PARTA
Board of Trustees Meeting via Zoom
September 24, 2020 @ 7 p.m.

Agenda

1. Call to Order
   Roll Call
   Oral

2. Meeting Minutes
   Minutes from August 27, 2020, Meeting (Motion Required)
   Attachment 2a

3. Guest Communications (Due to COVID-19, not required)
   Oral

4. General Manager’s Report
   Attachment 4

5. Committee Reports
   a. Administration
   Did Not Meet
   b. Finance
   Scheduled to Meet Via Zoom 9/22/2020
   c. Operations
   Did Not Meet
   d. Personnel
   Met 9/8/2020 and 9/15/2020

6. Old Business

7. New Business
   • Presentation by Justin Markey, Roetzel & Andress

8. Resolution - Roll Call Approval Required

   #2020-09-01: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES HONORING BRIAN GRAY, BOARD MEMBER, IN APPRECIATION FOR HIS DEDICATION AND SERVICE.

9. Executive Session (if needed) – Roll Call Approval Required

10. Adjournment.

Next Regular Meeting:
October 22, 2020 @ 7 p.m.
PARTA
PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Held Remotely Via Zoom
August 27, 2020

Board Members Participating:

Karen Beck          Debbie Davison          Jack Murphy
Marge Bjerregaard   David Gynn, President  Morgan Tipton
Richard Brockett    Virginia Harris       Frank Vitale
Jeff Childers       Michael Lewis, Vice President  Marvin Woods

Board Members Not Participating:

Karen Wise, TPO (1st excused absence)

Staff Participating:

Claudia Amrhein    Kelly Jurisch          Rebecca Schrader
Denise Baba        William Nome, Legal Counsel  Brian Trautman
Marcia Fletcher    Clayton Popik

Guests Participating:

None.

CALL TO ORDER

President Dave Gynn called the August 27, 2020, PARTA Board of Trustees meeting to order at 6:59 p.m. He welcomed two (2) new members who have already been through training: Ms. Karen Beck, who was appointed by the City of Kent to fill the place of Mr. Brian Gray, with one (1) more year on that term; and Mr. Jack Murphy, who is filling the position vacated by Mr. Rick Bissler. He said the Board is happy to have them. He suggested that everybody mute their phones or computers after the roll call because outside noises interfere with the sound. He then asked Ms. Marcia Fletcher to call the roll.

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

Mr. Gynn said the next item on the agenda is the minutes, which were sent out ahead of time, but may not have been received until yesterday or today. They were, however, online so hopefully everybody has the minutes from the July 23 meeting. He entertained a motion to accept the minutes. Ms. Morgan Tipton made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Michael Lewis seconded the motion. Mr. Gynn asked if there were any questions or changes. Hearing none, he asked all those in favor to say aye. Opposed same sign. The motion to approve the minutes, as presented, passed unanimously.

GUEST COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Gynn said there are no guests because of COVID-19 and moved on to the General Manager’s report.
GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Gynn said the General Manager's report was highlighted in the Board packet and asked Ms. Amrhein to comment.

Ms. Amrhein thanked Mr. Gynn and apologized for the delay in the mail delivery of the Board packets. For those Board members who receive a packet by mail, they were not delivered in the normal timely manner, she said. The Board packets were mailed out early on Friday. She then welcomed Ms. Beck and Mr. Murphy as the new Board members. She said they had great orientation sessions this week. A little blurb was included in her report about their backgrounds. Ms. Beck is a retired educator, working in the City of Ravenna. Mr. Murphy is currently employed with KAPCO, a Kent State University (KSU) graduate, and a chemist. She thanked them for their willingness to volunteer, step up, and be a part of the community and the people PARATA serves through its services. The only other thing to highlight is the Kent Health Department moved into the Kent Central Gateway (KCG) this week and are now officially located on the second floor of the facility downtown. Within the next week or so, a large green sign will be placed above the other signs on the first level that will say Kent Health Department 2nd Floor. It's taking longer than anticipated working through the planning commission and zoning issues with the City of Kent for a City of Kent sign. It's taken about three (3) years to find a suitable tenant. She concluded by asking if there were any questions.

Mr. Gynn asked Ms. Amrhein to mention the FTA award because that really is a big deal for PARATA.

Ms. Amrhein said about two (2) weeks ago, PARATA received notice that it had been selected for FTA Buses and Bus Facilities grant funding providing 80% of the needed funds to purchase one (1) CNG transit bus. It's a highly competitive federal award process and PARATA was one (1) of only three (3) from Ohio that were awarded out of 96 total applications from around the country. Nearly 300 applications requested $1.8 billion in funding but only $464 million was available, which shows the need to keep up transit fleets across the country in a state of good repair. Hopefully, funding will continue to be provided for replacements and keeping the safest and most efficient running buses on the road.

Ms. Morgan Tipton congratulated PARATA on such a great feat.

Ms. Amrhein thanked Ms. Tipton and said she was really surprised because it is so highly competitive, and PARATA only applied for one (1) bus and received funding.

Mr. Gynn said PARATA does a good job of applying for every grant that it can.

Ms. Amrhein said Ms. Ashley Boyd, who works in Ms. Rebecca Schrader’s department, has evolved into a very good grant writer for PARATA. It's a lot of fun when PARATA gets an award because a great deal of work goes into it not just from Ms. Boyd but it is a team effort because there are components of the grant and the narrative that need to be put together by just about every department. The grants are very thorough and ask precisely what PARATA does, how the money will be used, and how it will benefit service.

Mr. Gynn expressed his thanks to Ms. Boyd, Ms. Schrader, and the whole team. During COVID-19, he said, it’s amazing that the buses keep running and PARATA is able to continue to operate on a limited schedule and provide the kind of service that is needed.

