# **RTA Citizens Advisory Board Meeting 3-6-2024**

1. **Call to Order**
   1. Michael VanDekreke, Director, Mobility Services, called to order the RTA Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Meeting on 3/6/2024 at 10:00 AM.
2. **Attendance**
   1. Voting Committee Members Present In-person:
      1. Jackie Forbes, Chairperson, Kane County
      2. Ryan Ruehle, Vice Chairperson, Suburban Cook County
      3. Joe Surdam, Lake County
      4. Jazmin Vega, McHenry County
      5. Colin Phillips, Will County
      6. John Loper, DuPage County
      7. Adam Kerman, Pace Citizen Advisory Board Committee
      8. Rob Hart, Metra Citizen Advisory Board Committee
      9. Loren Gutierrez, The Network
   2. Voting Committee Members Present Virtually:
      1. Katanya Raby, CTA Citizen Advisory Board
   3. Non-Voting Members Present In-Person:
      1. Michael VanDekreke, RTA
      2. Rachel Arfa, MOPD
      3. Xavier Potts, Chicago
      4. Libia Bianibi, Chicago
      5. Parker Thompson, Kane County
      6. Terry Kappel, McHenry County
      7. Douglas Fowler, Will County
   4. Non-Voting Members Present Virtually:
      1. Ayesha Akhtar, Suburban Cook County
      2. Karl Gieseke, DuPage County
      3. Victoria Zimmerman, Lake County
   5. Other Individuals Present In-person:
      1. Steve Andrews, Pace
      2. Tyler James, CTA
      3. Kyle Whitehead, RTA
      4. Kevin Bueso, RTA
      5. Jill Leary, RTA
      6. Mario Basurto, RTA
      7. John Boex, RTA
      8. Rebecca Zamora, RTA
      9. Sarah Fettig, RTA
      10. Kendra Johnson, RTA
      11. Anthony Cefali, RTA
      12. ASL Interpreter
   6. Other Individuals Present Virtually:
      1. Katie Dote, Metra
      2. Scott Hennings, McHenry County
      3. Mark Koljack, RTA
      4. Tina Smith, RTA
      5. Garland Armstrong
      6. Heather Armstrong
3. **Welcome**
   1. Michael VanDekreke provided a summary of today’s meeting, the purpose of the RTACAB, and housekeeping.
      1. Meeting minutes are taken for all meetings. Minutes from prior meeting will be brought to the board for approval at the beginning of each meeting.
      2. Meetings will take place quarterly. Next meeting is April 22, 2024, at 10:00 AM.
      3. Reminder for committee members to send a short biography to Kendra Johnson. The bio’s will be used on the RTA’s website and blog post to announce the new RTACAB members.
4. **Introductions/Ice Breaker**
   1. Jackie Forbes opened introductions for the committee members. Each member answered the following questions:
      1. Introduction of self
      2. Where they are from
      3. What area of the region they represent
      4. What organization they are affiliated with
      5. Why they want to be a part of the RTACAB
      6. Topics they are interested in from the RTACAB
      7. What transit mode they use
         1. Members were from all areas within the RTA Region. Members were associated with departments of transportation, social services, public health, CTA, Pace, Metra, and more. The modes of transit used by members are Metra, Pace, CTA, and personal car.
         2. Topics of interest expressed by members were the following: extending services into DuPage County, county to county services, public transportation funding – including paratransit funding, accessible public transportation, providing access to transit for all – including people with disabilities, addressing the post pandemic ridership market, how to solve the fiscal cliff, service for people experiencing low income, accessibility for young families, veteran advocacy, sustainability, intermodal transportation, and public health equity.
5. **Review of the RTACAB Bylaws**
   1. Michael VanDekreke provided an overview and key points of the RTACAB Bylaws. A copy of the bylaws was shared with the committee members via email. There are 8 articles within the RTACAB Bylaws.
      1. The purpose of this committee is to provide advice to the RTA. This is not a policy making committee, but committee input will be shared with the RTA Board. This meeting was restructured from *Transit is Answer*, RTA’s strategic plan.
      2. The member composition is 11 voting members and 10 transit rider/non-voting positions. Due to compliance with the RTA Act, voting members are not allowed to be paid for their time. However, the transit riders or the non-voting members are eligible for compensation to serve on this board, and voting members are eligible for expense reimbursement for travel to and from meetings. Members include the Service Board CABs, The Network, and a member representing the counties. Additionally, there are 8 riders representing different areas of the RTA region. The term length for members appointed by organizations outside of the RTA is not limited and is determined by the appointing body. All other members can serve for 2 two-year terms.
      3. The Chairperson will provide a quarterly update to the RTA Board. The Vice-chairperson will create the agenda and step in when the Chairperson is not available to attend.
      4. The committee will meet quarterly unless more is required by the Chairperson. The agenda will be posted on the website 48 hours prior to the meeting. Meeting information will be shared with members in advance. There needs to be 6 voting members in-person out of 11 members to have a quorum. Last 15 minutes of each meeting is reserved for public comment - 5 minutes per person.
      5. If bylaws need a change, members can bring to the Chairperson and Michael VanDekreke. There must be a 2/3rd majority vote, then they will bring to the RTA Board.
6. **Board Ethic Discussion**
   1. Mario Basurto, Deputy Legal Counsel provided an overview of the members’ ethical responsibilities and guidelines. There is an ethics section on RTA’s website available for members to review.
   2. As a member, they will have preview to the confidential information and must protect the privacy of this information. Members cannot accept jobs, promotions, gifts, and cannot participate in political activity on RTA property or RTA time. Members must avoid conflict and the appearance of conflicts, example personal interest which the member might need to excuse themselves.
