



OPTA Board of Director Meeting Minutes

March 14, 2023

OFFICERS

Claudia Amrhein, PARTA

Howard Stewart, SEAT

Dawn Distler, METRO RTA

Chasilyn Carter, Lancaster Fairfield Transit

Shannon Webster, Greene CATS

Blair Taseff, TESCO

Kevin Hardesty, GILLIG

President

Vice-President

Secretary-Treasurer

Vice-President Small Urban/Rural Systems

Vice-President Mobility Manager Members

Vice-President Associate Members

Vice-President Associate Members

Emeritus Representatives

India Birdsong, Greater Cleveland RTA

Kirt Conrad, Stark Area RTA

Darryl Haley, Southwest Ohio RTA

Patrick Harris, Central Ohio TA

Laura Koprowski, Toledo Area RTA

Bob Ruzinsky, Greater Dayton RTA

Howard Stewart, South East Area Transit

OPTA Staff

Matt Carle, Executive Director

Elle Decot, Executive Administrator

Presenter Attendees

Andy Bowers, Andy Bowers & Associates

Chuck Dyer, Ohio Department of Transportation

Administrative Attendees

Denise Baba, PARTA

Marcia Fletcher, PARTA

Additional: 41 Go To Meeting Attendees

Claudia Amrhein, PARTA

Ms. Claudia Amrhein called the meeting of the OPTA Board of Directors to order at 10:34 a.m. on March 14, 2023. She indicated that the meeting minutes for December were distributed on Govenda. She asked for a motion to accept the December minutes to which Ms. Shannon Webster motioned. Mr. Bob Ruzinsky seconded the motion to which all those in favor voted "aye." Ms. Amrhein then asked Mr. Matt Carle to deliver the Executive Director report.

Matt Carle, OPTA

Mr. Carle began by thanking Ms. Amrhein and giving a brief introduction of Mr. Billy Wingfield from Access2Care. He stated that Access2Care was a sponsor at the OPTA conference last year and will be sponsoring the in-person OPTA conference in June but wanted to become more involved in OPTA. He stated to look for more to come from Access2Care in June.

Next, Mr. Carle moved on to his Executive Director report. He thanked everyone who participated in Ohio Loves Transit. The turnout was the largest that OPTA had experienced, with over 20 transit

agencies participating. He stated that over 30 bags of OLT swag were mailed out, more legislative meetings than ever before were had, and an influential group of legislators attended the legislative reception at the Statehouse. The House Finance Chair, Senate Transportation Chair, House Transportation Subcommittee Chair, and Senate President attended the legislative reception. Mr. Carle thanked everyone for their time and energy in making the event a success. Mr. Carle stated that it is clear the profile of OPTA has risen amongst legislators and many, if not all, legislators are now familiar with OPTA and the work that OPTA does, thanks in part to the participation of everyone on the call.

Next, Mr. Carle transitioned to discussing the Ohio Needs Transit Conference and OPTA Expo 2023. He stated the dates for the conference are Sept. 18-20, 2023, and will be held at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio. He stated that OPTA is currently seeking presentation proposals for speakers and educational sessions. He stated that committee meetings are commencing next week in order to have plenty of time to plan for the conference. Mr. Carle asked for everyone to feel free to submit ideas and thoughts of how to improve the conference from last year.

Additionally, Mr. Carle stated OPTA is seeking sponsors and exhibitors to display at the conference. He stated that in 2022, OPTA had more exhibitors than ever before, and he hoped to top that number this year. He stated all pertinent information is on the OPTA website and that updates will be posted as they come.

Finally, Mr. Carle stated that ticket sales will begin in June for regular conference attendees. He urged everyone to continue to check the website for updates.