Ms. Amrhein said she included in the Board packet some information about the buses and how they’ve been prepared for social distancing. KSU started up today so that service is running again, and the buses are marked with visual cues and signage to keep folks from sitting or standing too closely together.

Mr. Gynn then moved on to the committee reports.
ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Gynn said the Administration Committee did not meet.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Gynn said the Finance Committee met on Tuesday. Mr. Lewis wasn’t there so Mr. Jeff Childers chaired the meeting in his absence. He asked Mr. Childers for his report.

Mr. Childers said the Finance Committee met Tuesday, August 25, on Zoom. He thanked Mr. Gynn for sitting in as a committee member on that meeting and Mr. Marvin Woods for also taking the time to share in the meeting. He said KSU Revenues for July were $41,451, with a monthly budget of $194,979. It’s what was expected so there was a large hit there of $153,528 under budget. KSU income for the year may be down as much as $500,000. Year-to-Date Actual was $823,292 compared to the Year-to-Date Budget of $1,364,856. Also troubling was Farebox & Ticket Sales and Agency Cash Grants and Reimbursements. The revenue for these two categories was about $28,000 below the monthly budget. Sales Tax Revenues also lagged by $50,742 for the month. On the bright side, the federal government did come through by providing PARTA with $1,032,383 in CARES grant money, which allowed PARTA to have about an $832,000 surplus for the reporting period. It should be noted that county sales tax revenues are right on budget for the year, which is surprising and good. Overall, expenses for July were under budget by $113,233. Operators Salaries and Wages were under budget by $30,648. Admin Salaries and Wages were under budget by $20,452. Other Fringe Benefits was under budget by $24,318. Due to less bus usage, Fuel and Lubricants was down by $13,119.

Ms. Marge Bjerrregaard entered the Zoom meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Moving on, Mr. Childers said $3,083 was saved in Travel and Meetings because there was no travel. The budget for PARTA and the actual financial standing of the organization is doing very well considering COVID-19. Not as much money is being spent on the Bus Storage Facility as awarded in the grant so there’s going to be about $450,000 to $500,000 extra money for build outs in the building, which is still in the planning stages. There is about $1.4 million set aside for local match of capital projects. The KCG budget has some good news and bad news. There was a 26% increase in parked cars between June and July, but still down 57% from July 2019 to July 2020. It does show improvement so things are getting better at KCG. Revenues were still down for July. Hotel Overnight Parking fell under budget by $9,430. Monthly Parking Passes was down $3,492 and Daily Parking Revenue was under budget by $15,191. The total net loss for July was $16,193. The Kent Health Department will start paying $1,500 a month for use of the conference room and they’re also going to be purchasing some parking passes, which is good as well. Expenses for the parking deck and monthly budget for July were right on budget. The Finance Committee reviewed the same resolution that the Operations Committee did concerning the purchase of three (3) CNG buses from TESCO and voted unanimously to recommend to the Board that this resolution be approved.

Mr. Gynn asked if there were any questions.

Ms. Tipton asked if the surplus for the new Bus Storage Facility was earmarked specifically for that building or if it was movable cash.

Mr. Childers said the committee was told by Ms. Schrader that it comes as a grant and must be spent on that facility. Therefore, anything that PARTA wants to do to enhance the building can come out of that money but it can’t be moved over to payroll or something like that.
Ms. Schrader said Mr. Childers is correct. Two (2) years ago, PARTA received a 5339(b) Buses and Bus Facilities grant. It was a competitive grant and awarded to build a storage facility. At the time, the cost was expected to be more because of the type of foundation that is typically used but it turns out it didn’t have to be built that way and there is a surplus. Planning has started to determine the best use for that surplus and intends to build out the inside of the storage facility. PARTA is looking at requesting bids for a new architectural and engineering firm since the current one has reached its term.

Mr. Trautman said at first, the expectation was that driven piles were required because almost every one of the projects that PARTA has done required driven piles; but a split footing foundation was put in that facility, which was discovered early so the footprint of the building was restructured. PARTA has file storage and interior space issues so a floor section of the building closest to the east side was built thicker in that area so a mezzanine section could be added down the road. Electric was moved and it basically was set up ahead of time so there is less cost in the project when the interior part of that footprint is built out.

Ms. Tipton asked if there were term limits on using that cash within a certain amount of time.

Ms. Schrader said it is in an active grant and if it shows active use, then it’s fine but it’s not going to sit there for multiple years. There isn’t a timeline since it’s already been executed into a grant, but milestones have to be reported and the FTA is informed about how that money is going to be spent. PARTA does need to stay within the milestones that it has established.

Mr. Gynn said now is a good time for Board members, who haven’t been to the facility, to take a look at it. It’s nearly complete and there are no buses in it. He asked if there were any other questions for Mr. Childers or Ms. Schrader. He said Ms. Marcia Fletcher did a fantastic job getting the minutes out. Hearing no further discussion, he moved on to the Operations Committee.

**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Mr. Gynn said the Operations Committee met this evening and he asked Ms. Debbie Davison to give her report.

Ms. Davison said tonight was the first night that the new members of the Operations Committee met. The committee includes Mr. Woods, Ms. Tipton, and herself. Also participating were Mr. Richard Brockett, Mr. Childers, Ms. Beck, and Mr. Gynn. The committee discussed the resolution to approve the three (3) CNG buses that are in great need. One (1) of the buses is from a grant for $446,742, which covers 80%, and the other two (2) are from CMAQ funding of $832,000, which also covers 80% of the cost. The committee recommended that the Board approve this purchase.

