

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

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
MINUTES**

**April 27, 2023**

**Board Members Present:**

Karen Beck  
Marge Bjerregaard  
Richard Brockett  
Jeff Childers

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

Frank Vitale  
Stacey Wilson  
Karen Wise, TPO  
Marvin Woods

**Staff Present:**

Claudia Amrhein  
Denise Baba

Marcia Fletcher  
Kelly Jurisch

Justin Markey, Roetzel & Andress  
Rebecca Schrader

**Board Members Not Present:**

Debbie Davison (1<sup>st</sup> unexcused absence)

Dave Gynn (2<sup>nd</sup> excused absence)

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Mike Lewis welcomed everybody and called the April 27, 2023, PARTA Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7 p.m. He asked for a roll call, after which it was determined that **a quorum was participating.**

Mr. Lewis asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 23, 2023, Board meeting. **Ms. Karen Beck** made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, which was seconded by **Mr. Jack Murphy**. **The motion to approve the minutes, as presented, passed unanimously.**

**GUEST COMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Lewis said there were no guests in attendance and moved on to the General Manager's report.

**GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

Ms. Claudia Amrhein thanked everybody for coming and began by talking about the resolution that was being brought to the Board tonight. She said economic pressures, inflation, and supply chain issues came to roost at PARTA this year as the search began to buy two heavy duty trucks to take older trucks out of service. These are the ones that are used to plow snow and haul things around. In the past, they would be purchased from what dealers had in stock. In this case, funding was awarded through the state for the fiscal year 2023. Several attempts to find trucks were unsuccessful. Dealers indicated they didn't have anything in stock and couldn't tell when they would be back in stock or what they would cost, which presented a problem. Recently, Mr. Brian Trautman found two trucks, which are included in the resolution. The catch comes within the procedures. There is a simplified way of making purchases under \$100,000 that wouldn't include a formal procurement with sealed bids because vehicles aren't purchased that way. The two trucks together totaled more than \$100,000. The Board may be seeing more resolutions come forward for equipment and purchasable items that weren't brought forward before because they were under the threshold. Internally, procedures will be revised to allow a higher threshold for obtaining quotes for items that do not have specifics that must be negotiated. Everything that exceeds \$100,000 will still be brought forward to the Board. Until a few years ago, the threshold was at \$50,000. It was raised to

\$100,000 to avoid issues where quotes are received from vendors, but the item can't be bought because Board approval was needed. It is confusing because the resolution wasn't going to be brought forward since it wasn't technically a large purchase, except the cost of two trucks at the same time drove it to that point. This is being presented tonight to be fully transparent. PARTA will be looking at buying a generator soon too, which might be the same situation. It's something that is needed, is planned to be purchased, and might come forward to the Board. She asked if there were any questions.

Ms. Rebecca Schrader said there is also a state law that still needs to be followed. Any construction type projects would go through the formal sealed bid procurement, which threshold would still be \$100,000. All the other manufactured merchandise typically can have the threshold raised per the Federal Transit Authority's (FTA's) guidelines.

Ms. Amrhein said it's complicating to balance Ohio law, FTA regulations, and several other state auditing guidelines when making purchases.

Mr. Lewis asked if there was a different dollar amount for construction or if the \$100,000 was all for construction.

Ms. Schrader said the \$100,000 threshold was all for construction and would have to be approved by the Board.

Mr. Lewis asked how the total cost was known ahead of time.

Mr. Justin Markey said typically, an engineer provides an estimate.

Mr. Lewis clarified that the estimate was used but if the project came in over, it would be re-evaluated. With prices rising, if something didn't need a sealed bid procurement but then came in over the estimate, PARTA would have to withdraw and go with the sealed bid.

Mr. Markey said PARTA could look for ratification.

Ms. Schrader said there were two other mechanisms. It could go out as a Request for Information. The first thing that must be done for any purchase is an Independent Cost Estimate (ICE). It's more simplified when buying a truck because it can be done by looking at catalogs, but PARTA must do its due diligence and plan for those items so time isn't wasted by going through that process or asking the FTA or the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) for money that can't be spent because the purchase turned out to be too much. There's a definite planning aspect that is engrained in the procedures.

Mr. Lewis asked if there were any other questions on Ms. Amrhein's report.

Mr. Richard Brockett asked why one truck was a little more expensive than the other.

