



# Driving METRO Forward

---

## Project Outreach Summary – Round 1

**Planning & Development Department**

**Kris Liljeblad, Director**

**May 12, 2016**

*This document includes meeting summaries from outreach conducted by METRO Regional Transit Authority during April, 2016 to obtain input on fixed route transit system changes associated with the Driving METRO Forward Project for Summit County, OH.*

## 1.0 Introduction

The name for this project was borrowed from our **Vision** statement: *METRO is driving our communities forward*. Our **Mission** statement is: *METRO Regional Transit Authority enhances the quality of life for our community by providing innovative transportation solutions that are safe, dependable, cost-effective, and customer-focused...now and into the future*.

This project was launched to translate these lofty statements into meaningful action by evaluating the performance of all thirty-five regularly scheduled line service routes in our operating system. The purpose of conducting the operator and public meetings was to provide information about the project and to invite any and all ideas about what changes would make METRO's routes work better for our customers.

Five **Guiding Principles** were identified to shape staff's in-house work efforts over the expected 18-month timeframe of the project. A complete description of the Guiding Principles is included in the Appendix. These Guiding Principles were the focus of the Round 1 outreach process:

1. Match Service to Modern Travel Patterns
2. Strengthen Network Structure
3. Simplify the Routes
4. Foster a Transit-First Lifestyle
5. Build Financial Stability

METRO's Planning Department staff spent most of two days on April 13<sup>th</sup> and 14, 2016 interacting with bus operators as they reported for work, and during their break times. The operator's issues and ideas were recorded according to the Guiding Principle they most directly applied. A summary of the input obtained is provided in the following section.

Thirteen public meetings were conducted during the period from April 19 – 26, 2016 at public library branches and at METRO's Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center. At each meeting, the same presentation was used to describe the project and to stimulate discussion with attendees. Summaries are provided in this document of the input obtained at each of the 13 public meetings.

## 2.0 Notification Methods

In order to advertise both the in-house and the public meetings, METRO provided public notice via the METRO website and social media sites, sent out e-mail blasts to our customer contact lists, issued news releases to all Akron area media, sent notices to local jurisdictions, and published meeting notices. A front page story was published by the Akron Beacon Journal on March 26, 2016 and an editorial opinion was published on April 19, 2016. A copy of the March 26th article is provided in the Appendix.

## 3. Input from Operators - April 13 and 14, 2016

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, Planning & Development Department personnel were located in the Bullpen at 416 Kenmore Blvd from 6 am until 5 pm, and on April 14<sup>th</sup> at the RKP Transit Center driver relief lounge from

9 am to 1 pm. At both locations, Robin Miller and Jason Popik engaged the operators in conversation to collect input on the five Guiding Principles for the project. Sticky notes and comment forms were used to record the feedback from the operators. This summary is provided to document the input obtained. In most cases an attempt was made to attach the comments to one of the five guiding principles, however some of them clearly apply to more than one, or in a few cases to none of them. In any case, the discussion was very helpful to inform the overall project and the 13 public meetings scheduled to be conducted April 19<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>.

**A. Match Service to Modern Travel Patterns:**

- Route 110 misses the middle part of Massillon Road north of the freeway in Green at Turkeyfoot Road (619) where there is a new Children's Medical facility and other employers.
- The Avail on-board announcements work very well to allow Operators to remind passengers about dos and don'ts without having to leave the seat to confront them because the announcements empower the peer pressure from other passengers on-board.
- METRO should provide a Fare Free Day during the Akron Marathon. We often are running late because of the detours and it makes our regular customers complain. A free fare would reduce the complaints and may improve ridership that day.
- The Security Director needs to work past 5 pm; or some provisional coverage is needed.
- We need a tri-county transit pass that covers SARTA, METRO and GC RTA.
- METRO needs to do a better job of serving working single mothers: Multiple trips including day care drop-offs, work and shopping take too much travel time.

**B. Strengthen Network Structure:**

- We need more hub locations outside downtown Akron to allow transfers between routes without having to go to RKP. It takes too long to travel by bus now if a transfer is needed.
- Moving towards a grid system could improve our route coverage while allowing faster overall travel times for customers.
- We could do more neighborhood feeder routes and cover more area if we used more circulators to feed the trunk routes with transfers at grid locations.
- We should dump the Downtown Loop route – it hardly carries any passengers.
- The Downtown Loop route schedule is too tight and needs more running time.
- Route 14 should be re-routed to get it out of the Zoo parking lot – there are rarely any customers there and it interferes with schedule adherence. A stop out on Euclid Ave. would not be too far for customers to walk.
- Route 61 express ridership between Downtown Cleveland and Wade Park VA should be re-evaluated. More of the trips could be expressed between Downtown Cleveland and Akron, which is where most of the customers are.
- The 61 express mileage on W. Market Street between RKP and James Fisher should be shifted to I-77 as far as Miller Road to speed up the trip and make better use of the new parking capacity at RKP. Passengers along W. Market can transfer to Route 1 at an improved stop near Miller Rd.
- Routes 28 and 53 should be re-built to better serve the residents and businesses of the area. Both suffer from compromises between coverage and frequency, and neither works very well.

- We used to have a circulator route from Ellet to Copley to Rolling Acres to Montrose. We should re-consider a similar hub to hub connector route.
- Maybe we should create a Barberton loop route.
- Consider reaching out to Summit Racing to offer service.
- There is a need for service to Medina and Brimfield. Also, Allstate's office in Hudson has many employees from Medina who might use transit if it were an option.
- Revamp Route 18 to go down Robinson to the Plaza to shorten passenger wait time at the layover.
- There is a need for a circulator from the valley to W. Market to State Road.

**C. Simplify the Route Structure:**

- Eliminate the stupid line-ups! This was a frequent comment, with many variations. Operators complained that it causes too much delay for customers and causes a lot of unneeded stress. Too often we make many customers late because we're holding a line up for one, then operators have to stress out to make up time. The signal delays getting out of RKP don't help.
- Move to more clock-face schedules to simplify schedules for everyone – operators and riders.
- We need a route that runs back and forth on East and West Market Street without going south through downtown Akron. The current 1 and 2 interlining at RKP just delays too many passengers that need to ride through.
- There are too many schedule variations and too many bus stops at Summit Mall. It needs to be simplified for everyone.
- Route 28 should be extended up to State Road and Portage Trail to include the new Portage Crossing shopping center on every trip.
- Routes 33 and 104 have poor frequency, especially midday. Re-structuring should provide a more regular midday schedule and better subarea coverage. Maybe a small circulator.
- SCAT operators are too often directed to take on additional passenger pick ups that create delays for customers already on-board. This makes some customers late for appointments and creates extra stress on the operators.
- We should add information to our new bus stop signs to indicate if a bus stop is inbound or outbound. On some of our routes it can be very confusing which direction its going.
- We need to shorten the split time for run service on Saturday and Sunday.

**D. Foster a Transit-First Lifestyle:**

- METRO needs help from the cities in the core of our service area to fill empty buildings and encourage infill development. We need the activity of full buildings, not more parking lots.
- To attract more customers, we need to rein-in bad behavior by youthful riders who scare away other passengers.
- Our customers often trash up the buses, especially with spilled food and drink. This repels other customers and is hard to enforce.
- Some customers listen to music without headphones, disrespecting other passengers, and this is hard to enforce.
- Several operators reported their customers have said they feel unsafe on our buses and would not recommend us even to their own family and friends.

- Supervisors don't back up operators in the event of issues with passengers. The message seems to be: "don't bother to try to enforce the rules for riding, you're on your own."
- Route 33 needs more midday service up to Wyoga Lake Road. We're there in the peaks when parents are getting their children off to school and by the time they're ready to leave, we're not running. Not enough schedule choices to be convenient. Also, the route is long and indirect and should be simplified to speed it up.
- Route 28 gets the same complaints from customers about infrequent service and indirect routing.
- Route 53 needs to be fixed. It needs more of a midday schedule and more trips later in the day to serve the residents of Timber Top, Waterford and Sutcliffe Towers.
- Route 102 should have weekend service to Northfield. People who want to go to the Rocksino to gamble need a weekend travel option when they're not working.
- Routes 102, 103 and 104 all need weekend service.
- Consider a Community Resource Fair set up.

**E. Build Financial Stability:**

- Reallocate service from poor performing routes to those with the greatest demand and potential for ridership increase. Especially where lack of frequency is constraining ridership.
- Consider more neighborhood circulators to feed frequent service on productiveroutes.
- Weekend entertainment events in Cleveland offer opportunities to attract new riders. If we offered more weekend service on the X60 and X61 to Indians and Cavaliers games, with return trips around 11:30 pm, those riders might become regular riders.
- Rolling Acres has more service than it warrants given all the empty buildings.
- Rolling Acres lacks amenities for passengers and operators.
- Simplified schedules would help attract more customers and fares.

## 4. Public Meeting Summaries

- A. Location:** Barberton Main Library, 602 W Park Ave, Barberton 44203; April 19, 2016; 12:30 PM  
**Metro Staff:** Kris Liljeblad, Christine Hoffer, Jason Popik

**Summary of Key Points:**

- Zero attendance for the Barberton public meeting.

- B. Location:** Akron-Summit Co Main Library, 60 S High St, Akron 44326; April 20, 2016; 10:30 AM  
**METRO Staff:** Alex Harnocz, Jason Popik, Kris Liljeblad

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number	Representing
Mavis J. Anderson	[not for public release]	
Frank P Vaccaro Jr.	[not for public release]	
Mimmi Rally	[not for public release]	
Nickie Coxiwell	[not for public release]	

Robert Vide Fgniar	[not for public release]	
Ray Hruska	[not for public release]	
Ms. Lovett	[not for public release]	
Cindy Lou Snow	[not for public release]	
Bill Leavell	[not for public release]	
Becky Deger	[not for public release]	
His. C. Giddings	[not for public release]	

### Summary of Key Points:

- One of the problems is the #2 bus does not go into the Arlington Walmart anymore and it's a dangerous street to cross. Wants to go to the Manchester Acme but it's too hard to catch the bus. Can walk a mile or more, or pay the \$2 for a SCAT bus... Could we extend the #18 just a little bit farther?
- Biggest problem customer has is the bus is only running every hour and 20 min on Saturdays, people work on Saturdays and needs more service. That's too long and inconvenient for the customers who depend on it.
- Out in Norton I would really look to see the #8 route kept there, I think it started in 2011?
- Do the suburbs really want the bus? There was a big fight about siting the Ghent Road Park and Ride lot because the area residents didn't want the bus there. People in the suburbs really don't want buses. Another customer said the Cleveland Clinic in Twinsburg needs route service. (Kris stated that METRO has a duty to get our customers where they need to go, and there are work destinations in all these places.)
- Customer would like to see a # 5 bus on Sundays, but also does not want to wait an entire hour to catch the bus. (Kris mentioned requests for increased weekend service that we are trying to figure out how to accommodate.)
- What are the chances of bringing the circulators back so we don't have to go to the transit center all the time? (Alex said we are considering crosstown routes because previous circulators did not serve enough ridership. We expect to do more analysis to estimate the ridership demand.)
- Customer says some buses on Saturdays and Sundays stop too early. Can't even go to a movie because the last bus stops at 9:10 PM. Routes that stop service too early are the 1, 2, 8 and 10. (Alex said we know customers want more weekend service but it is difficult to fund it: For example, starting earlier on Sunday requires that we staff the Transit Center, the telephones, and maintenance staff – more than just adding bus operators. The same applies to later evening service.)
- Customer says the bus fares are too cheap and need to be raised.
- Customer asks why we don't have cutback problems like they have at GCRTA. (Kris and Alex state that we are financially stable due to sales tax. However, we recognize our fiduciary duty to change the service to provide the best possible service for Summit County taxpayers.)
- Customer asks if there is any possibility of a value loaded type fare card that can be loaded with fares on an as needed basis by the customer. (Kris said we are examining different passes and smart cards that would be more convenient for customers and also speed up the boarding process.)