Mr. Gynn asked if there were any questions for Ms. Davison on her report.

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT**

Hearing none, Mr. Gynn said the Personnel Committee did not meet but will be meeting in the future.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Gynn asked if there was any Old Business. Hearing none, he moved on to New Business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Gynn asked if there was anything under New Business. Hearing none, he moved on to the resolutions. He said he will read the resolution, ask for a motion to approve and second it, discuss it, and then vote by roll call.
Resolutions

Mr. Gynn said the first resolution is #2020-08-01.

#2020-08-01: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES AUTHORIZING THE GENERAL MANAGER, OR HER DESIGNEE, TO PURCHASE UP TO THREE (3) TRANSIT BUSES, OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT, AND SPARE PARTS FROM TRANSPORTATION EQUIPMENT SALES CORPORATION (TESCO).

Mr. Gynn asked for a motion to approve this resolution.

Motion: Morgan Tipton  Second: Debbie Davison

Mr. Gynn then opened it up for discussion. He said this has been recommended by both the Operations and Finance committees for approval by the Board. He asked if anybody from PARTA wanted to add anything.

Ms. Amrhein said this will keep PARTA on its fleet replacement schedule that will provide 80% funding for all three (3) buses, which will be ordered in September with an expected delivery in October 2021. Three (3) aging diesel buses will be retired that have already exhausted their useful life.

Mr. Gynn asked if there was any other discussion or questions. Hearing none, he asked Ms. Fletcher to call the roll.

Ms. Fletcher then called the roll.

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Mr. Gynn said the motion passes. He then moved on to Resolution #2020-08-02.

#2020-08-02: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES HONORING RICK BISSLER, BOARD MEMBER, IN APPRECIATION FOR HIS DEDICATION AND SERVICE.

Mr. Gynn entertained a motion.

Motion: Marge Bjerregaard  Second: Mike Lewis

Ms. Amrhein said as everyone knows, Mr. Bissler served on the Board for 17 years and for the last 14 he served as President. He is owed a deep amount of gratitude and thanks for his leadership over the last 17 years. He determined that he did not want to re-up for another three (3) year term. She expressed her sadness because he has been a great partner but appreciates his desire to go in a different direction. He informed her that he wouldn't be here tonight, but he enjoyed his time on the Board and is leaving with good thoughts for everyone. Traditionally, she said, a resolution is passed for Board members to thank them for their service.
Mr. Gynn said Mr. Bissler started his interest in PARTA when he was a college student driving a bus. PARTA certainly is a different organization now from when it was 17 years ago, which credit goes to Mr. Bissler’s leadership. He asked if there were any other comments. Hearing none, he asked Ms. Fletcher to call the roll.

Ms. Fletcher then called the roll.

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Mr. Gynn said the motion passes. He then moved on to Resolution #2020-08-03.

#2020-08-03: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES HONORING WILLIAM A. NOME, PARTA LEGAL COUNSEL, IN APPRECIATION FOR HIS DEDICATION AND SERVICE.

Mr. Gynn entertained a motion.

Motion: Marge Bjerregaard  Second: Marvin Woods

Ms. Amrhein said earlier this summer a determination was made to look for a law firm that could offer some deeper services. As Mr. Gynn mentioned, PARTA has changed a lot over the last several years with service and now COVID. Mr. William Nome has been faithful and dedicated legal counsel for more than 30 years. She thanked him for his time and service and wished him all the best. She said next month, Mr. Justin Markey from Roetzel & Andress will be brought on. She included a little bit of information in the Board packet but said that firm has a depth of knowledge of PARTA’s service through working with OTRP and current transportation issues. They also have a pretty impressive emergency response team that is available 24/7/365. All those things weighed together with COVID, made this the right time to make a change. She thanked Mr. Nome again and said his service was appreciated. A proper gathering would have certainly taken place if possible.

Mr. Gynn thanked Mr. Nome and said if a lot has changed in the last 17 years, think about what PARTA was like 30 years ago when it was Campus Bus Service. He said Mr. Nome has been there every meeting all along the way and his loyal service is appreciated.

Mr. Nome thanked Mr. Gynn and the Board.

Mr. Gynn asked if there were any other comments. Hearing none, he asked Ms. Fletcher to call the roll.

Ms. Fletcher then called the roll.
Mr. Gynn said the motion passes. Moving on, he said there is no need for an Executive Session and asked if there were any comments from any of the PARTA staff.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing nothing further, Mr. Gynn entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Karen Beck made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Marvin Woods seconded the motion. Mr. Gynn asked all those in favor to say aye and opposed the same sign. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

Mr. Gynn said the next meeting is September 24 and he would appreciate it if everybody signed on as early as they could and mute their connection. Under the circumstances, this was a successful meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Fletcher
Executive Assistant
PARTA
2000 Summit Road
Kent, Ohio 44240

GENERAL MANAGER’S REPORT

TO: PARTA Board of Trustees

FROM: Claudia B. Amrhein, General Manager

DATE: September 2020

Committee Meetings and Resolutions. The September meeting agenda includes a resolution to express appreciation to Brian Gray for his years of service as a board trustee. New board attorney Justin Markey also will introduce himself and present an overview of governance meeting best practices. The board will meet remotely via Zoom on Thursday, September 24, at 7:00 p.m.

The finance committee will meet remotely via Zoom on Tuesday, September 22, at 11:30 a.m. to review August financial reports.

#2020-09-01: A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES HONORING BRIAN GRAY, BOARD MEMBER, IN APPRECIATION FOR HIS DEDICATION AND SERVICE.

Thank you, Brian. Resolution #2020-09-01 extends PARTA’s grateful appreciation to Brian Gray for his years of service to the PARTA Board of Trustees. Appointed by Kent City in 2009, Brian recently accepted a job that prevents his participation in board meetings.