Mr. Lewis said the difference was about \$1,000 but he didn't know exactly why. He assumed that it had something to do with the options because they have snowplows and salt spreaders.

Ms. Virginia Harris agreed that it may have to do with the options.

Ms. Amrhein said it has been very difficult to get these trucks because they are not available to buy.

Ms. Schrader said they are both white trucks but have different base prices. However, from a procurement standpoint, and for the record, PARTA does not have local preferences.

Mr. Lewis asked if anyone else had anything to add. Hearing nothing further, he moved on to the committee reports.

## **ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

Mr. Lewis said the Administration Committee met prior to this meeting, and he asked Ms. Karen Wise to provide her report.

Ms. Wise said the Administration Committee met and had a good robust discussion on nominations for Board Officers. This is the time of year when the Board is looking for folks to consider running for President, Vice President, or Temporary Presiding Officer. Those are the three Board Officer roles, which will be seated in July of 2023 and run through June of 2024. The first discussion was tonight and will be followed by another discussion in May. At the June Board meeting, decisions will be made. Ms. Amrhein provided a little bit of color on the roles of the President and Vice President. Board members attend Board meetings and see the President and Vice President participate in those meetings. Tonight, Mr. Lewis is running the meeting in Mr. Gynn's absence. In addition to that, the President and Vice President meet with Ms. Amrhein once per month prior to the Board meeting to hear what's going on, provide counsel, ask questions, and be in a better spot to run the Board meetings or to step in, like Mr. Lewis is doing tonight. If anyone has any interest in being considered for any of the three positions, they should express their interest to Ms. Wise, Ms. Fletcher, or Ms. Amrhein or ask questions of the people who are currently holding those positions: Mr. Gynn, as President; Mr. Lewis, as Vice President; and Ms. Wise, as Temporary Presiding Officer.

Mr. Lewis thanked Ms. Wise for her report and moved on to the Finance Committee report.

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

Mr. Lewis said the Finance Committee met on Tuesday, April 25, and went through all the reports. As always, the reports were well done. Overall, PARTA's revenues were strong. KSU Revenues was above budget; however, the way the accounting is done, it will catch up over the summer because there will be some months when the students aren't in session, and it might be a little below budget. Those two should meet at the end, as in the past, because Ms. Schrader does a really good job of projecting that out. There was some money drawn down from Federal Operating (ARPA), and there are potentially three other draws that will come down within the next 30 to 60 days: State Capital Maintenance Assistance will be drawn down in May; Federal Capital Maintenance Assistance will be drawn down in June; and then Elderly & Disabled Fare Assistance was approved but not yet received. Sales Tax Revenues continued to be strong as well. On the expense side, there was not a lot to discuss. Salaries were low but that was because of the difficulty in filling positions. Everything else was either at or just below budget, which was good. For March, there was a net operating income of \$151,521; and for the year, there was a net operating income of \$465,132, which was \$413,446 over budget year to date. Everything looked good for PARTA.

Mr. Lewis said Kent Central Gateway (KCG) was also strong with a net operating income of \$5,064 for March. The net operating income year to date was \$17,669, which was \$28,375 over budget as projected. He asked if there were any questions on finances.

Hearing none, Mr. Lewis thanked the members of the Finance Committee: Ms. Virginia Harris, Mr. Jeff Childers, and Mr. Frank Vitale. He said they always come well prepared with questions in hand. The Finance Committee also reviewed Resolution #2023-04-01, which was recommended to the Board for approval.

## **OPERATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Moving on, Mr. Lewis said the Operations Committee did not meet.

## **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT**

Mr. Lewis said the Personnel Committee did not meet.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Lewis said there was no Old Business and moved on to New Business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Lewis asked Ms. Kelly Jurisch to provide the PowerPoint.

Ms. Jurisch presented a PowerPoint on FORE! Transit, which is attached.

Following the presentation, Ms. Jurisch asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Vitale asked what the value of service was that FORE! Transit gave to the area in both dollars and through transportation.

Ms. Jurisch said it depends on how successful the golf outing is because this is the primary fundraiser. For the last several years, the average has been between \$8,000 and \$10,000 a year, which is provided to PARTA to supplement the fares provided to local agencies by half, which agencies then pick up the other half. The people who are being helped through these agencies aren't normally able to ride the bus at a discount because they don't qualify. The agencies pass those tickets on to their clients.

