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**MEETING:** EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS COMMITTEE

**DATE:** TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2021

**TIME:** 3:00 – 4:30 PM

**LOCATION:** VIA WEBEX

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**MEETING MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Landino called the May 11, 2021 meeting of the External Stakeholder Relations Committee to order at 3:05 PM.

**2. ROLL CALL**

**Committee Members Present**

Amy Landino, Chair

Trudy Bartley

Jennifer Gallagher

Sean Mentel

**3. APPROVAL OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Trustee Gallagher motioned to approve the March 16, 2021 External Stakeholder Relations Committee minutes. Trustee Bartley seconded the motion. Motion carries.

**4. NEW BUSINESS**

Aslyne Rodriguez, Director of Government Affairs, gave a Non-Profit Engagement Update to the Committee. Since April 2020, COTA has been able to collect and distribute over 35,000 masks. In addition to that distribution, COTA has made great efforts to make sure that those who are seeking vaccination are able to access appointments. COTA has engaged in this effort in several ways. First, is through 18,000 day passes for COTA fixed routes that Mallory Donaldson, Community Relations Manager, delivered to over 48 non-profit partners. Additional opportunities are available through COTA's mobility services, and through the project partner, Columbus StandUp. Another option is through COTA//Plus, where customers can book transport through the system to access vaccination sites. There are further discussions happening with Franklin County Public Health and Columbus Public Health regarding pop-up vaccination clinics within various communities.



Aslyne continued with discussion on COTA's community sponsorships. COTA has gone from 20 sponsorships in 2020 to 30 events so far 2021. This has been significant because COTA realized that in addition to being supportive of partners financially, COTA also wanted to bring to the table the opportunity for travel training with these non-profit partners.

Any partner that COTA sponsors at \$2,500 or above, COTA is also partnering with them to provide travel training. In February, COTA held an event with the YMCA and the City of Columbus to offer travel training to New Americans along the 161 Corridor. COTA also has several upcoming travel training opportunities with City Year, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce and the Lincoln Theatre's Youth Summer Programs.

Aslyne concluded with discussing the new fare management system and the critical role community relations will play in the rollout. In July, Mallory Donaldson will begin external communication outreach to nonprofit partners who serve COTA's most vulnerable customers. She will promote the fare management public announcement to 118 nonprofit/community partners, partner with nonprofit/community partners to use social media platforms to drive awareness the new system, present the new fare management system to more than 20 nonprofit partner meetings to garner support and get customers registered, as well as provide training opportunities and resources for nonprofit distribution locations.

Q1: Chair Landino: How can we support this effort?

A1: Aslyne Rodriguez: If anyone knows communities with barriers to vaccines please connect them with us to provide the access. If you are part of any nonprofit organizations that may not know about this fare management process please let us know and we can present.

Q2: Trustee Bartley: What is the relationship with the hospital systems?

A2: Mallory Donaldson: We are working closely with PACT, OSU East and Mt. Carmel to expand vaccine transit pass programs into Franklin County Public Health and Columbus Public Health with their vaccine process. We are continuing to get more acclimated into the health care systems and those conversations.

A2: Patrick Harris: ODOT awarded \$750,000 to COTA to help connect people to vaccine opportunities. We continue to look at how best to utilize those dollars to provide access to vaccinations.

Kim Sharp, Senior Director, Development, presented a Return to Office Update. As COTA is designing service out on the street, listening to nonprofit partners is extremely important as well as listening to the business community and getting people back to the office. Development is in frequent contact with One Columbus on various phased approaches to getting workers back to the office.

Development has been paying particular attention to manufacturing and warehouse industries where jobs are growing and understanding where COTA needs to increase service. Kim noted that recently, COTA has added quite a bit of service to Line 22 and 24 down to the Rickenbacker area.

Kim's team has also worked with the Downtown SID and their C-Pass Survey engaging with employers to confirm when employees are returning to the office and when to phase in express lines.

Kim continued that Development is also speaking with up and coming development projects, particularly in the Arena District. She noted that there will be 400 plus housing units, hundreds of thousands of square feet of commercial and retail spaces as well as the new Crew stadium and existing Clippers and Blue Jackets facilities. Development works closely with the City of Columbus Transportation and Mobility Division along with these developers to understand what the mobility options are for moving people in and out on not only game days, but service for the new residents.

Development is also working on the Rickenbacker Area Mobility Center and serving the growing job market in that area. Currently, two COTA lines, 22 and 24 meet up with regional transit shuttles, like GREAT (Groveport Rickenbacker Employee Access Transit), at a Marathon gas station. She noted that the area needs something better in the multi-mobility mixed use center COTA plans to build. Kim went on to explain that the low hanging fruit is working with the various rural transit systems and creating a shared schedule online so customers can see when and where they need to make those transfers to get from a rural to urban system.

The Development team is also in discussions with Licking County in regards to the Kohls center in Etna that hires thousands of associates during the holidays. Same with Madison County and OhioHealth Patient Services.