   3. Discrimination and Sexual Harassment – members are prohibited, and the RTA will not tolerate any harassment. Each member has the right to be treated with respect. If there are any questions about ethics guidelines, members can reach out to Mario.
   4. Questions:
      1. John Loper asked about protecting documents and if they can be shared. Michael stated confidential information will be watermarked and members will be informed on which information cannot be shared.
      2. Adam Kerman asked about his responsibility of ethics with this committee because he is a member of the public and the committee does not make decisions. Mario asked that members do not accept gifts or payment to form their opinion.
7. **Overview of the RTA**
   1. Jill Leary, Chief of Staff, provided an overview of the RTA.
      1. The RTA was created by the State of Illinois to coordinate the Service Boards – CTA, Metra, and Pace. The RTA oversees finances, secures funding, and to conduct transit planning for the Service Boards. The RTA is the tax authority. The organization is made up of about 100 staff in a variety of departments.
      2. The RTA Board is a 16-member board and includes 5 Chicago representatives, 5 suburban Cook County representatives, 5 collared county representatives and 1 appointed by County Board Chair. There must be a 12/16 majority to pass.
      3. Legislative history of the RTA:
         1. In the 1940s, the CTA became a public entity with the creation of the MTA Act.
         2. In 1974, the RTA was created, and the General Assembly gave it powers to levy taxes to support transit operations.
         3. In 1979, the RTA switched to using the regional sales tax of 1% in Chicago and Cook County and .25% tax in the collar counties.
         4. In 1983, there was an amendment to sales tax and the inclusion of the 50% recovery ratio mandate.
         5. In 2008, the regional sales tax (.25%) increased, PTF match, and additional Real Estate Transfer Tax from City of Chicago and additional PTF match.
      4. Historic breakdown of funding (pre-pandemic):
         1. 40% of the funds comes from local sources. 40% of the funds come from system generated revenues. 20% of the funds come from sales tax.
         2. Funding breakdown is statutorily required.
      5. RTA sales tax by county (2022)-
         1. 30% Chicago
         2. 46% Suburban Cook County
         3. 9% DuPage County
         4. 5% Lake County
         5. 5% Will County
         6. 3% Kane County
         7. 2% McHenry County
      6. Transit is the Answer
         1. The RTA is responsible for creating a strategic plan every 5 years. Jill provided a summary of the economic impacts of public transportation. In 2026, there will be a $730M funding gap.
         2. With implementing the strategic plan, the RTA wants to advance our advocacy and action agendas. The advocacy agenda is centered around securing funding for transit operations. The action agenda includes items that most directly impact riders.
         3. 2024 Legislative Agenda:
            1. Fully fund the region’s transit system.
            2. Develop a funding structure less reliant on rider fares.
            3. Pursue reforms and efficiencies that will improve transit operations.
            4. Work with the State to leverage transit to reduce emissions and advance racial equity.
         4. Questions:
            1. Terry Kappel asked about statutory funding requirements for McHenry County. Jill stated the sale tax distribution is determined by the county.
            2. Adam Kerman commented on the sales tax history of the RTA.
8. **Overview of Work by RTA Department**
   1. Kevin Buseo, Chief Financial Officer provided an overview of the Finance, Innovation, and Technology department.
      1. The finance team is the largest of the RTA. There are 26 employees within 4 divisions – Treasury & Budget, Controller, IT, and PMO.
         1. PMO oversees State-Funded Capital Projects.
         2. IT maintains all IT infrastructure for the agency, manages our cyber security program & ERP systems, and collaborates with Service Boards regarding Technology.
         3. Controller is responsible for accounts payable, payroll, accounts receivable, and prepares the Annual Comprehensive Final Report.
         4. Budget and Treasury puts together the regional budget and works together with the Service Boards. They manage all the investments.
      2. Adam Kerman asked about audits, compliance, and triannual review. Kevin stated PMO provides audits for some projects, but the Planning Department oversees the majority.
   2. **Mobility Services**
      1. Michael VanDekreke, Director, Mobility Services provided an overview on the work of the Mobility Services Department. The main purpose of the department is to operate regional programs. The programs within the department include ADA Paratransit Certification, RTA Fare Program, Mobility Outreach, Travel Training, and Travel Information Center.
         1. ADA Paratransit – The RTA is responsible for ADA Paratransit eligibility. ADA Paratransit is based on a person’s ability to used fixed route services. The RTA determines eligibility based on assessments. Customers can receive a decision of not eligible, conditional eligibility (conditional based on a person’s disability), unconditional eligibility, or temporarily eligibility. If someone does not agree with their eligibility decision, they have the right to appeal.
         2. RTA Fare Programs:
            1. Reduced Fare Program is half off full fare on CTA, Pace, and Metra for older adults and people with disabilities. There is 4-year eligibility. There are 162,000 individuals currently eligible.
            2. Ride Free Program allows customers to ride free on CTA, Pace, and Metra. People enrolled in the Benefit Access Program are eligible. This includes older adults and people with disabilities. There are 100,000 individuals currently eligible.