Mr. Vitale said PARTA couldn't give cash out of their bank account because that would be against the rules of a government agency.

Ms. Jurisch said PARTA is a government agency and tries to be a very good steward of local funds. Any local agency that requests assistance must meet the mission of providing transportation. There have been numerous requests and conversations about this. Everyone wants some money. PARTA tries to give back to the community and work with those who need service.

Mr. Lewis asked how many teams and volunteers were currently signed up for the golf outing and how many were still needed.

Ms. Jurisch said nine teams were currently signed up and at least 18 were needed. Other than staff, no volunteers have signed up yet.

Mr. Lewis said he has two foursomes that have not signed up yet. He asked Ms. Jurisch to let him know what he can do to get volunteers. He said he has already been asked by a couple employees about volunteering. They didn't get an opportunity last year. He has never been on a golf outing that has had more rain quicker and then cancelled by the third hole. It did clear up a little later, but no one could have played because the course was too wet.

Ms. Stacey Wilson asked if teenagers could volunteer.

Ms. Jurisch said anyone could volunteer but the golf outing is on a Friday during the day. She asked if there were any other questions.

Hearing none, Mr. Lewis thanked Ms. Jurisch and asked Ms. Schrader to present the Service Award.

Ms. Schrader said service awards were presented once a year. For 2022, there was one Service Award and that was to Ms. Harris for 20 years. She then presented Ms. Harris with a framed certificate and a pin.

After a round of applause, Mr. Lewis congratulated Ms. Harris and said 20 years was quite an accomplishment.



Ms. Amrhein thanked Ms. Harris for her service.

Ms. Harris thanked PARTA and the Board for the beautiful wind chime that was sent when her husband passed away.

### **RESOLUTION**

Moving on, Mr. Lewis presented the resolution.

**#2023-04-01: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE GENERAL MANAGER, OR HER DESIGNEE, TO PURCHASE TWO (2) 2023 CHEVROLET SILVERADOS, OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT, AND SPARE PARTS FROM SARCHIONE CHEVROLET, INC.**

Mr. Lewis asked if there were any additional questions regarding the purchase.

Mr. Jack Murphy said there's almost \$18,000 in add-ons for each truck. He asked if PARTA's maintenance staff would be capable of installing the snowplow and salt spreader if they were ordered directly rather than through a dealership.

Mr. Lewis said that's a good question, but he didn't know the answer.

Ms. Amrhein said she didn't know the answer either. Mr. Trautman is on vacation, and he could answer that immediately.

Mr. Murphy said his concern is that dealerships markup parts and labor. He asked if PARTA was getting the best deal. He said over the course of two trucks, it almost adds up to the base price of a third truck.

Mr. Marvin Woods said there would be no warranty if PARTA installed the snowplow and salt spreader itself.

Mr. Lewis agreed and said it would not be factory installed.

Mr. R. T. Mansfield said the last time he purchased a snowplow, he couldn't do it himself, and that's what he does for a living. The dealerships have all the parts on hand and can do it efficiently. It takes a few hours. He would spend half a day getting all the parts together, as would PARTA's service department. They don't do this all the time. There would be a learning curve, and there's no way that PARTA could compete with a dealership that does this every day. There are a couple other considerations too when installing a snowplow and salt spreader on a truck. The truck itself must be certified for the extra duty. There are a bunch of numbers on the build sheet of the truck, located in the glove box, that must match. The trucks must be plow certified before a plow can be put on otherwise the warranty will be void. The people who install these all the time don't make those mistakes, so the warranties are always preserved. It's just a better way to go about doing it.

Mr. Lewis thanked Mr. Mansfield and said Mr. Trautman would reach out to Mr. Murphy so he could ask his questions directly.

Ms. Wise said the dealerships also buy those specialty parts in volume, so they're getting them at a better price.

Mr. Lewis asked if there was any further discussion. Hearing none, he asked for a motion and a second.

**Motion: Marge Bierregaard Second: Virginia Harris**

Mr. Lewis asked Ms. Marcia Fletcher for a roll call.

