

RTA CEO set to retire after 45 years of public transit service

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(Dayton, OH)... From bus driver to executive of an urban transit system, Greater Dayton RTA's CEO has spent his entire career in public service. After 45 years—15 of which were in Dayton—Mark Donaghy will retire, effective April 1, 2021.

Donaghy began his transit career in 1976 as a driver for the Omaha Public School system in Nebraska. At the time, the system was in turmoil as a federal court mandated busing of Black students to predominantly white schools in Omaha in order to desegregate schools. Donaghy was one of the first to drive a school bus for the new system as part of the desegregation process. Throughout his career he's held various leadership positions at other transit agencies, including Columbia Transit, Manchester Transit Authority, Missoula Urban Transportation District, and the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky, or TANK, where he eventually became CEO. He went to First Transit Inc. before joining Dayton RTA as CEO in 2006.

During his tenure, Donaghy successfully fought for equal access for bus service in Beavercreek, a battle which was the basis for the award-winning "Free to Ride" documentary produced by The Ohio State University's Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. He helped shepherd innovative partnership programs such as Dayton's downtown circulator bus The Flyer, the LINK bike share program, and RTA Connect On-Demand where traditional service is limited. One of his greatest achievements was the rebuild of Dayton's electric trolley system through infrastructure upgrades and the creation of the new NexGen dual-mode trolley bus, which can run off-wire for 15 miles, expanding RTA's electric bus service without increasing overhead wire.

"It has been a privilege to serve with many great employees, board members and stakeholders in the Dayton Region over the past 15 years," Donaghy said. "I am proud of my 45 years of service in the transportation industry and have been fortunate to have worked in nearly every aspect of it, starting as a bus driver in 1976 in Omaha and as a CEO for more than 30 years. The Dayton region is a special place where the public and private sectors collaborate in a determined effort to improve the quality of life for every citizen and being part of that regional infrastructure has been the highlight of my career. RTA is well prepared to serve the Miami Valley for generations to come as it has for more than 100 years thanks to the collective efforts of our employees, board of trustees and our regional partners."

RTA's board of trustees thanks Donaghy for his service, especially during the unprecedented COVID-19 health crisis, in which Donaghy maintained full service levels to ensure essential workers could get to their jobs, and RTA employees maintained employment.

Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority

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“Mark has been an extraordinary leader in extraordinary times. Recently, Mark has kept access to reliable transportation available through an unprecedented health crisis, devastating tornadoes, a horrific mass shooting, and civil unrest,” said David Williamson, president of the RTA board of trustees. “Mark championed expanded service for employees to get to work, for the underserved, and for innovative ideas like The Flyer. The Board of trustees fully appreciates Mark’s resolve to keep the buses running and his firm and steady hand on the wheel. He will be missed.”

The board will recognize Donaghy’s extraordinary achievements for public transit at their regularly-scheduled meeting set for Tuesday, March 2.