ODOT and AMATS Announce FY 2021 Grant Awards. I am pleased to report that PARTA will receive $485,800 Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2) funding and $272,382 FTA Elderly and Disabled Program (Section 5310) funding to support projects in FY 2021.

OTP2 funding is allocated as part of the state’s two-year general revenue budget. FY 2021 is the second year of this budget cycle, with planned funding reduced due to projected losses in the state’s tax receipts due to the pandemic. The $485,800 award will support construction of a CDL Driver Training Pad ($400,000) on our property and the replacement of five (5) Light Transit Vehicles ($85,800).

Section 5310 funding supports enhanced mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities. It is Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding allocated in Ohio though the state’s Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) is the designated MPO for the Akron Urbanized Area, which includes Portage County. Eligible recipients of 5310 funding include non-profit organizations, local governments, PARTA, and Akron METRO. The $272,382 award will support the purchase of three (3) Light Transit Vehicles (LTVs) to replace aging vehicles that have exhausted their useful life expectancy. Other 5310 awards within Portage County will support vehicle replacement by Family & Community Services and Hattie Larlham, with PARTA responsible for performing subrecipient oversight on behalf of FTA.

Auditor of State Issues Clean Financial Audit and “StaRS” Recognition. I am pleased to report that the Ohio Auditor of State recognized PARTA’s excellent financial reporting with an “Ohio Auditor of State Award” following successful completion of the 2019 financial audit. This represents the 18th consecutive clean financial audit. Keeping the numbers straight year after year is a team effort coordinated through Finance Director Rebecca Schrader that relies on every department as well as the Finance Committee’s regular monthly oversight.

A new initiative introduced by Auditor of State Keith Faber is the “StaRS” rating system for monitoring transparency in government. The state financial audit now includes an evaluation of public entities’
practices for meeting every Sunshine Law requirement, plus putting in place best practices to exceed Sunshine requirements. The audit report and award certificates are included in this packet.

**RFQ Issued for Architectural and Engineering (A&E) Services.** We issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for A&E services in mid-September to solicit “Statements of Qualifications” from firms to provide project consultation and support services for designing and overseeing construction projects.

An RFQ is the procurement method for obtaining A&E services for construction of new facilities or renovation of existing facilities. The selection process is based upon identifying the top qualified firm and attempting to negotiate a price. If a price cannot be agreed upon, negotiations will begin with the next highest qualified firm. Once a firm is selected, we will begin initial planning for several construction projects, including the addition of a Driver CDL training pad and building out the new vehicle storage building to include a mezzanine, workout room, and future working spaces.

**COVID-19 Disrupting Bus Construction Schedules.** The schedule for replacing buses described in the August board report and discussed during the August meetings has been delayed. We learned in early September that Eldorado National has cut production to 40% of normal capacity due to pandemic-related issues. Their current projection is to complete construction of the four (4) clean diesel buses (ordered in January 2020) in March 2021, with delivery in April or May, but they also indicated there is no way of knowing if additional delays will occur.

Our intention was to order three (3) CNG buses in September, as authorized via Resolution #2020-06-01, as the last buses purchased through the 2016 TESCO contract. Considering the production delays Eldorado is experiencing, we are evaluating the pros and cons of issuing a new RFP by year-end to establish a new five-year bus construction agreement.

**Veterans Day Ceremony Cancelled due to COVID-19.** I sadly report that our annual Veterans Day ceremony will not be held this year due to ongoing COVID-19 group gathering restrictions. Since 2013, we have hosted this annual event to honor and remember our local service men and women. Several years ago, we produced a 3-minute video about the memorial, including thoughts from local veterans, which can be viewed here: [https://youtu.be/-5kcP2CA5Kl](https://youtu.be/-5kcP2CA5Kl).

**Service Reports.** *(Coronavirus closures began March 2020)* **Ridership.** Total county fixed route and DART ridership decreased by 41.86% through August, as compared to August 2019 with total county service performing 163,338 trips as compared to 280,956 trips performed through August 2019. Overall ridership, including campus service, decreased by 46.88%, with campus down by 49.84%. Total system ridership totaled 350,267 as compared to 659,402 through August 2019.

**On-Time Compliance.** **ADA Paratransit Service.** ADA on-time compliance remains excellent at 96% in August as compared to 97.29% in July. Of 675 trips, 27 were performed late, with the latest running 58 minutes behind due to a mechanical problem. **General Public (non-ADA) DART.** On-time performance for general public, non-ADA trips remained flat at 86.88% for August, as compared to 87.73% in July 2020. **Vehicle Preventative Maintenance (PM).** On-time compliance with established PM inspection schedules were 100% in August as compared to 99% in July 2020.

**Parking.** Parking deck usage is climbing slowly as COVID-19 continues. In August, 5,502 cars entered the deck, an increase of 48% as compared to July and a decrease of 47% as compared to August 2019. Fortunately, leasing the 2nd floor to Kent City Health Department and monthly permit revenue will provide stable funding to support deck operations.

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

COVID-19: Impact on Ridership

The COVID-19 global pandemic has impacted virtually every aspect of society, and transit is no exception. Ridership reductions beginning the week of March 8 show the significant impact of prevention measures and the cascading effects of unprecedented closures.

As jurisdictions issued stay-at-home orders, most transit systems continued operating, ceasing fare collection, enhancing safety measures, and installing new equipment to protect drivers and passengers.