Roll Call:	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Marvin Woods	<u>X</u>	___	<b>Debbie Davison</b>	<b>UNEXCUSED</b>	
Karen Wise	<u>X</u>	___	Jeff Childers	<u>X</u>	___
Frank Vitale	<u>X</u>	___	Richard Brockett	<u>X</u>	___
Stacey Wilson	<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>	___
Virginia Harris	<u>X</u>	___	<b>David Gynn</b>	<b>EXCUSED</b>	

Mr. Lewis said that resolution was approved and asked Ms. Amrhein to present the last item she wanted to discuss.

Ms. Amrhein said she didn't put this in her Board report and didn't anticipate giving this update. However, she wanted to give the Board a heads up. As mentioned in her presentation last month, the Transit Development Plan (TDP) would be updated, service areas reviewed, and new software utilized to determine whether the community was being served in the best way with the fixed route service. She mentioned METRO Regional Transit Authority (RTA) planned to bring service to Kent, but she didn't elaborate at that time. In the past few weeks, PARTA has been made aware of more about their plans. It may be something that hits the news, or the Board may get questions about. Basically, METRO RTA plans to bring fixed route service to Kent beginning June 4. She reminded everyone about PARTA's mission and how everything is framed when thinking about transit service, which is that PARTA enriches lives by providing eco-friendly transportation that builds community trust. She said everyone knows how important trust is to her and how fragile community trust can be, particularly for a public agency. Discussions have taken place about railway issues that simply do not promote community trust. They promote discord and difficulty within communities. Thus far, METRO RTA's communication has not inspired trust. Their planning process did not include meaningful input from PARTA. Concerns were raised and questions asked about some very legitimate issues that haven't been answered or resolved yet. There has been very little movement in providing clarification. As it stands today, METRO RTA intends to run through KCG roughly 30 times a day. To give a comparison, PARTA runs to Akron seven times a day. One concern is that METRO RTA is not aligning their routes with PARTA's routes, and they will run along some of the same corridors that PARTA already runs. In transit service, there's an efficiency to aligning and making passenger transfers between systems. Picture green buses and purple buses running back-to-back potentially appearing empty because PARTA is simply not aware of a demand for this service. The term METRO RTA has chosen to use is that PARTA is "collaborating" with them; however, at this point, it has not been collaborative, and she doesn't know if the questions will be answered, or issues addressed. PARTA will need to resolve the issues as they come up. She spoke with Mr. Markey today to go over how to cover this tonight and asked him if he had anything to add.

Mr. Markey said he just wanted to mention that, as Ms. Amrhein knows, he also represents the METRO RTA Board so if there was to be any dispute in the future, he would have to bow out. He did talk to Ms. Amrhein about the issues and was aware that she was going to make the presentation tonight.

Ms. Amrhein said it's PARTA's role to manage what's going to be happening at KCG and not to inundate the community with bus service without a clear service narrative. She likes to keep the Board up to date because no one knows how these things play out in the media and what can be misinterpreted.

Mr. Murphy said Ms. Amrhein mentioned that PARTA's buses and METRO RTA's buses could potentially be running the same corridor and reduce efficiency. He asked if that would pose any future risk to PARTA in terms of funding.

Ms. Amrhein said that's a complicated question. Passenger counts do matter. METRO RTA already takes most of the urbanized area funding that PARTA has an agreement to apportion based on PARTA's ridership versus METRO RTA's ridership and other data. Potentially, yes, it could pose a risk.

Mr. Lewis said it sounds like it's probably something that will be discussed again in the future. He thanked Ms. Amrhein for bringing it to the Board's attention. He said he likes learning about it at the Board level before seeing it in the paper or hearing about it on the news. More to follow.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Moving on, Mr. Lewis said he wasn't made aware of the need for an Executive Session.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Hearing nothing further, Mr. Lewis entertained a motion to adjourn. **Mr. Marvin Woods** made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by **Ms. Virginia Harris**. Mr. Lewis asked all in favor to signify by aye. He asked any opposed the same sign. Hearing none, the **motion to adjourn passed unanimously**.

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Marcia Fletcher  
Executive Assistant



**FORE! Transit (Friends of Riders) foundation works in conjunction with PARTA to help the most vulnerable in our community by supporting non-profit agencies whose mission aligns with that of FORE! Transit.**

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## What is FORE! Transit?