- Customer asks if we are considering raising fares, when many people are low income and cannot afford higher costs for rides especially with a family. What about family fare pricing? (Kris replied that METRO's fares are the lowest in Ohio and no family fares are under consideration.)
- Customer was concerned that there is no interior place for people to wait for buses at Independence Turn Around, although we have the interior space in the former bakery. The wind is bad in the winter and we should be able to provide better facilities for our customers. Customer lives at Chapel Hill Towers.
- How about looking at updating your current schedules. Many schedules have the wrong information such as "Wabash" that is now named "Akron General Way".
- The #1 starts out as the # 50 but it turns into the 1 and I had no idea when I first moved here that I could have used the bus to get me home. (Refers to route interlining that occurs frequently.)
- 10 years ago we published a single map with every route. We also had complaint forms consisting of 3 pages... He asked for one and the driver said they don't use those any more and you have to call in to register your complaints. We should be able at minimum call in the driver's badge number so the public can call in with more specific information about our personnel. When you ask drivers for their name or employee number they won't provide it.
- #26 operator says that he can not stop at the number 1 stop (Refers to W. Market at Bryden, this is due to the need to make a left hand turn, restricting service to the bus stop.)
- When you call to make a complaint to METRO you get transferred to voicemail and your call is never returned, so you get to deal with the same issue over and over.
- Customer says if an operator sees you walking and you wave down the bus but you're not at the stop then you've missed the bus because the bus keeps going. (Courtesy stops don't always work.)
- Customer says she has been riding the bus since 1995 because she does not drive, and every year METRO has gotten better and better. Most drivers are very helpful and very nice and will go out of the way to help passengers as much as possible.
- Drivers need better training to know when people want to stop at specific bus stops. The front of some buses gets really congested and passengers need to be directed to move to the back.
- More evening service would help to expand ridership. Connections are difficult due to wait time.
- Customer says some drivers do not pay attention at stops. Was at Howe Ave standing at a stop and the driver flew by without stopping. Called in and got a bunch of crap. Some of these drivers do not pay attention to the stops. One driver took 15 min to get the same distance other drivers have taken only 3 and 6 min. I know which driver it is and he always leaves late.
- Customer says this proposed project is really good for connections and services.
- I do notice that on some buses, say I want to go to Cleveland, I could catch the 101 for 50 cents but the drivers always tell me the most expensive way on North Coast Express.
- Some people at the window (at RKP) don't know the changes that have happened and what some people want.
- Customer is thinking of moving but he doesn't want to move until he sees where the new routes are going to go and how frequent the service will be.
- Customer asked us to replace the bus shelter on S. Main near the baseball stadium.
- Customer Ray Hruska lives on Ridgewood Road and rides the X61. He would like a bus stop for the X61 in the Sand Run area. Some of the schedule times are convenient and others are not. The X61

skips some stops depending on the time of day. Early in the mornings or late at night he has to go all the way to RKP creating unnecessary travel time. Morning and evening schedules make it difficult to get to any evening sporting events in Cleveland or Akron in the evenings.

Written Customer Notes:

- Your prices are great the way they are
- Keep the costs the same
- I don't like that when I call to make a complaint, I am sent to an answering machine service and I never get my call returned.
- There should be courtesy stops
- Wheelchairs, baby strollers, and grocery carts hold up the employees and riders, they should have a separate bus and they take up seats.
- People have to stand after they paid their fare if the buses are too crowded, so make them (the buses) longer like the #1 and #2.
- The #5 needs a Sunday bus
- All buses on Saturdays and Sundays shouldn't be any longer than 15 to 20 min apart.

Roy Hruska – Customer Notes:

Thank you for your presentation this morning. Very informative. Since I got to Akron about 4 years ago, whenever I question Akron metro, city, county officials about why things are being done this way and never updated is that "We always have done it this way." Very frustrating answer. This was like a breath of fresh air; there are better ways of doing things. Interested to see how these changes will turn out. Good luck with the thankless job ahead.

**C. Location:** Cuyahoga Falls Library, 2015 3<sup>rd</sup> St, Cuyahoga Falls 44221; April 20, 2016; 5:30 PM

**METRO Staff:** Kris Liljeblad, Jason Popik

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number	Contact Info.
Rose Pirce	[not for public release]	
Jessie Carduner	[not for public release]	

**Summary of Key Points:**

- Customer wants METRO to provide SCAT service on Sundays
- More daytime bus service to Cleveland is needed. The commuter buses are too early in the morning and too late in the afternoon for senior citizens who want to travel midday.
- Customer needs to get to Beria about once a month and usually can't. She has had to take Greyhound from Akron to get up there. Customer goes a few times a week using METRO and it takes her 3.5 hours to get to her destination and to come home she has to leave by 3:00 PM or she won't make the bus to get back to Akron.
- PARTA and METRO do not overlap very well in Stow with their schedules. METRO drivers leave right on time and often PARTA is running late so the small schedule gap is not enough. She spends 2 hours each way to commute to Kent for work and struggles to get out of Kent on time because their last 5:00 PM bus can be tough to catch.
- Loves METRO drivers way better than PARTA's drivers. PARTA's drivers can be kind of rude.



- How can we get more word out about the different ways to connect between METRO and PARTA?
- The text function for individual bus stops is fabulous.
- This customer made a great spreadsheet showing all her transfers between PARTA and METRO and laminated it so she can use it every day without wearing it out.
- Says we do a lot of things right but can see room for improvement.
- Used Pittsburgh which was a good system. Santiago was rough, no line up system. Grew up in Philadelphia which had a very unreliable system but they did have service all the time even on holidays and they had subway and elevated rails.
- Road ways are bad making busses really shaky to ride
- Consider selling merchandise to increase our revenue
- Give employees of companies discounts to use the buses instead of driving
- Travel training “show people how to ride today”

Written Customer Notes: Jessie Carduner

Match Service to Modern Travel Patterns:

- Last bus out of Cleveland and last afternoon Stow bus #51 leave too early for people who walk
- If you want to know a typical riders day, shadow them on the bus
- I take 3 buses from Kent to Cuyahoga Falls and it takes 1.5 to 2 hours each way to get from Kent to the Falls

Simplify the Routes:

- Use shorter routes with more transfer meet points besides the transit center and Independence Turnaround.
- While I understand the lineup concept, it would be better to have more departure times on services that go close to my house.
- # 51 spends a lot of time on the highway, has no pickups in downtown Cuyahoga Falls.

Foster a Transit-First Lifestyle:

- Need to collaborate better with PARTA, SARTA, and GC RTA & perhaps a ride share service with Uber
- Maybe METRO, PARTA & SARTA can take turns running some routes?
- Need more weekend and holiday service. No way to get to Cleveland on the weekend.
- I have to use Greyhound to get to where I need to go between RKP and Cleveland

Build Financial Stability:

- Incentivize more people to ride and to invest tax money for transportation.

General

- I like the combined schedule that shows all the routes and when they leave the RKP transit center and Independence Turnaround. Very useful.
- I like the text bus stop signs on the street.
- The maps on the individual schedules are not always easy to read if you don't know what streets are between the major stops on the route.
- Some routes could be shorter and more could serve busier streets. For example, the # 10 fills up mostly along State Road and onto Howard but it is mostly empty before it reaches State Road.
- Eliminate the redundancy of certain routes.

- Most people from Kent wait to take PARTA from RKP instead of taking METRO to Independence Turnaround to transfer to the # 51 to get to the Stow-Kent transfer point. I think that it would be easier for them to take that route to get where they need to go but most people simply do not know that connection works.

**D. Location:** Ellet Branch Library, 2470 E Market St, Akron 44312; April 21, 2016; 12:30 PM

**METRO Staff:** Kris Liljeblad, Robin Miller, Jason Popik

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number	Contact Info:
Mat Megaw	[not for public release]	
Debbie Westcott	[not for public release]	
Sara Schismewos	[not for public release]	
Joan Meola	[not for public release]	
Danny K	[not for public release]	
Stacey Davis	[not for public release]	

**Summary of Key Points:**

- Requested service to Wadsworth. Have to pay for travel service twice, public and private to get to work.
- Route 14 is an untimely ride.
- Grid service to allow more transfers is a welcome idea when travel training customers on how to use Metro.
- Construction impact information was requested for Routes 7 and 59

Written Customer Notes - Debbie Westcott

Simplify the Routes:

- Don't have a half hour walk from the bus stop to where I need to go.

**E. Location:** North Hill Branch, 183 E Cuyahoga Falls Ave, Akron 44310; April 21, 2016; 4:00 PM

**METRO Staff:** Jarrod Hampshire, Jason Popik, Robin Miller

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number
Susan Juhan	[not for public release]

**Summary of Key Points:**

- Teach the younger ones to move to the back of the bus.
- Takes the bus every day almost.
- The 26 doesn't always run on a regular basis and not on weekends.
- The number 5 on Saturday mornings only goes to Mogadore but that is not far enough to get where I need to go on the weekends and it only runs 6 to 6 on weekends.
- I do like the fact that the bus passes scan now, and are a lot easier than the old way.
- Is there any way that they can fix the fareboxes so they can accept Canadian coins?
- We have to keep reminding people that the bus does not always go into Summit Mall. Maybe it would be easier to have more consistency with the routes.

- I have not figured out how to ride the number 4.
- On the 59 circulator, why does it have to go into one place twice?
- The buses often are dirty and have a lot of trash or spilled drinks making it uncomfortable for passengers.
- Some kind of tri county pass would be nice because I often go to Portage County.