Mr. Carle then transitioned to his Government Affairs update. Mr. Carle stated that the 2024/2025 Ohio Transportation Budget is in the process of being passed. He stated that OPTA performed very well in the House, maintaining the budget dollars that were given in the "as introduced" version from the Governor's office. Public transit remained flat funded at \$70M this budget cycle and had overwhelming bipartisan support. Additionally, OPTA was able to secure the Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Program amendment, with 45 sponsors, which will allow one or more transit authorities to work together to provide service. The earmark secures \$15M each year for economic development and regional workforce projects that are both within a county and outside of a county. This will help areas that are traditionally difficult to reach for some workers across Ohio without a vehicle.

Mr. Carle stated that OPTA will continue to work with ODOT to determine the application process and how the money will be distributed.

Next, Mr. Carle thanked everyone who participated in testimony at the Statehouse. He said six agencies came to speak from OPTA in support of the budget at the request of the committee chairs to not bring a ton of agencies to testify. Additionally, OPTA was successful in getting the funding moved from the main operating budget into the transportation budget, which ensures the budget discussion will be over much sooner than if the money remained in the main operating budget.

Next, Mr. Carle asked everyone on the call to reach out to their state Senators and urge their support as the budget moves to the Senate. He stated the importance of having local legislators hear from their local transit agencies.

Claudia Amrhein, PARTA

Ms. Amrhein thanked Mr. Carle for his update and then asked Mr. Carle to give a financial update as Ms. Dawn Distler is not able to attend the call.

Matt Carle, OPTA

Mr. Carle stated that the December, January, and February financials were posted to Govenda for review. He stated that OPTA remains in a strong position and encourages everyone to review the financials and reach out if they have any questions. Mr. Carle stated that OPTA continues to cut unnecessary spending and is striving to be good stewards of the OPTA budget. Mr. Carle stated that you can see some outstanding invoices on the financials and urged transit agencies to get their dues checks in as soon as possible.

Claudia Amrhein, PARTA

Ms. Amrhein began her report by stating that many OPTA committees are beginning to meet in person rather than virtually. Due to this, OPTA is conducting an internal inventory of the active committees to understand which committees are still active and which are not. She stated that according to her records, the following committees are still meeting: maintenance, marketing, legislative, operations, paratransit, planning, and security.

She then paused to allow for committee chairs to give their updates.

Kristie Cox, GCRTA

Ms. Kristie Cox stated that she and Ms. Denise Baba are getting ready to send out a survey to members to find out how they would like to re-engage with the marketing committee. She stated the committee will be doing some evaluations over the next couple of months to figure out how to proceed forward.

Keith Leighton, COTA

Mr. Keith Leighton stated that he and Ms. Amanda Brooks are working to schedule an in-person safety and security meeting. They have several big topics that they are looking to address, including operator assaults and de-escalation methods.

Claudia Amrhein, PARTA

Ms. Amrhein stated that OPTA is working on putting together an out-of-state membership for any transit agencies from Kentucky, West Virginia, and other surrounding states that may want to join OPTA mainly for the networking opportunities.

Ms. Amrhein then thanked everyone for their help and support during the budget season, acknowledging that coming to Columbus to testify on top of everyone's normal duties can be difficult to juggle but is much appreciated. She then asked if anyone else had updates that they did not get to share.

Shannon Webster, *Greene CATS*

Ms. Webster stated that currently there are 43 mobility manager positions in the state, five of which are vacant. So, there are numerous employment opportunities for folks who are looking to get into public transit. She stated that mobility managers cover 71 of the 88 counties and of the active 38 mobility managers, 35 are OPTA members. Additionally, she is working on March campaigns for social media and will be featuring mobility manager success stories.

Howard Stewart, *SEAT*

Mr. Howard Stewart stated that the small operators conference is fast approaching and will be held the first week of April.

Chasilyn Carter, *Lancaster Fairfield Transit*

Ms. Chasilyn Carter stated that she had nothing to report but would be able to connect with Sen. Schaffer to discuss the budget and garner his support.

Claudia Amrhein, *PARTA*

Ms. Amrhein thanked all the committee chairs for their reports.

Ms. Amrhein then adjourned the meeting at 11:08 AM.