Terry asked if people under 16 can be eligible for Ride Free. Michael stated the Illinois Department on Aging determines the eligibility and their requirement is at least 16 years old.

* + - 1. Access Pilot Program offers reduced face on Metra for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients living within the RTA region. The pilot started 2/1/2024 and runs to 7/31/2025.
      2. RTA Fare Programs Online Portal allows customers to apply online for RTA fare programs. Customers can visit fares.rtachicago.org.
         1. Additionally, customers can visit one of RTA Registration Sites to apply for RTA fare programs. A list of the sites can be found on the Registration Site Locator by visiting rtachicago.org.
      3. Mobility Outreach provides education to older adults and people with disabilities about public transportation and RTA programs through presentations and attending outreach events.
      4. Travel Training is a one-on-one individual training. There are 3 types of training models: Trip Training, Orientation to Transit, and Orientation and Mobility Training.
      5. Travel Information Center allows customers to call 312-836-700 for travel information, request maps, and directions.

1. **Update on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault RTA Public Transportation Assistance Program**
   1. Loren Gutierrez, The Network, stated this program was created by legislative last year. This provided 25,000 $20 Ventra cards to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. There is an option for individuals to receive the funds virtually by adding it to their Ventra account. Survivors use their cards to get to health appointments, court, and to get their children to school. 4000 Ventra cards have been given to over 1200 survivors. Survivors have provided positive feedback about the card and service.
   2. Loren shared a survivor story about a family who was restricted to only traveling around the area near their shelter. With the Ventra card, the family was able to go downtown and experience the tree lightings and fireworks.
2. **Service Board CAB Reports**
   1. Katanya Raby, CTA CAB, will provide an update at April’s meeting.
   2. Rob Hart, Metra CAB – this is Rob’s personal report.
      1. February 1, 2024, Metra rolled out their new fare structure. The rollout was not great due to the Ventra app issues.
      2. Ridership is 51% of pre-pandemic levels.
      3. Metra ordered battery operated trains and will be the first commuter rail system to use this type of train. The trains will be deployed to the Rock Island line.
   3. Adam Kerman, Pace CAB
      1. Pace’s VanGo Program leaves vehicles at parking lots to use for shared rides to work. This is accessible by using Pace’s Transit app.
      2. TripCheck has been upgraded.
      3. Pace built a new partnership with community colleges to train new bus drivers to receive their CDL.
      4. TNC program is being launched called RAP.
      5. Pace is offering free fixed-route bus fares for ADA Paratransit riders. This is currently a flash pass; if you tap on Ventra customers will be charged reduced fare.
      6. Revision Plan is a network restructuring initiative. Currently, they are in the internal phase, but will reach out to the public to hear their needs.
3. **Public Comments**
   1. Garland Armstrong provided a public comment about following up about ADA Advisory Committee reports at the RTACAB and if the chair is not present, if the vice-chair can provide a report. Garland asked if there will be any more RTA Assessment Sites opening for customers.
      1. Michael stated they have Pace, CTA, and Metra CAB participating in the RTACAB. Additionally, the RTA has 2 sites and they do not plan on opening anymore assessment sites.
   2. Heather Armstrong presented an idea about people who are ADA Paratransit certified to ride for free on fixed route.
      1. Michael said Pace has launched this on their fixed route buses. CTA has discussed launching this in the future.
4. **Other Business**
   1. Terry asked if he could submit his questions. Michael said he can send his questions to Kyle, Kendra, or himself. They will address his questions in the next meeting.
5. **Adjourn**
   1. Meeting adjourned at 12:03 PM.

Meeting minutes completed by Sarah Fettig, RTA Supervisor, Mobility Outreach.