**F. Location:** Kenmore Branch, 969 Kenmore Blvd, Akron 44314; April 21, 2016; 5:30 PM

**METRO Staff:** Kris Liljeblad, Jessica Dreschel

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number
Mike Burkhart	[not for public release]

**Summary of Key Points:**

- It takes too long for a “back up” bus to arrive when a bus breaks down
- Need more shelters on the routes
- The # 8 bus is useful, uses it the most
- I don’t really want to make any transfers to get downtown regardless if it saves time
- RKP is really nice
- Fare should still be 75 cents not \$1.25
- Teens often ask for spare change when on the bus which I do not like

**G. Location:** Maple Valley Branch, 1187 Copley Rd, Akron 44320; April 22, 2016; 12:30 PM

**METRO Staff:** Richard Enty, Kris Liljeblad, Bambi Miller, Mike Davis

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number
Richard Baker	[not for public release]
Carmen Hispherson	[not for public release]
Sharline Hirsk	[not for public release]

**Summary of Key Points:**

- It's interesting to see the numbers. We ride constantly, 99% of the time we ride. If I'm going somewhere I'm on the bus. On #33 there isn't a weekend option; it has a big schedule gap. Big employers out there are GOJO and Associated Materials. You're going to be looking at employers, right? (Kris: Yes, we've been talking to some of them already.)
- Another big employer is Sterling - the #101, but people have to walk a bit. I worked for the University of Akron for years. No Tallmadge route. Route to Acme only. We used to walk 45 minutes to our first bus stop. Great exercise. (Kris: We like to remind people that bus riders are healthier from walking.)
- Customer loves METRO service. It’s never late unless there's a breakdown or someone is sick which is rare. (Richard asked how many times:) Answer: 3 times in 7 years they experienced a breakdown. There was a chaser bus there within 15 minutes. We sat on State Road once, last year. We know a lot of drivers, they are nice.

- Customer lives off East Ave in the Springhill Apartments, over by Miller South. We used to live in Tallmadge. We use the #9 V. Odom route. Springhill has a mid-rise, high-rise, and garden area; 3 buildings and town homes all on one campus. The bus stop is at the bottom of the hill. Springhill is on a steep hill. Have to walk up the hill from the #9. She has proposed an alternate route. Richard Baker suggested using #14 instead. Walked up the hill for 4 years. Everton off V Odom maybe METRO could go there instead.
- Customer transfers frequently at RKP. Likes going to the Tallmadge Acme. Buses are fixed well, what they turn into. (Interlining) When I get on the 9, not too bad.
- MIKE: Where do you travel most? Answer: Use the 9 to 30 to go to doctor appointments and the Main Library.
- MIKE: You go to the Acme in Tallmadge? Do you do that because you enjoy shopping there? Answer: Yes, we are comfortable with that store. Many get on at Goodyear Heights. Yes, there is an Acme down the street, but we don't like that one.
- Customer lives near Steels Corner, goes to Market District and Acme #10 goes to Market District (Portage Crossing). If I transfer, I transfer there to Chapel Hill & Independence. Great place to transfer. Wellness Center at Allen Rd - would like to see a bus do a big loop. A circulator that would stay in that area around the Market District. The other sister said the same thing about Stow Courthouse, however there are no sidewalks. One sister lives by Walsh, no sidewalks. I go downtown and take the big loop 10. Waters Edge is located right before a great big complex. There should be Sunday riders there. There is a special program there on Wyoga Lake Rd. She gets her bus pass as part of her rent.
- KRIS: How do the bus stops work at Portage Crossing? Answer: We think they are perfect, the #10 and 33. The stop is right in front of Arby's. Seems like there are a lot of riders on State Road, lots of stops.
- RICHARD: What do you want a bus loop to look like? Answer: We have a doctor by the Krieger's. We want to go to the Market District, then go toward Walmart instead of making the turn on 33; we want to go to Walmart. Lots of people want to do that. But there is no service in between them, and no stops. Have to get off and walk. Then make a left and go up to Akron General during the week and make another loop on Steels Corners and back.
- RICHARD: Could it operate several times a week, rather than everyday? Answer: Yes. Then there's the Wellness Center and all of those doctor's offices. A lot of people use Care Source and generally have to go to the doctors there. I'd like to see a bus go down Graham Road by the Stow Courthouse and AGMC.
- MIKE: Would the 53 work if there was more service? Answer: Yes, but it misses one strip of road.
- KRIS: We've been talking to the City of Cuyahoga Falls about rerouting #53 through Front Street. Ridership around the edge of downtown is light. Maybe it will be better, not sure how many riders we will find.
- Customer remembers when Front Street was open, it was a heavier route. Before it was a shopping area, 15 years ago? A lot of storefronts are vacant now. There are some doctor's offices there, but not much there. Dead zone.

- Customer said the West Market bus (#1) was always crowded, even if it was the long (articulated) bus. (KRIS: We are talking about using articulated buses on weekends. The earliest that a change could happen is in the fall of 2016.)
- Customer commented on the variable Route 1 service to Summit Mall. Last time they rode they had to cross the street for to catch a smaller bus. Thought they weren't allowed in the Mall now.
- KRIS: Asked about installation of more bus shelters. Answer: Customers said there was one installed for the #9 at the nearest inbound bus stop to Springhill. It helps.
- RICHARD: Have you used real time? Answer: No, but other people told me they have. Even older people have. That's gone over real well. Good idea. Lately we've been using the Grocery Bus. Good system. A lot of people use that. With the new system, we don't have to carry schedules.
- KRIS: How do you pay your bus fare? Answer: One sister gets a monthly bus pass along with her housing. The other sister uses All Day Passes. The Springhill sister's son goes to Firestone HS, but they don't live in the area. It's easy; the only thing is we have to buy his bus pass.
- KRIS: Transit First lifestyle - want to make it as easy as possible to ride. Works for us, as well, we can speed up the boarding process. Answer: Told a story about the first time they rode the bus 7 years ago and paid by individual ride all day until a driver told them about an All Day Pass. One sister was employed by the University of Akron, who paid for her transportation.
- Customer would like more direct routing into Springhill Apartments, maybe on Everton. Not necessarily all the time. Walking is good, but sometimes the sidewalks aren't cleaned off and it's kind of scary there on the hill. One time a new driver went up there and no one told her, but we were excited. A lot of people live there. I'm not just asking for myself.
- Customer is happy with the routing they have now. Please don't take what I have now.
- Kris thanked them for the comments and told them to feel free to share more ideas.
- Customers: Appreciated the opportunity to help. Think people are confused what the meetings are about, if they are meetings for employees or riders.

**H. Location:** RKP Transit Center Community Room, 631 S Broadway; April 23, 2016; 9:00 AM

**Metro Staff:** Kris Liljeblad, Molly Becker, Mike Davis, Richard Enty

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number
Kathleen Buckwater	[not for public release]
Judy Gibson	[not for public release]
Jason Kryel	[not for public release]
Carolyn Hofer	[not for public release]

**Summary of Key Points:**

- Customer wants to talk about the Avail next bus app. Mike told him we would set up travel training to show him how to use the app.
- Customer wanted to talk about high speed rail between Cleveland and Akron – proposed a Hyperloop system using sealed compartments in pneumatic tubes.
- Customer wants earlier options on weekends, for work and church, before 9 am; esp. on Route 2 in order to get to work at Arlington Walmart by 7 am.

- Customer wants later Saturday service, specifically after 10 PM from W. Market and Montrose. Should allow people at entertainments to get home after 11 PM.
- Customer wants 4th of July service for the fireworks; we should continue our operations until after the fireworks, closer to midnight.
- Customer wants #13 needs to run later on weekend. It stops running past Aster and Archwood around 7 PM.
- How does METRO determine where they pull in and out of? Some riders won't take the #2 to Arlington Walmart because it is difficult to cross a busy 6-lane highway. Kris pointed out that Summit County will be improving pedestrian facilities next year.
- Kris asked about convenience related to fare structure: How could we better support a Transit First Lifestyle? There was interest in value-loaded smart cards, greater use of passes instead of cash fares. Customers were pretty satisfied with the existing fare structure. One customer has witnessed older kids boarding buses for free, holding the back door open to let others on free, and kids panhandling on the bus.
- People sneak on the bus in the back door while lots of people are loading in front of bus (when the operator is busy with a full bus on weekday afternoons).
- How far apart would bus stops be spaced if changes happen? Disabled passenger concerned about having to walk too far if bus stops are eliminated.
- At the 3:55 PM lineup, #13 is totally full and standing room only.
- #17 buses should run later on Saturday so customer can go to Hibernian. Saturday and Friday are big entertainment days.

Written Customer Notes:

- On weekends, the last bus is at 7 PM which is too early to shut down transit
- At Arlington it is hard to cross at the Wal-Mart
- Sunday service after 10 PM would be nice
- More service after 3 PM
- Saturday evening service for the # 10 and # 17

- I. **Location:** Cuyahoga Falls Library, 2015 3rd St, Cuyahoga Falls 44221; April 25, 2016; 12:30 PM  
**METRO Staff:** Kris Liljeblad; Robin Miller; Richard Enty

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number	Contact Info.
Carl S Farinacci	[not for public release]	
Cynthia Richards	[not for public release]	
Chuck Rector	[not for public release]	
Linda Johnson	[not for public release]	
Terry Wigal	[not for public release]	
Jan Anita Polk	[not for public release]	

**Summary of Key Points:**

- Is Metro eliminating the transit center?
- Will Metro eliminate any routes?
- Will Metro notify the public with any route eliminations?

- ITA is nice location to make transfers
- Will ITA be renovated to be used by customers as well?
- Will any routes be changed? And if they are will the coverage still be there?
- Is Metro trying to get riders in the suburbs at the cost of city riders?
- Can Metro coordinate with the suburban companies on shifts so the bus doesn't go there all throughout the day?
- The Goodyear and Darrow route used to go further down to Goodyear and Eastwood than Darrow Rd. She would ride more if it went back to doing that. The walk to Tonawanda to catch the bus is the same time as to walk to ACME.
- Could Metro have a bus do an East Market W. Market route?
- Richard shared the possibility of riding the circulator downtown.
- Will Metro still have line ups?
- Will Metro eliminate routes?
- Customer thinks layovers at Tri County Plaza are too long when trying to make a connection to another bus. Passenger waited 30 minutes at the layover on the bus.
- Portage and Graham, is there anything in the works for changes?
- Are there changes to #33 coming? She uses it for school service for her children.
- What's the policy on swearing on the bus? Passenger doesn't want to hear that on her ride time.
- Wants to know what Metro policy is on open carry weapons?
- She says that 99% of Metro operators are great! Thinks Metro does a great job.
- Is there information to be had about the Metro changes coming up?

