.

Transit officials made a deliberate decision not to make the clinic a drive-thru.

“A lot of the vaccine sites in this county are drive-thru,” Barnes said. “We made ours a walk-up location. People can walk in or come by bus or paratransit vehicle. You can get the vaccine and go about your activity.”

The transit agency [coordinates more than 400 volunteers](#)—including some of its own staffers—to perform tasks such as directing people where to park and helping them check in for appointments.

“It’s a sizeable effort. There are a lot of logistics to coordinate,” Barnes said.

His agency hopes to expand the clinics to include some weekdays, he said. Foothill Transit also has been in discussions with another health center and NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory to let the agencies use the transit center for more clinics.

Another possibility under discussion is putting a mobile clinic in a transit bus, taking it to communities in need and setting up small-scale vaccine events.

But as with everything else during the pandemic, plans are fluid, Barnes noted.

“I think there are going to be more changes, more pivots as we go,” he said. “We’ve been trying to shift our mission a bit and lean into this particular moment and time.”

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