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**FORE! Transit, formerly known as Portage Public Transportation Assistance Foundation, Inc. (PPTAFI), is a 501(c)3 non-profit foundation established by PARTA to:**

- **Assist people in Portage County who have difficulty affording public transportation**
- **Provide an avenue to work collaboratively with area agencies that serve low-income individuals who need public transportation**
- **Give businesses and individuals an opportunity to make tax deductible charitable contributions, which help people in need of public transportation**

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# Who do we serve?



Through our subsidized fare program, PARTA awards, half the cost of full fare passes to area agencies whose clients need our service and wouldn't be eligible for discounted fares otherwise.



**Such agencies include:**

- Catholic Charities
- Center of Hope
- Coleman Professional Services
- Freedom House
- Haven of Portage County
- Housing and Emergency Support
- Kent Social Services
- Miller House
- Passages
- PCJFS
- Portage Area Recovery
- PMHA
- Safer Futures
- Townhall II

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## The Center of Hope "The hand that feeds"



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## Freedom House

- Providing hope and shelter for our Veterans

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## Providing shelter for families

The Haven and the Miller House

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## May 19, 2023

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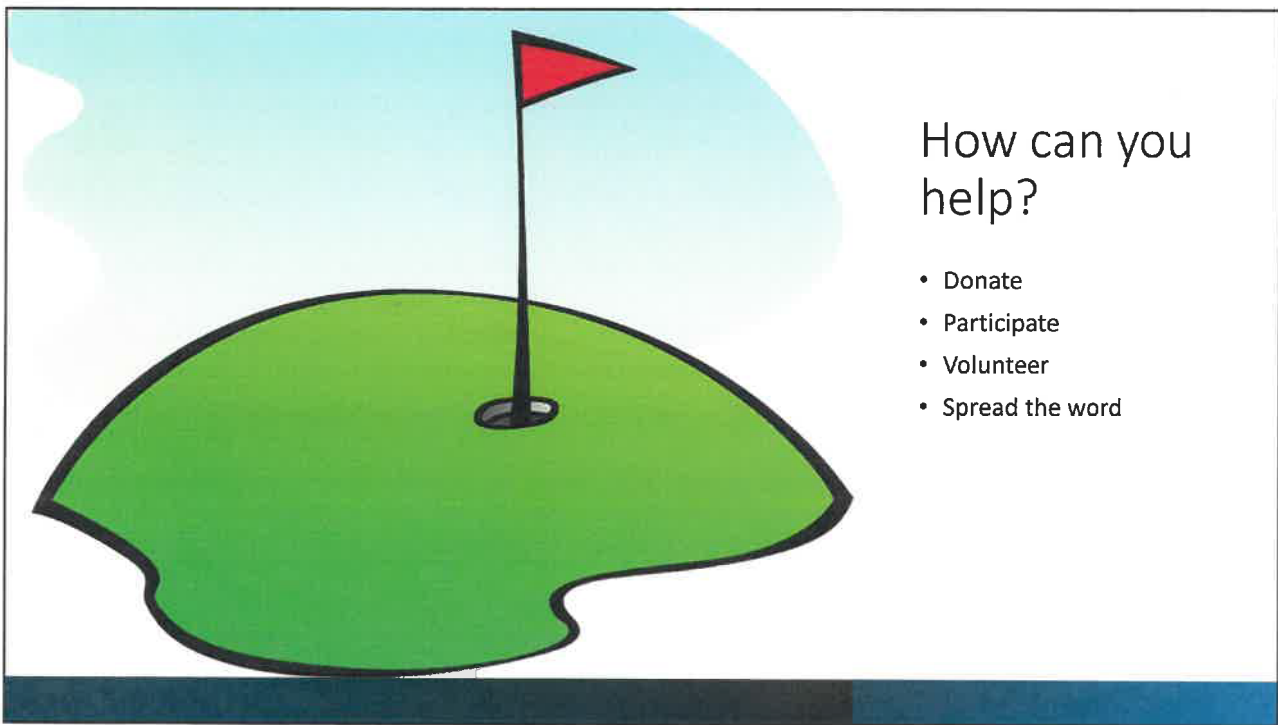
- FORE! Transit hosts an annual fundraising golf event to support unmet transportation needs in Portage County and to assist other local non-profit agencies whose mission aligns with ours.
- Held at Paradise Lakes County Club in Suffield



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## How can you help?

- Donate
- Participate
- Volunteer
- Spread the word



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