**J. Location:** Highland Square Library, 807 W Market St, Akron 44303; April 25, 2016; 4:00 PM

**METRO Staff:** Kris Liljeblad, Molly Becker, Jason Popik, Richard Enty

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number	Comment
Curtis Tillman	[not for public release]	
Clay W	[not for public release]	
Delilah Ortiz	[not for public release]	
Andrew Williams	[not for public release]	
Ed Sanders	[not for public release]	

**Summary of Key Points:**

- Route service stops too early, need weekends (#5) and more frequency on Sunday. There is no service at all for work at Haven of Rest. Need service for clients further out of the city.
- A grid system would be like Chicago. When are changes coming, if at all? Answer: 18 months due to amount of work to do. Looking for the broad ideas to allow specifics in a couple of months to the general public.
- Are you thinking of more frequency and no line-ups?
- Are you planning on other routes being similar to routes 1 and 2?
- Routes that go to Chapel Hill....the Rolling Acres route...what are your plans for mall routes? Are we planning around malls and other factors?
- Weekend schedule needs expanding to save on cab fares. Want METRO to add more times/trips, greater span of service.
- Route 26 needs more in between run times. The route 26 has odd span of time. Needs more frequency.
- Shifting the radial to a grid network would allow less duplication.
- Any idea on how you will determine what will be eliminated and changed? Answer: We'll try to use data to help drive those decisions.
- Are there changes to fares that will have a financial impact on riders? Answer: Nothing planned to increase fares though we want to make it more convenient for customers.
- Day pass was a great idea. Love it!
- Consider offering a reward for expired passes.
- Later runs are needed in the summer for concerts and such.
- Zone buses are good too, just learned about them recently. Needed on weekends.
- If you expand service on weekends, we could save on cab fares.
- Are you getting more articulated buses? For the 9:50 PM line up we need more capacity.
- Are the articulated busses more costly to run?
- Avoid routes with students. Operators try to discipline them, but some kids don't listen.
- I like the grid system idea, I don't like going to RKP sometimes
- Transfers are hard and not timed right. I miss it at RKP, so I get off earlier stops to transfer to another route.
- 9:50 PM lineup, some people were out of control. Women were getting disruptive. I was on #10 and the bus was late because of a mobility device. I felt bad because my bus was holding up the lineup and I was afraid people may be angry with us on that bus.
- People are avoiding the RKPTC because of safety/security issues. Heard this from many passengers.
- In the winter the streets aren't cleared and I get dropped off in the snow piles.
- Passengers want to be dropped off at non-stops and the driver says no, but some do it, some issues around courtesy stops, as well.
- Most of the drivers try and drop you off where it is safer in the winter.
- Would like a shuttle to/from jobs and family services on S. Main to RKP Transit Center
- Can we have identical Saturday and Sunday schedules?



**K. Location:** Highland Square Library, 807 W Market St, Akron 44303; April 25, 2016; 5:30 PM

**METRO Staff:** Kris Liljeblad, Molly Becker, Jason Popik, Richard Enty

**Citizens in attendance:**

Curtis Tillman	[not for public release]	
Clay W	[not for public release]	
Delilah Ortiz	[not for public release]	
Andrew Williams	[not for public release]	
Ed Sanders	[not for public release]	

**Summary of Key Points:**

- More service available. How do you balance that in your system?
- Manufacturing jobs are at the outskirts of the city.
- I've been at stops and the bus doesn't come because that time point is a limited stop and doesn't always go there at certain times.
- You are missing the university on your map. Is that because they have their own routes?
- Likes the circulator idea.
- I've ridden since 2008. Only ride when I have \$\$\$\$. Use #1 mostly for shopping. Sometimes the route 50, as well.
- Bus is full on inbound trips. Even articulated busses are full. The last 2 trips of the night are fuller closer into town.
- Never have to transfer. Live near Copley road. Just walk if no route.
- Never tried other routes.
- I use day pass so I can go off/on as needed.
- Now that I am a senior I pay base fare of 50 cents.
- A value loaded card is not needed. I don't ride enough. If it's a card that subtracts fare only when you ride, that would be cool. He'd like that.
- You are going in the right direction. I like it!
- With gas, parking and frustration, I thought you'd have better ridership. I've heard people have lost jobs because of timing and such.

**L. Location:** Firestone Branch Library, 1486 Aster Ave, Akron 44301; April 26, 2016: 12:30 PM

**METRO Staff:** Kris Liljeblad, Robin Miller

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number
Rachelle LeBrian	[not for public release]
Kathy Edge	[not for public release]

**Summary of Key Points:**

- A woman stopped by the meeting inquiring about the Roo service for her daughter to Stem HS on Akron U property. She is a special needs student. It was suggested she call Customer service for Travel training as well as keep up on our upcoming service information.
- We run the 102 and 103 to suburban areas. Discussion on being more effective on these routes.

- Will Metro keep Rt 17? Answer: It has decent ridership so we don't want to alter it too much. In some places routes that overlap may be looked at to cover more area effectively.
- Passenger uses her SCAT card to pay half fare on line service. Discussion on using a smart card when boarding. Uses SCAT, Rt11, Rt17, and Rt2 mostly.

**M. Location:** Odom Blvd Branch, 600 Vernon Odom Blvd, Akron 44307; April 26, 2016; 5:00 PM

**METRO Staff:** Jarrod Hampshire, Jason Popik, Robin Miller, Richard Enty

**Citizens in attendance:**

Name	Phone Number	Contact Info
David Klesic	[not for public release]	
Tamara James	[not for public release]	
Jerry Egan	[not for public release]	

**Summary of Key Points:**

- Fare structure - passes vs transfers. Answer: Fare structure will be evaluated to best serve customers.
- A visitor is very excited about our potential plans. She works with people on transportation for employment. She is currently very happy with service to hospitals.
- How often would service be provided? Gentleman is looking for expanded service plan before considering moving.
- Akron Canton airport.... Planes leave at 7:00am and the bus arrives at 7:05am. Something to think about. Would like to see integrated service with other services. Takes too long to ride the bus with no connection. Ten minute drive vs a one hour bus ride. Would very much like to see more consistent trips made throughout the day. Routes such as 110, 60/61.
- Gentleman asked about the population drop and how to capture people to use buses again? Richard shared various studies to gain community demographic information to develop plans for our service.
- Is Metro looking to serve North Hill, Twinsburg in a better fashion? Jared explained a cross town connection would shorten the connection time for passengers.
- Passenger currently uses Metro's texting service for route arrival.
- Would like to see more shelters.
- Would really like to see express routing during peak times and on really busy routes.
- Is there something that can be done to communicate with Cleveland to have more stops to make better time?
- Why does Metro own Rail track? A - There was a possibility of commuter rail happening.
- Bus rapid transit, has Metro given up on the idea? Jared shared how the model works; however there are longer range costs to consider.
- From RKP passenger wants a circulator to reach downtown; will we have something to offer? A – Richard shared our free circulator coming soon.
- Mark with Icons on the schedules to transit connections from other agencies.
- Would like to see more Cleveland service for sporting events, shows, and what not.

**Customer Notes:**

- Need seat belts for riders not just for the drivers and those in wheelchairs.

## 5. E-mail and Written Correspondence

4/20/16, Ms. Becky Deger  
Mr. Richard Enty, Director METRO RTA  
416 Kenmore Boulevard  
Akron, Ohio 44310

Dear Mr. Enty:

I live at Chapel Hill Towers in Akron and am the Chairperson of our Resident Safety Committee last met with you February 2013 when Metro RTA was actively soliciting community input for its expansion plans from its ridership. We were not successful in getting attention to our problems with lack of a safe inside waiting area at the newly opened Independence Transit Center and an addition of Saturday service for the 59 Circulator bus at Chapel Hill Towers at that time.

NOW with the *Akron Beacon Journal* article on March 26, 2016 providing an enticing account of Metro RTA's major overhaul, the "Driving Metro Forward" Project — we are encouraged by Metro's community meetings during April to gather feedback about the general proposal. Even more, we are also encouraged by your "hopes that people will show up with recommendations" as a welcome entreaty to us to keep these issues viable and at the forefront.

The Chapel Hill area offered the third largest ridership in 2011 when Chapel Hill Mall "kicked" the Metro buses off of Mall property, save for one lonely Circulator bus. At that time and because of the involvement with Bob Pfaff, Jeff Fusco (then Akron City Councilman-at-Large) and John Schmidt (then Summit County Councilman) Metro opened the Independence Transit Center in 2012 - but alas minus the use of the building because of environmental hazards.

With the repaving of the driveways encircling the building at the Independence Transit Center we are still left "OUT IN THE COLD" LITERALLY with two small partial-glass enclosures that do not accommodate wheelchairs and walkers. With waiting times of even a few minutes to close to thirty minutes between buses, **YOUR** riders are forced to endure all of Mother Nature's bounty including, icy rain, bitter cold and wind and snow.

The Safety Committee completed a short survey of residents at Chapel Hill Towers 1 & 2 in preparation for your community meetings. We are a 55+ Community, independent living apartment buildings with 200 apartments in each building. We had 62 surveys returned and these are early results: 66% of our residents said they are unable to use the Independence Transit year-round because of one or more of the following reasons: No inside waiting area to provide protection from inclement weather; Outdoor glass booth does not accommodate walker and/or wheelchair; No safe way to cross Independence in winter when plowed snow covers sidewalks.

Page 2.

Letter of April 20, 2016

Mr. Richard Enty, Metro RTA

- 35% of the respondents use walkers and/or wheelchairs and cannot walk up the hill to the Independence Transit when 59 Circulator does not provide full day service and we have No Saturday Service.
- 69% of residents responded that they do use 59 Circulator;
- 59% of residents responded they would ride a Saturday 59 Circulator.
- 53% of residents responded they would prefer Grocery Bus on Thursday or Friday because many of the store circulars have specials that start on Thursdays.

We received many positive comments regarding the drivers on the 59 Circulator and Grocery Buses. Residents are very pleased this service is available.

One word about the Independence Transit Center — We notice that at the other Transit Center is at Romig Road and is comprised of a glass enclosed structure maintained by Metro. What can we do to get a similar structure at Independence?

Mr. Enty, we are happy to work with you and Metro RTA to bring about these changes and look forward to continued dialog. Please feel free to contact me at 330-724-7255. We are happy to—re-active our community support with the City of Akron, County of Summit and Jeff Fusco.

I have also enclosed a letter of support for this endeavor addressed to you from Ms. Tracie Steffee, Property Manager for Chapel Hill Towers.

For the Safety Committee, I remain Cordially Yours,  
Ms. Becky Deger

November 20, 2012

Mr. Richard Entry, Director

Metro Regional Transit Authority

416 Kenmore Blvd. Akron, Ohio 44301

Dear Mr. Entry:

Per the article in the Akron Beacon Journal on 11-15-12 Metro wants to hear from the community on expansion plans from its ridership. I am sorry I was not able to attend that meeting; however, I do want to comment about the incomplete plans at the Independence Turnaround.

I live at the Chapel Hill Towers in North Akron, a 55+ community. I also represent our Safety Committee, a resident-initiated activity that began working with Bob Pfaff, Metro's Executive Director in September 2011 when CBL Enterprises, owners of the Chapel Hill Mall, made the decision that Metro had to remove all but one bus from the Mall property. This decision forced Metro to use the small public street, Bucholzer Blvd. for bus stops. These were the only options at the time and forced riders to try and negotiate a grassy knoll on the East side of the street, with no handicap access. Riders were literally dropped off in the street and were forced to traverse and attempt to cross the street in front of on-coming traffic for nearly 9 months with no bus shelters. This hazardous circumstance was of critical concern to numerous people since our area has the third largest ridership in the county per Bob Pfaff.