- The table above tracks PARTA’s overall ridership, including county fixed route, KSU, and demand response, as compared to the week of March 1, with total ridership of 29,610 trips.
- Ridership dropped by nearly 43% during the week of March 8 – Week 2, and continued to drop during March and early April, when it stabilized over the summer.
- The week of August 30 – Week 27, shows a small increase as compared to April, but trips will continue to remain low with KSU students mostly attending virtual classes.

Recent studies refute early fears that public transportation fuels coronavirus outbreaks, and ridership losses do not equate to a reduction in the need for transit (see articles enclosed in this packet).

Our service remains an economic force and a lifeline not only for riders, but for the public in general, because it ensures people get to their jobs, dialysis, medical appointments, grocery stores, and pharmacies. The continuation of transit service throughout the pandemic helps to keep essential businesses open, preventing further economic hardship.
Open and Transparent Government: Meets all Sunshine Law requirements.

Achievement in Open and Transparent Government: Implemented 1-2 best practices*

Outstanding Achievement in Open and Transparent Government: Implemented 3-4 best practices*

Highest Achievement in Open and Transparent Government: Implemented 5 or more best practices*

Non-compliant  
Sunshine Law requirements are not fully achieved. Click here for information to help you achieve compliance.

- Read Auditor Faber's bulletin announcing StaRS
- Click here for online Sunshine Laws training
- Request a public record
- Search for your government's transparency rating
- Public Records Mediation Program statistics

*Best Practices

To create an open and transparent government, the AOS suggests implementing the following best practices. Note: These suggestions are not required by Ohio's Sunshine Laws.

The public office employs a method to track public records requests, such as record requested, date received and date provided.
To assist the public in making a request for records the public office has standard request forms that are available to requestors to use if they wish, as well as for the staff to use when a request is made via phone.

The public office provides an acknowledgment to the requestor when a public records request is received, consistent with how the request was made.

To assist the public in making a request for records, the public office has publicized (website, public records poster, etc.) the name or office title of the records custodian and his/her contact information. Further, the public office’s staff has been trained on how to route public records requests to the record custodian, who also has been trained on fulfilling the public records requests, including guidelines for negotiating ambiguous or large requests.

All elected officials or their designees, as well as community school administrators, have taken the required public-records training within the applicable time frame.

The public office has an online presence that provides the office’s agendas, policies, and schedules.

The public office has an online presence that provides access to official documents, such as the annual budget, salaries, and contact information.
THE STATE OF OHIO

KEITH FABER
OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE

OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE AWARD
Presented to

Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority

This award is presented for excellence in financial reporting in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and compliance with applicable laws for the fiscal year ended 2019.

The citizens you represent are well-served by your effective and accountable financial practices.

Keith Faber, Auditor of State
Highest Achievement in Open and Transparent Government

presented to...

Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority
Portage County 1/1/2019 to 12/31/2019

Keith Faber, Ohio Auditor of State
Date signed: 8/13/2020 12:00:00 AM
RESOLUTION #2020-09-01

A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (PARTA) BOARD OF TRUSTEES HONORING BRIAN GRAY, BOARD MEMBER, IN APPRECIATION FOR HIS DEDICATION AND SERVICE.

Whereas, Brian Gray has been a PARTA Board Trustee appointed by the City of Kent from 2009-2020; and

Whereas, Brian Gray has been a faithful and valuable member serving as a Trustee for 11 years, which included serving as a Member of the Operations Committee; and

Whereas, Brian Gray is highly respected by both his fellow Board members and the General Manager and Staff of PARTA; and

Whereas, Brian Gray has improved the quality of life for the citizens of Portage County through his dedication and service to PARTA.

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED by the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) Board of Trustees that they extend their grateful appreciation by this special resolution acknowledging Brian Gray for his dedicated service and wish him continued success in all his future endeavors.

CERTIFICATION:
The undersigned duly qualified Board President, acting on behalf of the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA), certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Board of Trustees held on September 24, 2020.

______________________________
Date

______________________________
David Gynn, President
Board of Trustees

______________________________
Attested
Fear of Public Transit Got Ahead of the Evidence

*The Atlantic | June 14, 2020*

Many have blamed subways and buses for coronavirus outbreaks, but a growing body of research suggests otherwise.

**Janette Sadik-Khan**
Former commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation

**Seth Solomonow**
Co-author of *Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution*

The headline of the report read like the title of a 1950s horror film:

"*The Subways Seeded the Massive Coronavirus Epidemic in New York City.*" As America’s densest city became the epicenter of a national pandemic in March, New York’s subway system, which carried 5.5 million people on an average workday in 2019, emerged as the villain from central casting. Landing in mid-April, the report, written by an MIT economics professor, concluded that New York’s subway system was “a major disseminator—if not the principal transmission vehicle” in the city’s COVID-19 outbreak.

Ominous articles citing the report created an uproar during the opening weeks of the pandemic. Some elected officials urged Governor Andrew Cuomo to shut down New York’s transit system. Conservative commentators, long skeptical of public transportation, seized on the MIT report as more evidence of transit’s unviability.

In recent months, public-health experts in the United States have urged people to avoid crowds, enclosed spaces, and time spent in close contact with others—each a feature of a normally functioning transit system. The notion that subways themselves were seeding disease interrupted this social contract and also played to long-standing fears of urban spaces. Even during a pandemic, public-transit systems show themselves to be indispensable to the functioning of big cities, transporting essential workers to jobs, while also acting as a major engine of economic stability and equity. As New York and other cities take steps to reopen, transit agencies’ most pressing job, next to managing massive budget shortfalls, will be managing fear while they seek to reclaim the passengers they have lost. High-visibility cleaning and strong health-messaging campaigns, coupled with universal mask wearing, can help reassure passengers that they can return to a safe transit system. But more reassuring still is the lack of evidence that public-transit systems have played a role in COVID-19 transmission—and a growing body of research pointing in the other direction.
By the time the MIT report appeared, according to the transportation-data company Transit, ridership on bus and rail systems had already dropped by 74 percent in New York, 79 percent in Washington, D.C., 83 percent in Boston, and 87 percent in the Bay Area from pre-pandemic levels. The assumption that transit was accelerating infections stoked public fears and quickly hardened into conventional wisdom. “Subways, trains and buses are sitting empty around the world,” a Washington Post headline intoned in a May headline, adding, “It’s not clear if riders will return.” When the New York Stock Exchange reopened in May, traders were required to avoid public transportation.