Kim ended her presentation with a few maps, showing the Committee how Development is closely watching over potential developments that are 400+ unit projects or \$1M in development. 33 projects are currently on the books. She noted that her team will work with developers to ascertain if the project is on an existing COTA line and talk to them about utilizing transit for their employees or residents.

Patrick Harris, AVP Government Affairs and External Relations presented on Community Project Funding requests. Community Project Requests or "earmarks" are back in 2021. There are two types of community-based projects, appropriations earmarks which are smaller amount requests and reauthorization earmarks, which are larger requests. During the reauthorization process, there are many opportunities for competitive and formula grants.

Working through the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, each Congressional member was allocated roughly \$15-20 million to submit projects for the Committee's consideration. Based on this, COTA reviewed the Capital Appropriations Budget and the project list and submitted COTA's requests based on that. It is important to note that the earmarks rules have been introduced in the House, but not the Senate. Whichever vehicle the community-based projects or earmarks takes in the House, does not necessarily mean that is what is going to be successful in

the Senate. According to our federal lobbyists at Squire Patton Boggs, there is a potential for any earmarks that are in House legislation to be stripped out in the Senate.

COTA submitted three projects, two to Congresswoman Joyce Beatty and one with Congressman Troy Balderson. The two projects submitted to Congresswoman Beatty are the Rickenbacker Area Mobility Center (RAMC) and the Reynoldsburg Park & Ride. RAMC is unique project for COTA. This is not only a multi-modal hub, but a quality of life center. COTA did receive \$1M from the State Capital Budget already. Initially, COTA's request was upwards of \$4 million, but due to the 80/20 federal share rule, the request was reduced to \$3 million. The Reynoldsburg Park & Ride \$800,000 request, is a new facility with an increased demand for express lines as usage continues to increase.

Congressman Troy Balderson is a minority member of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee. COTA's \$800,000 request to his office is a Cleveland Avenue Multimodal Facility in partnership with the City of Westerville and Otterbein University. Currently, the property is owned by Otterbein University and has potential plans for redevelopment including mixed use student housing apartments, retail space and additional space for Otterbein. COTA would also be a part of that development with the Westerville Park & Ride that is just south of the location. The plan with the multimodal facility will support electric vehicle charging and the opportunity for COTA//Plus to connect in Westerville.

As of a few weeks ago, all three projects did end up on the final consideration lists submitted by members of Congress. COTA was not alone in this process, as the team worked with the Columbus Region Coalition to ensure everyone was on the same page with Columbus area requests.

Q1: Chair Landino: When will we know something next?

A1: Patrick Harris: The biggest challenge is looking for the right legislative vehicle. May be the infrastructure package in the next 4-6 weeks. Unfortunately, I cannot give an exact timeline at this time. Capitol Hill makes the decision on when and how to move the legislation.

Dr. Alexis Yamokoski introduced COTA's new Director of Marketing, Jennifer Walton and Senior Director, Customer Experience, Shara Hutchinson. Jennifer Walton introduced herself to the committee and reviewed what is to come from Marketing, including, launch of new brand tagline, new website, new fare management system, promoting innovation widely and work on a build back ridership campaign. Shara Hutchinson oversees both the Customer Experience Center and Customer Information Center at COTA. Shara shared her strategy to reimagine how COTA engages with customers in laying the foundation to support the fare management rollout, assist in the build back ridership campaign, and strengthen community relationships in order to support innovative mobility solutions. She also noted on the importance of enhancing the employee experience and how it ultimately affects the customer experience.

Sindy Mondesir, Chief People Officer, introduced COTA's new Director, Corporate Communications, Sara McCain. Sara introduced herself to the group and noted that she plans to

invest in the employee experience and look at employee culture and communications first and foremost.

Sophia Mohr, Chief Innovation Officer, introduced Matt Martin, Senior Director, Program Management. Matt will be working with all divisions within COTA to facilitate the portfolio management, including strategic plan project intake, managing demand, prioritization and determining where resources can be best spent. Matt told the committee members he is looking forward to continuing to help divisions develop the ability to execute efficiently and effectively and achieve the results and impact that COTA is looking for.

Lastly, Dr. Alexis Yamokoski presented a resolution requesting the authorization of additional funds for market research. In 2020, the Marketing team conducted extensive customer and community market research, including COTA's first ever customer segmentation and research activation. At the end of 2020, Marketing established a COTA Voice Panel comprised of 1,500 COTA customers and a COTA Voice Council, comprised of 15 COTA core customers. Dr. Yamokoski's team engages both groups on a monthly basis, making sure that that customer is ever present in COTA's decision making. This resolution is requesting an additional \$175,000 to continue to support the impactful research. Dr. Yamokoski noted that this resolution is not asking for more dollars, but simply reallocating existing dollars with in the 2021 Marketing budget.

Q1: Chair Landino: Where were the reallocated funds from?

A1: Dr. Alexis Yamokoski: The funds are coming from phase 2 of the website update as we do not believe we need to use those dollars this year.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Landino adjourned the meeting at 3:49 PM.

July 13, 2021

Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: Amy M Landino  
Chair, External Stakeholder Relations Committee

Attest: [Signature]  
President/CEO