Our letters to the CBL corporate offices went unanswered. The local Manager of the Mall would not even talk with us, prompted by corporate headquarters. At that point our Safety Committee began a series of meetings with Bob Pfaff, Jeff Fusco – Akron City Councilman at Large, our local Ward Councilman and the Summit County Ward Councilman, John Schmidt. Bob Pfaff even brought a plot plan for the Mall area to try and find an available piece of land.

As you know, Mr. Entry, Bob Pfaff was able to accomplish the purchase of the former Baker's Square and opened the Independence Turnaround this June through Metro. Jeff Fusco was able to have the City of Akron build the curb cuts on the North and South sides of Independence and build the center island as a rider/handicap accessible crosswalk and turnaround, plus add the additional 3 curb cuts on Independence.

Sadly, Bob Pfaff passed away before the final touches at the Independence Turnaround will be accomplished as he told us. Bob was not able to attend our "Balloon Launch" in June. However, Molly Becker did get the word to us that he was with us through his reps he sent and we could look forward to the completion of the following:

1. The interior of the former Baker's Square was to begin to be worked on after Jan. 1, 2013.
2. Additional routes to the schedule for the No. 59 Circulator would be added for Saturdays for Chapel Hill Towers I and II.

Page 2.

Mr. Richard Entry

November 20, 2012

Mr. Entry, we have high hopes that the previous two issues are still part of the original plan – or are on the expansion plan and did not get lost in the transition of Bob’s untimely death and your appointment as the new Director of Metro. It is the hope of the Safety Committee, and my personal optimism that we will be able to work with you through the conclusion of the two previously mentioned unfinished matters.

Our Safety Committee meets the first Tuesday of the month, although for January 2013 we will plan to meet January 8, because the first Tuesday is New Year’s Day. If you are available on Jan. 8, I will also contact Jeff Fusco and John Schmidt to ascertain their availability that day. We meet at the Party Room at Chapel Hill Towers I, 1101 Independence Ave.

Please feel free to contact me at 330–724–7255. I look forward to meeting you and can forward pictures of the June “Balloon Launch” unless you prefer to get some pictures from Molly Becker.

For the Safety Committee, I remain Cordially Yours,

Ms. Becky Deger



May 11, 2016

Ms. Becky Deger



Re: Driving METRO Forward; Reply to Your 4/20/16 Letter

Dear Ms. Deger:

Thank you for your April 20<sup>th</sup> letter and for attending the Public Meeting that day at the Akron–Summit County Main Library. We appreciate the time and energy that you devoted to identifying needed transit facilities and services to benefit your fellow residents of Chapel Hill Towers, and your neighbors in the vicinity of Chapel Hill Mall. I can assure you that METRO has seriously considered the issues that you raised. There are no facility improvements, route revisions or schedule changes in the works that will result in immediate changes. However, METRO is in the process of evaluating our entire fixed route system, and your input will be considered in that context. Specifics relevant to your points follow.

There were six specific issues that you identified, including:

1. No indoor waiting area for customers at METRO's Independence Turnaround (ITA) facility;
2. No scheduled Saturday bus service to Chapel Hill Towers;
3. Inadequate service frequency to Chapel Hill Towers on weekdays;
4. Unsafe pedestrian crossings of Independence Avenue with snow and ice conditions;
5. Inaccessible bus shelters at ITA; and
6. A request to shift Grocery Bus from Wednesday to Thursday or Friday.

The primary functions that drove METRO to acquire the former Baker's Square facility were to provide a transfer point, layover, and bus operator restrooms for bus routes serving the vicinity of Chapel Hill Mall, which we have done. We also use the ITA facility for secure storage. As you point out in your letter, our Rolling Acres Transit Center on Romig Road provides better weather protection for our customers. Unfortunately, there is no current plan to remodel the ITA building interior to provide an indoor customer waiting area. Our METRO Safety Committee has brainstormed some ideas, but nothing has been decided that I can report at this time.

METRO's Chapel Hill Circulator Route 59, which begins and ends each trip at Independence Turnaround, has seven different timepoints in the schedule, which it operates six days a week, excluding Sunday. On weekdays there are 15 scheduled trips, and there are 6 scheduled on Saturdays. Chapel Hill Towers is one of the timepoints, but it receives scheduled service to the door of the building on 11 weekday trips (of which four are two-way, that is both outbound from -, and inbound to-, ITA). Aside from one inbound trip to ITA at 7:43 PM, all the weekday trips occur between 9:30 AM and 5:00 PM, and there are no scheduled Saturday bus trips to the door of the building. As I discussed with you by telephone, transit agencies traditionally assume that in urban areas, a bus route within ¼ mile of a bus route provides very good passenger access. By that measure, Chapel Hill Towers has good bus service six days a week. The lack of a safe, accessible pedestrian way between your building complex and either



416 KENMORE BOULEVARD, AKRON, OHIO 44301  
phone: 330.762.7267 / fax: 330.762.0854

web: AKRONMETRO.ORG

Independence Avenue or Buchholzer Boulevard is an infrastructure deficiency that METRO is not equipped to make up for in perpetuity. We would like to work with you to seek help from your property owner and the City of Akron to address this sidewalk infrastructure deficiency for the long term.

Regarding the bus shelters at ITA, we recently re-paved the entire driveway area around the building with concrete as you have observed. I believe the shelters are in full compliance with ADA standards as currently installed, but if you can help us identify a specific non-compliant element we will get it fixed as soon as possible.

The lack of a continuous sidewalk on the south side of Independence Avenue adds to the importance of safe pedestrian crossings between the north and south sides of the street. The pedestrian crossing between Chapel Hill Mall and ITA includes a refuge in the middle of the street and warning signs. As you know, this does not ensure that motorists will always yield to a pedestrian in the crosswalk, and especially not in poor visibility or snowy conditions. We will gladly work with you and Akron's Traffic Engineers to evaluate, purchase and install a new active pedestrian crossing warning device, similar to one that we installed adjacent to our RKP Transit Center Park and Ride lot.

The Grocery Bus service at Chapel Hill Towers on Wednesday is the heaviest ridership day of the five weekdays that we operate it. The popularity of Grocery Bus service has continued to grow to such an extent that our freedom to change your building from Wednesday to another day is very limited. We now serve five other apartment buildings in addition to yours on Wednesday. On Thursdays our published schedule shows we are serving 11 apartment buildings, and on Friday we serve six – all in different parts of Summit County. Although shopping the coupon sales might be preferred, we're not in a position to make that happen.

Please feel free to contact me to follow up on any of the above issues. Again, we thank you for your thoughts and ideas to improve METRO's facilities and operations for our customers.

Very Sincerely Yours,



Kris T. Liljeblad, AICP, PTP  
Planning & Development Director  
METRO Regional Transit Authority  
416 Kenmore Boulevard  
Akron, Ohio 44301

Cc: Richard M. Enty, Executive Director/Secretary-Treasurer  
Akron Council Member Jeff Fusco  
Dave Gasper, Akron Traffic Engineer



416 KENMORE BOULEVARD AKRON, OHIO 44301  
phone: 330.762.7267 / fax: 330.762.0854  
web: AKRONMETRO.ORG



4/29/16, Mark J Slutz - Dear Metro:

- I live in Stark County, so an issue for me is how the SARTA routes connect with the METRO routes. At certain times of day, the SARTA Canton Akron route connects rather nicely with Metro routes, other times of day it's terrible. One proposed solution: some coordination with SARTA, particularly with line up times. For example, it would be nice to have a SARTA trip that arrived at 7:10/7:15 A.M. to take advantage of the 7:20 line up.
- I think moving away from your present radial routes from downtown Akron to more of a grid system would be a great idea. SARTA did this several years ago, and it works much better. There are now 4 smaller radii (Massillon, Belden Village, Canton, and Alliance) instead of one large radius (Canton). Many, many years ago (when Metro became county wide) there was talk of establishing "town centers" in Green, Falls, etc. and having routes radiate from these "town centers"; maybe it's time to revisit this idea. You have this to a point now: Rooming Road Rolling Acres, Independence Chapel Hill, where multiple routes go to, and leave from a certain point. Perhaps expand these points further.
- It would be nice if it were easier to get from Canton to Cleveland with a more direct route. It's possible now, but it's complicated.
- SARTA 4 (Cleveland express): Problems: does not stop at Belden Village. Only runs a few times a day. Advantage: it's very cheap.
- SARTA Canton Akron to Akron, then Metro 60 North Coast Express. Problems: not very well coordinated; at times the connection works great, other times it involves some LONG layovers at the Metro center. Limited mid day service; early AM and evening rush has good service.
- SARTA Canton Akron to Akron. 101 to Richfield Brecksville connect to Cleveland RTA 77. At times, this is a workable connection, other times it's pretty awful; depends a lot on how Cleveland is fine tuning it's 77 timetable. The 77 runs pretty often, the 101 not really.
- At this point in time, it's usually a better option for me to drive to Cleveland and deal with the parking, etc. On paper there are a lot of connections to Cleveland, but in reality it's not that convenient. Something I have done is drive to the Metro Center and takes the North Coast from there; Metro has decent parking at Metro Center, which helps a great deal.
- Proposed solutions:
  - Better coordination of North Coast Express and SARTA 81.
  - Establish some sort of connection between the Metro Northfield Route and the Cleveland Route that runs near Broadway – Walton Hills – the former Ford Plant. It's only about 2-3 miles between Northfield Park and this route, so it probably wouldn't be that hard to work out a connection, sort of like Kathryn Blvd with Metro 101-Cleveland 77.
  - Metro owns the railroad tracks that run between Canton and Akron. Any chance of commuter rail becoming a reality? It would be nice to jump on a train at Canton Lincoln Highway and go straight to Akron, then Cleveland, without dealing with traffic congestion, etc. It would help a great deal if the State of Ohio actually funded public transit for projects of this magnitude, but I'm not holding my breath. In many parts of the country, a route like this would actually be considered realistic (New York's Long Island Rail Road, Metro North Railroad, Washington D.C. Metro, San Francisco BART, Northwest Indiana Interurban to

Chicago, etc.) but Ohio is pretty behind the times when it comes to any sort of transportation issue.

