

**METRO RTA  
PLANNING / MARKETING / RAIL  
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
416 KENMORE BOULEVARD BOARD ROOM  
VIRTUAL MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2021  
10:30 A.M.**

**ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER**

Attendees: Gary Spring, Vincent Rubino, Dave Prentice, Robert DeJournett, Dawn Distler, Valerie Shea, Claire Merrick, DeHavilland McCall, Jamie Saylor, Jarrod Hampshire, Bambi Miller, Shawn Metcalf

Guests Present: Dr. Daniel Van Epps, Ron Brubaker, Bill Sepe

Mr. Gary Spring called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

**ITEM 2: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER MEETING**

Motion to approve the minutes by Mr. Vincent Rubino. Second by Mr. Gary Spring.

**ITEM 3: SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Planning Report | Valerie Shea**

- Reviewed KPIs and Performance Report
- Winter 2021 Contingency Service went into effect January 17, 2021; added some early morning trips and 11 p.m. departures on core routes, four Zone buses at midnight, and made minor trip time changes based on operator and customer feedback. The service change also included full fixed-route service on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. In the past, there has been limited fixed-route service and no Demand Response service on MLK Day. Last year, the service level on MLK Day was 50%, with 40% of the ridership compared to a previous Monday. This year with 100% service, ridership was at 72% compared to the previous Monday. Last year's ridership also accounted for pre-COVID numbers.

Mr. Spring asked how METRO is serving the new Amazon Distribution Center. Ms. Shea noted the three routes that serve Rolling Acres [Transit Center] next to the facility serve the area well at this time; however, the team will continue to look at what works well and what shifts are not being served efficiently and consider time adjustments in April.

- Since April 2020, METRO has made service changes to accommodate social distancing, maintain safety, and workforce levels. Per the FTA, Ms. Shea said a Title VI Analysis and Public Hearing is required for service changes that last more than 12 months. A copy of the analysis will be available to the public on Monday [February 25] and feedback will be collected through February 15. A virtual Public Hearing will be held on February 15. The analysis will be presented in detail at the February Committee Meeting, followed by Board consideration for approval at the February Board Meeting. Ms. Shea requested the Committee waives METRO's internal Public Participation Policy requirement which states the Board must have 10 days to review the analysis. Due to time constraints, Ms. Shea proposed a one-time exception to the internal policy to allow seven days for the Board to review the document.

Mr. Robert DeJournett recommended getting the Board's input on the amendment at the February Board meeting.

- Ms. Shea thanked the Board for their approval of the Strategic Plan in November 2020. The first step in the process is creating a comprehensive analysis and transit oriented development plan that will take a deeper dive into specific recommendations. Ms. Shea said the first step of the process will last through 2021 and will serve as guidance for 2022 implementation.
- Ms. Shea gave an update on the HOPE Grant project. Senior Planner Emily Baarson created a working group consisting of stakeholders to review transit oriented development proposals relating to project. Proposals were submitted on January 14 and a resolution for an award of contract will be presented to the Committee in February.
- Discretionary Grant Report: A BWC Grant will be submitted in February. In December 2020, METRO applied for a grant through the Ohio EPA Diesel Admission Program and was awarded \$850,000 to replace two diesel buses with two CNG buses.

### **Marketing Report | Claire Merrick**

- Reviewed KPIs
- Winter 2021 Contingency Schedule messaging was distributed internally and externally, which included MLK Day service change. We received positive feedback from passengers on social media regarding MLK bus service.
- A text messaging service is now available to team members as another form of communication. Team members can opt-in to receive Employee Engagement updates, surveys, event reminders, and emergency alerts.
- Ohio Loves Transit campaign starts Sunday, February 7. This year, we are partnering with the City of Akron and Akronite app. METRO will

also be featured in a TV commercial with other OPTA members to showcase the importance of public transit across the state.

**Rail Report | Valerie Shea**

- Akron Secondary Line in Hudson was addressed in news articles about reactivating the line for freight rail. Ms. Shea said METRO is still in conversations with the municipalities, stakeholders, and Summit Metro Parks to pursue this as a trail option.

Mr. Vincent Rubino asked if there was a time estimate for the trail. Ms. Shea said she is not aware of a timeline. METRO's plan is to not be [the trail] owner, builder, or operator but remain as the property owner (like the Freedom Trail) and continue to partner with the Metro Parks on the project.

Mr. Dave Prentice asked how the development may affect the business corridor and potential economic development. Ms. Shea noted all municipalities and Summit County officials have been in communication throughout the process and there has been no interest in a freight rail line in over 20 years. Mr. Prentice had a follow-up question about funding and Ms. Shea said any trail development will follow the Metro Parks' funding plan.

Ms. Shea is hopeful for a similar agreement with the FTA as the existing agreement regarding the Freedom Trail.

**ITEM 4: RESOLUTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

None

**ITEM 5: OTHER BUSINESS**

**ITEM 6: CALL FOR ADJOURNMENT**

Adjourned at 11:02 a.m.