Underlying that rule is an assumption of danger that, so far, research has not borne out. A recent study in Paris found that none of 150 identified coronavirus infection clusters from early May to early June originated on the city’s transit systems. A similar study in Austria found that not one of 355 case clusters in April and May was traceable to riding transit. Though these systems, like their American counterparts, were carrying fewer riders at a lower density than before the pandemic, the results suggest a far less sinister role for transit than the MIT report described.

If transit itself were a global super-spreader, then a large outbreak would have been expected in dense Hong Kong, a city of 7.5 million people dependent on a public transportation system that, before the pandemic, was carrying 12.9 million people a day. Ridership there, according to the Post, fell considerably less than in other transit systems around the world. Yet Hong Kong has recorded only about 1,100 COVID-19 cases, one-tenth the number in Kansas, which has fewer than half as many people. Replicating Hong Kong’s success may involve safety measures, such as mask wearing, that are not yet ingrained in the U.S., but the evidence only underscores that the coronavirus can spread outside of transit and dense urban environments—which are not inherently harmful.

Even the MIT report didn’t trace any individual coronavirus case to a subway ride shared with an infected passenger. Instead, it overlaid the home ZIP codes of patients with the city subway map. Critics pilloried this methodology, noting that the report data showed that Manhattan’s dense, subway-rich neighborhoods had lower infection rates than car-dominated Staten Island.

Many of the highest-profile outbreaks occurred far from the nation’s buses and subways. Eleven percent of American coronavirus infections and one-third of deaths in the U.S. by early May had occurred in nursing homes. Hot spots appeared in March following a funeral in Albany, Georgia, and after a choir practice in Mount Vernon, Washington. In Nebraska, at least 3,000 meatpacking workers have tested positive for the virus. Another 6,000 cases and counting have ravaged Navajo communities in the Southwest.
Jeffrey Ostler: Disease has never been just disease for Native Americans

Hard-hit cities such as Milan that have reopened their transit systems have not seen subsequent infection spikes. Japan, which has some of the world’s busiest rail networks, had very few infections at all—only about 17,000, less than 1 percent of that of the U.S.—and no reported upticks in Tokyo since Japan began reopening its economy. Officials traced a post-peak outbreak in Seoul, South Korea, not to transit but to a lack of social distancing at the city’s reopened nightclubs.

Something that Japanese and many other Asian cities have in common is a long-standing culture of wearing face coverings in public. Scientists have not yet determined precisely how effective masks are at reducing virus transmission—and how safe transit would be if everyone wore them—but even imperfect face coverings appear to confer benefits when most people wear them. Buses and trains where masked riders silently browse their phones may prove less risky than other settings where patrons are talking loudly and singing.

It’s difficult for nuances like these to break through when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tells American employers to encourage employees to avoid transit and to drive alone to work in offices, if possible. This message, which bewildered transit agencies scrambling to recover, fails to recognize the transportation realities of millions of Americans for whom owning and maintaining a car is simply unaffordable and impractical.

The CDC guidance also fails as a matter of transportation and environmental policy: Shifting transit commuters to single-occupancy vehicles would asphyxiate cities with congestion and pollution, and reinforce the deadly outcomes of a century of car-focused urban planning that cities have been trying to escape. Every year, 1.3 million people die in traffic crashes worldwide—about 37,000 annually in the U.S.—and another 4.2 million die globally from the health impacts of air pollution, which is exacerbated by vehicle emissions.

Before the pandemic, cities were acting locally to fight climate change, make their streets safer, and achieve greater equity among neighborhoods. Residents would be rightly furious if their leaders restored cities to maximum traffic and increased car dependency—brining back the same issues of congestion, pollution, inequity, and lack of access as before the crisis, but providing even fewer transportation options to confront them with.

The scariest aspects of the pandemic involve things we can’t see. We can’t see the virus, we don’t fully understand its epidemiology, and we don’t know exactly what are the most effective steps to reduce or even eliminate risk on transit and in public. But revitalized transit systems may not need hospital-level sanitization to operate safely and to win back riders. They must also look and feel safe, and agencies must create a new transit culture that reinforces public hygiene and promotes washing hands before and after trips. Expanding contactless payment and protecting transit workers can help reduce touch points and get cities working again until a vaccine and effective treatment are available.
Scott Wiener and Anthony Iton: A backlash against cities would be dangerous

Psychological and visual comfort already appears to be important for passengers. Ridership didn’t drop as sharply on America’s local bus networks nationwide. In May, the number of bus riders in New York surpassed the number of subway riders; usually, buses attract only a third as many. Some transit advocates report that riders feel more comfortable above ground than in trains and stations, and they limit the time spent in contained areas.

The way out of the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic runs along the rails and bus lanes of cities, and restoring urban transit networks to full force, expanding their service, and extending their reach across cities must be at the top of every nation’s economic-recovery strategy. Far from scaling back on public transit, cities across the country need a massive transit expansion that will enable them to avert the mobility meltdown that threatens to swallow them if even a fraction of former transit commuters take to cars. The nation won’t recover if it adds a traffic crisis to the ongoing health and economic crises.