5/3/16, Kris Liljeblad's Reply:

Mark – I am responding to thank you for your April 30<sup>th</sup> e-mail with your ideas to be considered during our system planning project. Your ideas demonstrate a strong knowledge of transit here in NE Ohio and your input is much appreciated. I'll try a brief reply specific to your ideas:

1. SARTA connections with METRO line-ups – Its important to point out that our line-ups prevent us from doing clockface headways like SARTA's (they pulse hourly), and we will be re-evaluating the line-up times and trying to better match up our schedules with both SARTA and PARTA at RKP and at other transfer points. However, we'll also be re-evaluating all our routes to look for ways to simplify them and make them more productive. So they may end up being changed in other ways, or even eliminated.
2. Moving from radial to grid routes – As you pointed out, we do already have important hubs outside downtown Akron at Rolling Acres and Independence Turnaround, and we will be looking to create more transfer points in the future. However, we'll be trying hard to maintain our existing riders in the process, so the changes may not be very radical at first.
3. Canton to Cleveland direct route – Parking costs in Cleveland are friendly to transit. All three of us, METRO, PARTA and SARTA are operating overlapping service to that market, though METRO's is by far the most frequent during weekdays. We think there are potential efficiencies in greater cooperation on our competing Cleveland services and you should expect that in the future.
4. Route 102 to Northfield connection to GCRTA? – When we extended route 102 to the Rocksino a couple of years ago, and several times since, we have urged GCRTA to extend their 77F to meet us there. Unfortunately it has not worked out with their plans, and I understand the 77F is now being considered for service cutbacks.
5. Commuter Rail to Cleveland – There is no current plan or funding to do this although there have been a number of studies in the past and a recommendation of the Vision NEO effort a year or so ago. As long as our North Coast express bus service is more than adequate to satisfy the demand it would be very difficult to justify such an extremely big capital, operating and maintenance cost.

Thanks again for your ideas and we hope you will stay tuned to our ongoing planning process. Our next outreach step will likely be in about a month to request input on an initial line service system map.

4/15/16, Gary Whidden

Advocating improved transit service to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park

4/18/16, Alan Strobel

This proposal provides affordable, door-to-door transportation to all Summit County citizens without regard to location, income, education or technological barriers. It provides safe, efficient transport to any destination, eliminating unsafe walks in poor weather, less-safe neighborhoods or darkness. It provides for the extended regional use of all types of transportation, both now and in the future without the need for costly system upgrades.

- Increase frequency (20 minutes or less) on main lines with viable ridership.
- Eliminate/combine any routes with an overlap of less than 2 miles from a competing/more direct route. Analyze system map to find underserved areas that are not currently on the above routes, adding or extending routes (linked to main lines) to provide minimum 2 mile coverage.
- Partner with one ride sharing company to provide fixed-rate service (Carpool format; 2.5 miles/\$2.50) from transit stops to front doors of work or home. Ride sharing cars would be assigned regional zones, enabling them to maximize revenue and minimize empty miles in a defined geographic area.
- Create “METRO: GO” trademark/branding to be displayed on sides, hood or roof of all ridesharing vehicles. Some vehicles should have bicycle racks installed for use (surcharge).
- Create “METRO: GO” branded phone app (in partnership with ride share partner) to handle all ride sharing requests and payment. Riders prepay funds to their account to cover all fares, and riders have ability to add ride details such as number of passengers, amount of cargo (groceries, bicycles, etc.) This single app would enable multiple types of transport throughout Summit County. App can be pre-loaded with funds with a credit card, or with a PIN-based “top-up” card, which would be available for purchase at stores throughout Summit County
- METRO: GO app could also be used to facilitate access to METRO: GO bike sharing vehicles in downtown, neighborhood and recreational/park areas, and to also provide future access to light rail and intercity travel opportunities, should they arise.
- Some riders will use “METRO: GO” for neighborhood trips without stepping onto a transit bus, so maintaining riders and payments through the METRO: GO app would allow METRO to include the increased usage as part of overall METRO ridership, while reducing legacy expenses (equipment, personnel.) This type of trip service could dovetail with existing SCAT bus service, as well as medically-necessary transport provided to Medicaid/Medicare clients.
- A surcharge could be added for trips that do not include a ride on a transit bus; Trips that exceed the 2.5 mile limit would be charged at ride sharing partner's regular rates.
- A commission would be paid by all service partners to METRO; This provides an ongoing
- Revenue stream without any major expense. The ride share partner would pay this commission from the fees they charge their drivers for use of their system, so that driver incomes are not further diluted beyond the fees currently paid.
- Ride sharing vehicles should be hybrid or LEV types (Low-emitting vehicles) to reduce overall emissions. Vehicles should be no more than 5 years old; METRO could consider making available highly-branded efficient vehicles for lease or rental to approved ridesharing drivers in order to standardize the ride experience.
- The above proposal fits well with future developments in transport, including driverless vehicles, and the phone app and network system could be licensed to other transit systems.

5/3/16, Kris Liljeblad's Response:

Dear Alan Strobel – I am writing to thank you for your thoughtful e-mailed input to our METRO planning project on April 18th. It is obvious from your proposals that you know a lot about transit and have many ideas to share. I can't reply to every one of the dozen ideas you offered at this time but I'll pick off several of the main ones:

- Increased frequencies on main trunk lines consistent with ridership support will be a primary goal of our effort; 20 minutes for much of the weekday may be achievable on select routes.
- Reducing or eliminating redundant route coverage is also an objective in order to improve geographic route coverage and add more frequency on high ridership routes.
- Launching a ride-sharing service for geographic areas that cannot support regular fixed route service is already being tried with our Call-A-Ride service in Green and N Summit County. The demand has not been growing; however some people have come to depend on it. We charge a \$4.00 one-way fare for this service which overlays on our existing SCAT system. This could be extended to other geographic areas as needed in the future.
- Fare payment options that would improve convenience for our riders is definitely under consideration. Quicker fare box turnover also helps us keep buses on schedule by reducing dwell time at stops. There is no change ready to be implemented yet, as any changes need to be approved by our Board of Trustees, but keep your eyes open for fare simplifications in the future.
- Although there is strong logic for distance-based fares, at this time there are no proposals on the table to go that direction. We're mostly pushing to improve the speed and convenience of fare payment and don't wish to chase away riders by raising fares.

We regularly report our average bus fleet age to our policy board and it is currently at 4.8 years for big buses and 2.8 years for the small ones. So we are already satisfying your suggested age limit. A large share of our fleet is CNG fueled rather than diesel, and we are building a new CNG fueling station as a back-up for our fleet and also to provide public CNG fuel access.

I hope this helps inform you about our project direction. Please keep your eyes open for another public outreach effort in about a month when we hope to roll out a proposed system map for a revised fixed route system.

**Q&A from NEO Ride Public Meeting; RKP Transit Center; May 3, 2016; 12:30 PM**

- NEO Ride stated a growth in ridership but METRO shows a drop. Which is true? Tim did not know that METRO has actually dropped. He says he is not surprised and blames falling ridership on 2014 drop in gas prices. He says he assumes other agencies have fallen as well but says the demand is still growing.
- More circulators would be helpful in Twinsburg and Springfield
- SARTA does not meet the lineups. Kris explained METRO's line ups in general are under review; they are not clock-face as SARTA's are already.

- SARTA's transfers only last an hour, and if the lineup is missed the transfer is expired
- Kids get into fights and security is an issue on routes.
- #1, #2, and # 3 have the worst security issues.
- Expand service on Sundays
- People work in hospitals and nursing homes and they need to get to work.
- Only run up until 7:15 PM, and they need to run later than that.
- Weekend routes used to run until 8:30 PM a few years ago
- Tim suggests the possibility of dropping PARTA's Cleveland service to Fridays and Sundays. Jason asked about park and rides potential in Kent and Streetsboro with transfer to METRO in Twinsburg. Tim said that idea is not currently being explored.
- Do we run any routes to the Cleveland clinic? Yes we do.
- Customer uses Greyhound on weekends to get to Cleveland so having regular public transit would be nice.
- Tim says Cleveland weekend service might need more funding. We understand that some people take Greyhound on weekends to get to Cleveland which can be expensive. Our main goal right now is to get people to work.
- Customer could use service to Hartville. She uses METRO to SARTA to get to Hartville on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
- Do we have a voting type of system to add other routes? Who would want them?

## **Appendix**

### **Contents:**

- a. Frequently Asked Questions
- b. Copy of the Line Up Employee Newsletter Article
- c. Guiding Principles
- d. Beacon Journal news article

## **APPENDIX: DRIVING METRO FORWARD PROJECT**

### **Frequently Asked Questions – April 2016 Public Meetings**

**1. *What is METRO proposing as part of this project and why?***

METRO is launching a major planning effort that is expected to cover an 18-month timeframe, concluding in Fall 2017. The purpose is to evaluate our entire fixed route bus system and to re-design the network. This is being done at the direction of our Board of Trustees to address our trends of flat to declining ridership and increasing costs. METRO staff is doing the work in-house, utilizing new data sources that were recently made available to us with implementation of our Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) system. This AVL system is providing detailed passenger counts and schedule adherence (not previously available) that will inform staff's work.

**2. *What types of changes are being considered by METRO in this project?***

We will be considering changes to all 36 of our regularly scheduled fixed routes, including the areas with service coverage, streets that routes operate on, the number and location of bus stops along routes, the frequency of scheduled trips by time of day and day of the week, how routes connect to each other, and how the schedules are organized across the entire system. It is probable that some routes will be eliminated and other new ones created. The complexity of the effort is the reason for the 18-month project schedule.

**3. *What input is METRO looking for from the public outreach process at this time?***

METRO is asking for input on five guiding principles to shape the forthcoming planning work:

- a. Match Service to Modern Travel Patterns
- b. Strengthen Network Structure
- c. Simplify the Routes
- d. Foster a Transit-First Lifestyle
- e. Build Financial Stability

These five principles are intended to provide guide-posts for the duration of the project. We want to make sure that our customers and other community members have input to how we will measure the success of any proposed system changes for the future. We want to hear any ideas people have about how we can improve our system for the future of Summit County.

**4. *Are there any examples of system-wide changes from other cities that METRO has studied?***

It is safe to say that many transit systems in North America share the same challenges that we have here in Summit County. This type of project has been completed or is currently underway in several cities in the U.S. Some great examples are Omaha, Nebraska; Columbus, Ohio; and Houston, Texas. We modeled our project after the successful one in Omaha because it is a similarly-sized transit system in a similarly-sized metro area. The Omaha transit planners shared with us some of the lessons learned from their project, and we think it will help a great deal.

## **5. Where and when are public meetings going to be held?**

There will be several rounds of public input conducted over the 18-month course of the project. In this first round, METRO has 13 public meetings scheduled within a two week period from April 19<sup>th</sup> – April 26<sup>th</sup> at public venues located around Summit County that are convenient to transit service, and at times that regular route service is available. The weekday times are varied, including in the morning, near lunch time, late afternoon, and one at 9 am on Saturday morning, April 23<sup>rd</sup> at the RKP Transit Center. A complete listing of these meetings is provided below:

### ***APRIL 19 – TUESDAY***

- 12:30 p.m. Barberton Main Library, 602 W Park Ave, Barberton 44203 - Get there with Routes #8 or #14.

### ***APRIL 20 – WEDNESDAY***

- 10:30 a.m. Akron-Summit Co. Main Library, 60 S High St, Akron 44326 - Get there with Routes #1, #5, #6, #7, #12, #19, #26, #28 or #33
- 5:30 p.m. Cuyahoga Falls Library, 2015 3rd St, Cuyahoga Falls 44221 - Get there with Route #10 or #53

### ***APRIL 21 – THURSDAY***

- 12:30 p.m. Ellet Branch Library, 2470 E Market St, Akron 44312 - Get there with Route #6
- 4:00 p.m. North Hill Branch, 183 E Cuyahoga Falls Ave, Akron 44310 - Get there with Routes #7 or #33
- 5:30 p.m. Kenmore Branch, 969 Kenmore Blvd, Akron 44314 - Get there with Route #8

### ***APRIL 22 – FRIDAY***

- 12:30 p.m. Maple Valley Branch Library, 1187 Copley Rd, Akron 44320 - Get there with Route #3

### ***APRIL 23 – SATURDAY***

- 9:00 a.m. RKP Transit Center Community Room, 631 Broadway, Akron 44311 – Get there with most line-service routes

### ***APRIL 25 – MONDAY***

- 12:30 p.m. Cuyahoga Falls Branch Library, 2015 3rd St, Cuyahoga Falls 44221 - Get there with Routes #10 or #53
- 4:00 p.m. Highland Square Branch, 807 W Market St, Akron 44303 - Get there with Route #1
- 5:30 p.m. Highland Square Branch, 807 W Market St, Akron 44303 - Get there with Route #1

### ***APRIL 26 – TUESDAY***

- 12:30 p.m. Firestone Branch Library, 1486 Aster Ave, Akron 44301 - Get there with Route #13
- 5:00 p.m. Odom Blvd Branch, 600 Vernon Odom Blvd, Akron 44307 - Get there with Route #7



**6. How can I offer input if I cannot attend one of the public meetings?**

METRO is inviting input to the project in whatever way is most convenient for people: by phone, e-mail, text message, or regular mail. All comments or questions will be treated the same as if one attends a public meeting. Our project information is available on the website at <http://www.akronmetro.org/driving-forward.aspx>. A project-specific email box has been created to collect comments. It is [DrivingForward@akronmetro.org](mailto:DrivingForward@akronmetro.org).

**7. *When will METRO have a more specific route map to show its proposed changes? And what about schedule changes?***

After we tabulate and review all the input that we collect from this first round of public input, we will prepare a map of proposed route changes. Our schedule is to complete a First System Map showing our proposed changes during the next month (May) so that we can analyze it and conduct another round of public meetings in June. Developing a revised schedule is a more complex and difficult task that we do not plan to start until after we consider the public input, and have developed a preferred system plan. This will require analysis of the impact on paratransit service, maintenance needs, and cost-benefit analysis. Schedule work will start in December 2016.

**8. *What opportunities will be available to the public to provide input on specific route and schedule changes?***

METRO is committed to conducting a very open and transparent planning process, with opportunities for public input throughout, but especially prior to decision-points. Input on the First System Map is scheduled for June. A third round of public input is scheduled for September 2016 on a Preferred Alternative. The expected public rollout of schedule information to go with the Preferred Alternative route map will take longer due to the amount of analysis we have to do and the complexity of the work. That will occur about a year from now in April 2017.

**9. *What information will METRO be preparing to support project-related decisions?***

The amount of data available on the existing fixed route system is much better than has been available previously due to the new Automated Vehicle Location system that became operational in 2016. This will provide ridership and schedule adherence data for existing bus service on a route segment basis, and passenger boarding/alighting data at the bus stop level. In addition, METRO is planning to generate analysis tied to the Guiding Principles that will help support decision-making. Some of these analyses will include evaluating proposed changes in access to jobs and housing, transit travel time, service reliability, support for urban density lifestyles, and cost effectiveness/productivity. We intend to share this information widely through our website and at project-related meetings, especially prior to decision-points.

**10. *Who will make the decisions about what changes will ultimately be put into effect?***

METRO's Board of Trustees is the final decision-maker. Day-to-day management of the project is overseen by Richard M. Enty, the Executive Director/Secretary-Treasurer and his Leadership Team, made up of department directors and assistant directors. An internal Service Planning Committee offers interdepartmental review of all proposed route and schedule changes prior to consideration by the Leadership Team or Board of Trustees.

**11. Who do I contact to get the most current available project information in coming months?**

Email: [DrivingForward@akronmetro.org](mailto:DrivingForward@akronmetro.org)

Website: <http://www.akronmetro.org/driving-forward.aspx>

Phone: 330-762-0341 – Customer Service will direct you to the appropriate contact person.

## **APPENDIX: The Line Up Article – METRO’s Employee Newsletter**

### **First Round of Input to Driving METRO Forward**

In April planners reached out to Operators, Bus Riders and the Public to collect input on revising METRO’s fixed route system. This was part of launching an 18-month project called Driving METRO Forward. Planners Robin Miller and Jason Popik spent most of the day on April 13<sup>th</sup> in the Bull Pen, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> in the Driver’s Lounge at RKP. At both locations, operators shared ideas about how to: 1) Match METRO service to modern travel patterns; 2) Strengthen our network structure; 3) Simplify the routes; 4) Foster a transit-first lifestyle; and 5) Build financial stability. Sticky notes and comment forms were used to record feedback.

Operators suggested more than 50 ideas to improve fixed routes. Just a few of the ideas included: Getting rid of the line ups at RKP; use more clock-face headways; create more hubs for transfers outside RKP; create a joint pass with SARTA, PARTA and GCRTA; standardize the #1 route on West Market past Summit Mall; eliminate the Downtown Loop and the diversion into the Zoo on #14; shift the X61 from W. Market to I-77 to speed it up; and many, many more. The discussion was very helpful to prepare for 13 public meetings that were held during April 19<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> at branch libraries in Akron, Barberton, and Cuyahoga Falls.

The attendance at the 13 public meetings was not great, but staff heard a lot of good ideas, mostly from METRO’s regular riders. We heard a concern that METRO would take away service that people depend on, or that we would raise our fares. Also, while some customers want to be able to use the bus to get to more places, they questioned whether the suburbs need more service. There was a lot of support for adding more frequent trips on routes during the midday, for extending service later into the evening, and for adding more service on weekends to address overcrowding and work travel needs. A lot of comments were recorded about specific changes to individual routes that don’t get much attention, including the 5, 9, 14, 26, 33 and 59. We also heard a lot about the need to enforce the “rules for riding” – especially use of foul language, loud music, food and beverage, and trash on the bus.

The input that staff heard will be used to help create a revised system map. That will be the subject of another round of input by Operators, Riders and the Public in early June. Stay tuned!

---

## METRO RTA System Update – Guiding Principles

### Match Service to Modern Travel Patterns

Place bus service where it will benefit the largest number of likely transit users. The current bus system was designed around the commuting patterns of the past and must be updated to reflect *where* and *when* jobs and services are located now.



### Strengthen Network Structure

METRO's radial network, traditionally focused on Downtown Akron, makes cross-county or even neighborhood-to-neighborhood trips slow and difficult. Use more major thoroughfares to improve connectivity between routes outside of Downtown in order to make more transit trips competitive with auto travel.



### Simplify the Routes

METRO's current routing and schedule is highly customized. This arrangement achieves some efficiency, but hinders first-time or casual use of the system. Simplify the system map with more direct routing and clockface headway schedules to create a more efficient and easy to use transit system. Schedule should take traffic and weather delays into account.



### Foster a Transit-First Lifestyle

Increase the frequency and service span on routes in transit-supportive (dense, walkable, mixed use) areas to allow greater flexibility in trip planning, shorter wait times, and ultimately the ability to live without a car.



### Build Financial Stability

Increase system ridership to improve farebox recovery ratio, providing better value to customers and taxpayers.





# Akron Beacon Journal

SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2016 // Informing. Engaging. Essential.

COMMUNITY, B1

Silver Lake man, 28, sentenced to prison for providing heroin in deadly overdose

www.ohio.com



SATURDAY LIFE, F1  
**IT'S EASTER ALL OVER AT ELLET HOME**



SPORTS, C1

Patience preached by Jimmy Haslam, but Browns owner expects skepticism

Home Delivery 800-777-2442 \$1

Higher education

## UA takes exception to article on future freshmen

University claims information was outdated, but new figures raise more concerns about fall

By Marilyn Miller  
Beacon Journal staff writer

The University of Akron on Thursday emailed nearly 3,500 people in the university community taking issue with a Beacon Journal story on freshman applicants for the fall semester, which was published the same day.

The university email suggested that the story was "inaccurate, misleading and apparently relied on out-of-date information." However, new data in the email were not available to the Beacon Journal before publishing the story.

In a meeting with the newspaper Friday, the university provided newer information released the day the story was published, that in fact raised additional concerns about the upcoming school year. The number of students who have committed to attending next year is the lowest in at least five years.

New data show that as of this time a year ago, 2,464 students had confirmed they would attend next fall, or about 49 percent of the 5,000 who confirm by September. By Thursday, only 1,658 had done so, or 33 percent of 5,000 needed to maintain the same number of students. That's a shortfall of about 800 students.

University spokesman Wayne Hill confirmed Friday that it is a concern for administrators. The budget, which begins July 1, is dependent on tuition income and state funding. State aid is heavily weighted on enrollment.

Please see **Enrolled, A4**

Metro RTA to overhaul transit system, possibly shifting focus to suburbs and away from downtown

## ROUTES TO BE REVAMPED



A bus waits for passengers at the transit center on South Broadway in Akron. Metro RTA plans to redesign its bus routes. | ED SU/BA JR/Akron Beacon Journal

By Rick Armon

Beacon Journal staff writer

Most mass transit systems were designed with downtowns in mind.

People hopped on buses — or took trains — that shuttled them to and around the center city where they worked and shopped.

But that model doesn't work anymore in many communities such as Akron, where jobs and shopping centers have migrated to the suburbs.

With that issue in play, Metro RTA plans to shake up its routes — a major overhaul that could push buses farther into the suburbs and, in some cases, no longer require a trip to the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center downtown.

Armed with detailed ridership data, the bus company may eliminate some routes, add others and alter frequencies to meet changing demand as part of its "Driving Metro Forward" project.

The plan is to abandon the hub-and-spoke model and move to more of a grid system that has been adopted in some other communities.

"We'd like to design a system that will get you there from anywhere," Metro RTA Executive Director Richard Enty said.

The transit agency hopes to unveil the redesign this year following input from the community and put it into place early next year.

### The redesign

Metro RTA Director of Planning and Development Kris Liljeblad and transit service planner Alex Harnocz ventured into a Metro RTA board meeting in November and broached the subject about redoing a couple of the routes.

The board's response?

Go bigger. There was no need to make a series of minor changes, it concluded.