Cities can take practical steps now to win passengers back and create a post-COVID covenant with transit riders. The bigger health risk may not ultimately be the bus or subway car where you spend half an hour with a group of strangers than the places that you are traveling to and from. Researchers still have much to learn. What’s becoming clear is that, with appropriate precautions, transit riders can feel comfortable swiping their MetroCards again and agencies can start building the post-pandemic transit systems that cities and their residents want to see.

The Atlantic
June 14, 2020

JANETTE SADIK-KHAN is a principal at Bloomberg Associates and former commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation. She served as Deputy Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration and is the co-author of Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**PARTA** launches first EZfare mobile ticketing validators in Ohio

Kent, Ohio – Friday, August 28, 2020 – The Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) has launched the first EZfare mobile ticketing validators in the state of Ohio. On-board validators allow riders to scan a barcode on their smartphones to pay fare through the EZfare mobile ticketing app. **PARTA** received $190,000 through the Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2) to pay for the technology.

“We’re extremely appreciative for the state funding that allowed **PARTA** to provide this enhanced service experience to our riders and we are thankful to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), Governor DeWine and the state legislature for their support of public transportation,” said **PARTA** General Manager Claudia Amrhein.

**PARTA** is one of ten (10) Ohio transit agencies that received OTP2 grant funds to further the expansion of the multi-county EZfare mobile ticketing system launched in 2019. The total award shared among agencies was $3.3 million. **PARTA** used its portion to purchase 38 validators and wireless routers to equip its fixed route buses with the advanced technology.

“Validators improve the speed of boarding, reduce demands on our bus operators, and offer a touchless payment option for public transit riders in Portage County,” said Amrhein.

Other Ohio transit agencies installing similar technology later this year and in 2021 include: Butler County RTA, Laketrans, Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit, METRO RTA, Medina County Public Transit, Stark Area RTA, Southwest Ohio RTA, Toledo Area RTA, and Western Reserve Transit Authority. All are members of NEORide, a council of governments comprised of 13 transit systems dedicated to the development and promotion of regional public transportation services.

More information about the EZfare app and download links may be found at [www.EZfare.us](http://www.EZfare.us). The free app can also be found in the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store by searching for “EZfare.”

Organized in 1975 under Section 306.32 of the Ohio Revised Code, **PARTA** provides fixed-route, ADA Complementary Paratransit and Demand Response service throughout Portage County. **PARTA** also operates the Kent Central Gateway Transit Center and parking deck in downtown Kent. In 2018, **PARTA** constructed the first Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fuelling station in Portage County.

For more information contact **PARTA** Communications and Public Advocacy Advisor Denise Baba at 330.678.7745 or email dbaba@partaonline.org.

###
PUBLIC SAFETY

Why you shouldn’t be afraid to take public transportation amid the Covid-19 pandemic

According to Spanish health experts, the risk of contagion on buses and trains is low thanks to safety measures like the use of face masks, as well as improved ventilation systems.
solution for the future, but in these circumstances they are an option."

But studies in several countries have now shown that public transportation is not one of the main sources of contagion, and health experts also agree that with the new safety measures in place, such as face masks and disinfection, plus improved ventilation systems, there is not a high risk of infection – especially when compared to other activities, like eating in a closed space or going to a nighttime venue.

Indeed, Spain has not identified a single Covid-19 outbreak on its subway, train or bus systems. Despite this, the fear persists. According to a survey by the Spanish consumer protection group OCU, public transportation is considered by Spaniards as the most dangerous space (31% of respondents consider it very unsafe), ahead of sporting activities in closed spaces (28%) and cultural events (25%). Changing this perception is key to preventing cities from being overwhelmed by traffic when mobility returns to its normal levels.

“We have to think about why public transportation has been demonized, while other spaces where lots of people gather have gone unnoticed. This is where the battle for urban mobility comes into play, where the car industry is throwing a lot of weight against collective transportation. In every car advertisement, the word ‘safety’ is the central focus,” explains Padro Gullón, from the Spanish Epidemiological Association.

The fact that face masks became mandatory on public transportation three weeks before they were compulsory in other public spaces has also played a role in stigmatizing trains and buses.
“The use of cars is recovering much more quickly than public transportation. On a global level, the use of private cars in cities is between 70 and 80% of pre-pandemic levels, while on subways, trains and buses it is no higher than 50 to 60%,” explains David Lois, a researcher at the Transportation Research Center at the Polytechnic University of Madrid.

In Spain, collective city transit systems in cities lost 90% of their passengers in March and April due to the restrictions on movement, and they have still not recovered them. In Madrid, the Metro had 47% fewer passengers in July compared with last year; in Barcelona, passenger numbers on the Metro and bus network fell by 46% and 49% respectively; and in Valencia, Metro users declined by 46%. The Cercanías commuter train network has maintained just 50% of passenger numbers.

According to mobility data from Apple devices, searches relating to the use of cars rose more than 50% in the summer before later stabilizing, while searches for public transportation fell by 40% in the same period. Although these figures, which are published anonymously, only show data from Apple users, they show a trend that is similar in neighboring countries and cities.

What the studies say

Scientific studies are helping to show that these fears are unfounded. In Japan, researchers studied contagion hotspots in the...
results were discovered: 27% were related to companies and the workplace, 14% to family gatherings and 12% to health centers. Only 1% (15 cases out of 1,100) were linked to buses, subways and trams. And in Switzerland, none of the 800 infection hotspots tracked in August were related to public transportation.