The last time the bus com-

Please see **Bus, A11**



Annette McGhee talks Friday about a gunshot wound to the head that she suffered from a stray bullet Thursday in Akron. | JOE MCGEE/WEWS NewsChannel 5

## Shooting survivor thanks God

Akron woman is happy to be alive after stray bullet grazes head

By Colette M. Jenkins

Beacon Journal staff writer

Annette McGhee is calling her miracle "The Passover."

"God guided that bullet so that it would pass over me and not destroy me," said McGhee, 63. "I thank God for sparing my life. I just know it was God who kept that bullet from ending my life. It grazed my head and I have an awful headache, but

I'm thankful to be alive."

McGhee and her husband, David, were inside their Chittenden Street home in Akron about 6 p.m. Thursday when they heard gunshots outside. David McGhee remembers hearing three shots and a ping sound inside the house before a bullet landed on the floor, near his left foot, as he was reading the first Book of Psalms in his

Bible.

As the bullet landed on the floor in the kitchen, David McGhee heard his wife screaming: "David! David! I've been hit!"

When he made his way into the living room, where his wife of nearly 30 years was sitting watching TV and playing solitaire, he saw blood on her arm.

"At first I thought she was

Please see **Shot, A11**

## Senior IS leader killed by U.S.

Presence of American forces could be increased in Iraq

By Lolita C. Baldor  
and Robert Burns  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon said Friday it was mov-

cabinet," Defense Secretary Ash Carter said.

Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said recommendations on

increase in U.S. forces in Iraq in coming weeks, but that decision hasn't been made," Dunford told Pentagon reporters during a briefing. He did not say how big that increase might be.

FORECAST, DETAILS B8

Today  
High Low  
55 38  
Sunny

Sunday  
High Low  
69 42  
Sun then clouds

INSIDE

DeWine approves language for medical marijuana amendment. B1

INDEX

Dear Abby B8 Movies F3  
Astrology D3 Saturday Life F1  
Comics B8, 9 Sports C1  
Community B1 TV Listings B2

Appendix



## Bus

Continued from Page A1

pany did a major change with its routes was in 1998.

Metro RTA opted to do this latest analysis and create a new system itself instead of hiring an outside consultant.

Liljeblad and Harnocz are now working on an aggressive redesign — a complicated puzzle involving roads, businesses, times, stops and riders.

They are relying heavily on technology that can pinpoint ridership anywhere along a route, even down to how many people are getting on and off at individual stops.

That level of detail can help determine where and how frequently buses run.

"Now that we have the data coming in every day and we can see the riders per segment even down to the stop level, we can say, 'OK, what times of day do we really need to go to Norton and what times of day would it be more productive for us to short turn in downtown Barberton?'" Harnocz said. "We can really make some better decisions about where to put our time and our money."

Metro RTA has seen expenses growing at a faster pace than its revenue over the last five years.

Expenses hit \$52 million last year, up nearly 18 percent from 2011. Meanwhile, revenue was \$55.9 million last year, up 14.5 percent over the same time period.

Bus ridership, while down from the last couple of years, is about the same as five years ago at 5 million.

### Not alone

Akron isn't alone in facing this route problem.

"This is an issue confronting every single metro area in the country," said Adie Tomer, a fellow at the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program in Washington, D.C.

Transit agencies have known about the issue for a long time but it's not easy to change established routes, which were designed to support specific areas and businesses.

More agencies, though,



Tammy Harper of Akron discusses Metro RTA's plan to redesign its bus routes while waiting at the transit center downtown Friday. She said the current system works well. | ED SUBA JR./Akron Beacon Journal photo



"I personally love the bus," said Mike Kloos of Akron at the Pfaff Transit Center. Metro RTA hopes to unveil route changes this year.

including those in Houston and Omaha, Neb., have redesigned their systems in recent years.

For many communities, the old hub-and-spoke model, which relies on a strong central business district that remains the center for economic activity, no longer works.

"That's the fine as your behavior is very, very traditional," said P.S. Sriraj, interim executive director at the Urban Transportation Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The reality is that jobs have sprawled away from downtowns.

Transit systems exist to get people — especially those with lower incomes and no access to a car — to jobs and services, whether it's a doctor's appointment or the grocery

### Metro RTA

Metro RTA is looking to redesign its routes. Here's a look at the agency's ridership and financial picture:

	RIDERSHIP PARATRANSIT	LINE SERVICE
2011	237,271	5,044,830
2012	247,476	5,230,118
2013	236,095	5,189,095
2014	254,440	5,203,843
2015	268,732	5,052,855
% change	12.3%	0.2%

	FINANCIAL EXPENSES	REVENUE
2011	\$44,326,710	\$48,879,667
2012	\$45,535,266	\$51,019,617
2013	\$47,478,767	\$51,251,849
2014	\$50,176,977	\$54,304,788
2015	\$52,263,594	\$55,987,042
% change	17.9%	14.5%

SOURCE: Metro Regional Transit Authority  
Akron Beacon Journal

store. With more people not only working in the suburbs but also living in the suburbs, "right now the networks don't really work for them," Tomer said.

The 2011 Brookings report "Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America" noted that transit systems needed to get better at connecting riders with their jobs.

The report stated that only 25 percent of jobs in the Akron area were reachable by bus within 90 minutes — below the national average of 30 percent.

The solution isn't as simple as adding a route deep into the suburbs. Liljeblad and Harnocz know that they can't send a loaded bus one way and have it return empty.

Indeed, Metro RTA's most productive routes are along Main Street and South Arlington in Akron, and heading out to Barberton.

### Rider reaction

Metro RTA doesn't expect everyone will be thrilled with the upcoming changes.

The bus company knows that some of its riders and even its drivers may be unhappy.

It has scheduled a series of public meetings next month to gather feedback about the general proposal and hopes people show up with recommendations. (See companion article for locations and times.)

"We want people's input and suggestions" before finalizing the plan, Metro RTA spokeswoman Molly Becker said.

Many people who ride buses every day — whether it's to get to work, school, a grocery store or medical appointments — say they are happy with the service now and they are curious about what changes the transit agency will make.

"It works well," Tammy Harper, 55, of Akron said while waiting for a bus at the terminal on South Broadway.

Mike Kloos, 63, of Akron agreed.

"I personally love the bus," he said. "We plan our days on when you can go on the bus."

When asked what they would do to improve the service, many suggested running buses farther into the suburbs and more often on weekends and holidays.

"You're dependent on their schedule," Brian Ward, 58, of Akron said.

Rick Armon can be reached at 330-996-3569 or armon@thebeaconjournal.com. Follow him on Twitter at @armonickABJ.

### METRO RTA PUBLIC MEETINGS

Metro RTA will host several meetings next month to hear input from the community about its plan to redesign bus routes. The meetings will be held:

**April 19**  
• 2:30 p.m.: Barberton Main Library, 602 W. Park Ave.

**April 20**  
• 10:30 a.m.: Akron-Summit County Public Library, 60 S. High St., Akron.  
• 5:30 p.m.: Cuyahoga Falls Library, 2015 Third St.

**April 21**  
• 12:30 p.m.: Akron-Summit County Public Library, Ellet branch, 2470 E. Market St., Akron.  
• 4 p.m.: Akron-Summit County Public Library, North Hill branch, 183 E. Cuyahoga Falls Ave., Akron.  
• 5:30 p.m.: Akron-Summit County Public Library, Kenmore branch, 969 Kenmore

Bldg., Akron.

**April 22**  
• 12:30 p.m.: Akron-Summit County Public Library, Maple Valley branch, 1187 Copley Road, Akron.

**April 23**  
• 9 a.m.: Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center Community Room, 631 S. Broadway, Akron.

**April 25**  
• 12:30 p.m.: Cuyahoga Falls Library, 2015 Third St.  
• 4 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.: Akron-Summit County Public Library, Highland Square branch, 807 V. Market St., Akron.

**April 26**  
• 12:30 p.m.: Akron-Summit County Public Library, Firestone branch, 1486 Aster Ave., Akron.  
• 5 p.m.: Akron-Summit County Public Library, Vernon Odom Boulevard branch, 600 Vernon Odom Blvd., Akron.

**CONRAD'S**  
Tire Express & Total Car Care

TIRES • MAINTENANCE • REPAIRS

**NEW**  
**Hudson**  
234-380-4900  
1565 Norton Road  
(Next to Circle K)

SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT ONLINE AT  
**econrads.com • 877-289-4630**

**CONRAD'S**  
\$16.95  
LUBE, OIL & FILTER  
PLUS FREE  
4-TIRE ROTATION  
COURTESY  
INSPECTION  
SAVE \$8  
ON OTHER  
OIL  
CHANGE  
PACKAGES

**GOODYEAR**  
\$140  
via Visa® Prepaid Card  
with the purchase of a set of 4 eligible  
Goodyear® Tires on your  
Goodyear® Credit Card

**MICHELIN**  
\$70  
via MasterCard®  
Rewards Card with  
the purchase of a set of 4 Michelin® Tires

**Any service \$25 or more**  
\$50  
Any service \$50-\$99  
\$40  
Any service \$100-\$149  
\$30  
Any service \$150-\$199  
\$20  
Any service \$200 or more  
\$10

## Shot

Continued from Page A1

shot in the arm. Then I saw where her wig had moved back and blood was streaming down her face," said David McGhee, 72. "The [police] officer said the bullet probably hit her and ricocheted all the way around and fell by my left foot."

According to Akron Police Lt. Rick Edwards, unknown gunmen in a maroon sport utility vehicle and a gray van were shooting at each other near the McGhees' home when a stray bullet pierced a window in the home, striking Annette McGhee. Police recovered multiple .40-caliber shell casings from the intersection of Duane Avenue and Lucy Street to the 300 block of Chittenden, where a .40-caliber slug was recovered from a fence.

Annette McGhee, who said she heard two shots before being grazed, was transported to Summa Akron City Hospital, where she was treated and released.

"I had a burning feeling on the top of my head and then felt blood running down my face.

ing or being mad at each other or complaining. We have to be more thankful."

Anyone with information about the shooting is asked to call Akron police

at 330-375-2490.

Colette Jenkins can be reached at 330-996-3731 or cjenkins@thebeaconjournal.com. She can be followed at www.twitter.com/ColetteJenkins.

**Freshway Market**

Located in the Parkwood Plaza  
Merriman Valley

- Ready-Made Dinners to Go
- Special Orders
- Made to Order gourmet Sandwiches (Call or Come In)
- Troyer Pies
- Large Variety of Wines and Beer
- Sunday Wine Sales 11:00am

**NY Strip Steaks**  
\$9.99/lb

**Ground Chuck**  
\$2.99/lb

**Thumann's Cole Slaw**  
\$1.99/lb

**Thumann's Red Skin Potato Salad**  
\$2.99

**East End Residences**

LIVE • WORK • PLAY

The Residences at the East End are now nearing 100% occupancy.

Call Dillon McBride today at 330.590.0534 to schedule your personalized tour.