A recent study reviewed 2,300 infected passengers who traveled on trains in China between December and February, as the country was experiencing the peak of the pandemic. Of the 72,000 passengers who sat close to these cases, only 0.34%, or 234 people, contracted the disease. However, another study published last week looked at an outbreak on a bus in the Chinese province of Hubei at the end of January, where one third of the passengers (23 people) caught the coronavirus from one person. But the travelers in this case were not wearing face masks and the bus did not have a working ventilation system.

Although Spain does not provide data on the origin of contagions, neither the Health Ministry nor Spanish regions with large public transportation networks (Madrid, Catalonia and Valencia) have so far identified any coronavirus outbreak on a bus or train. Ildefonso Hernández, a professor of public health at Miguel Hernández University, says that “the studies that attribute part of the transmission to public transportation were situations at the beginning of the pandemic, when the measures were not as strict.”

In June, a team at Spain’s National Research Council (CSIC) led by Xavier Querol and Gloria Sánchez analyzed samples taken from handrails, stairs, turnstiles, vending machines, handles and air conditioning filters at Valencia’s Metro network and found no presence of coronavirus on the premises.
The main two sources of coronavirus contagion are microdroplets, which we emit when we speak, breathe or sneeze – hence the need for social distancing and face masks – and aerosols. Minute particles of these respiratory droplets that remain suspended in the air. Xavier Querol, from CSIC, explains that his team did a modeling study in a closed space of 105 square meters, similar to a train carriage. "If the ventilation system continuously took 25% of air from the outside, the risk of infection from aerosols was 10 times lower. With respect to microdroplets, if everyone wears a mask the problem is solved," says Querol.

"There are some buses that already ventilate 50% of air and take another 50% of outdoor air, and most Metro trains also have 30% outdoor air," he adds. "With face masks, optimized ventilation, the disinfection that is done on all surfaces and hand sanitizer, I think the Metro is no less safe than a cafe, where people tend to talk without their masks."

Madrid's Metro, for example, filters air between 24 and 44 times an hour, depending on the model of the carriage; the Barcelona Metro does it 13 times and wants to increase this to 24; and on the Cercanías commuter train network, air is filtered six times an hour. The constant opening of doors also helps renew the air.

The third way the coronavirus is spread is by fomites, or surfaces and objects that are contaminated by the virus, which we touch before bringing our hands to our eyes, nose and mouth. To avoid this, buses, train carriages and stations are disinfected at least once a day. On the Madrid Metro system, all surfaces that could come into contact with passengers are disinfected three times a day.

**Safer than the bar?**

So is public transportation safer than a bar? According to Pedro Guillón, from the Spanish Epidemiological Association, "we spend less time on the Metro or Cercanías network, around 30 to 40 minutes, with new people at each stop. Most people don't talk and everyone wears a face mask. And, with the exception of peak hour, there are not normally large crowds.

"In contrast, in nightclubs and bars, you have to scream to make yourself heard over the music, people take off their face masks, they drink alcohol, there are fewer safety measures and more time is spent there," he explains, adding: "commuting is an essential activity, while nighttime venues are not."

Ildefonso Hernández agrees: "Bars and nightclubs exist to provide social interactions, which encourages greater proximity between people [...] And when you drink alcohol it is more difficult for you to remember all the preventive measures. If there is an infected person at a bar and you spend several hours inside, with little ventilation, the risk of contagion will also increase."
The health experts explains that "the time of the day when there are more people in the Metro is during short trips that go through the city center, while on long trips there are fewer people and less of a risk," but adds there is no such thing as zero risk.

In order to further reduce the risk of contagion, Hernández recommends that hand sanitizer dispensers be installed in trains and stations, as passengers "cannot avoid touching lots of elements, for instance when holding on inside the carriage or the hand railing of the stairs."

Hand sanitizer is available in Valencia’s Metro network, but not in Madrid, and the Barcelona Metro and the Cercanías line only offer it at the busiest stations.

According to Xavier Querol, it is also important to increase safety distances by increasing the frequency of trains and dividing peak hour in stages – a point that was repeated by Fernando Simón, the director of the Health Ministry’s Coordination Center for Health Alerts, on August 17. “The fact that masks are mandatory helps reduce the risk when there are crowds, but it would be better for there not to be any [crowds] at all,” he said.
But there is still a lot to be done on this issue. Madrid Metro authorities said that the same number of trains were circulating in August as last year, even though there were 40% fewer passengers, and promised that the frequency would increase 20% during peak hours in September. Despite this, images of packed platforms and trains were frequently shared on social media this summer. Unions claim that only 45 of the 300 new drivers promised one year ago have been hired. Meanwhile in Catalonia, the Barcelona Metropolitan Transit (TMB) authority says that bus and subway train frequency has been increased in peak hours, with greater frequency set for the coming months. In Valencia, Metro authorities say that frequency increased 22% in summer, while Cercanías will boost numbers by 15% in September. Madrid’s Metro has also launched a system to stop passengers from entering stations when these hit capacity, a measure that Valencia wants to introduce in September.

“Few sectors are taking as many measures as public transportation, but despite this it continues to have a bad reputation. We have to turn this image on its head,” says Álvaro Fernández Heredia, the manager of city buses in Valladolid.

“If we don’t do this, there will be more traffic jams and an increase in pollution in cities, which could increase the fatality rate of the coronavirus,” warns Marta Serrano, transportation consultant and founder of Women in Movement.

The Transportation Ministry is planning on launching a campaign in September to let people know that public transportation is safe. And similar measures have already been introduced in Barcelona and Valencia.

“We have to dedicate all our efforts to showing that public transportation is safe. If we don’t do this, air quality will worsen and this will have a very negative impact on the health of the population,” explains Querol.

*English version by Melissa Kitson.*