

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SOUTHWEST OHIO REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
RESOLUTION NO. 2019-25

AUTHORIZING THE LEVY OF A SALES AND USE TAX FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING
GENERAL REVENUE FOR THE SOUTHWEST OHIO REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

WHEREAS:

1. Our public transit system is at an important crossroad, and the choice SORTA makes will impact many of the most important initiatives currently underway in our region; and
2. Affordable and frequent public transportation is critical to the fabric of our community and will support efforts to reduce child poverty and connect Hamilton County residents to jobs, education and health care; and
3. Frequent and reliable public transportation is increasingly critical to our region's economic development efforts to compete in attracting new businesses to the region and support the growth of our existing businesses; and
4. A strong public transportation system will serve as the backbone of a network of options that will enhance the region's attractiveness to a pool of talent that increasingly demands multiple modes of transportation to experience all that Hamilton County has to offer; and
5. Investment in transit will improve on the public health disparities across Hamilton County and promote equitable and healthy outcomes for residents; and
6. Expanding access to public transportation will further enhance the Cincinnati region's standing as a leader in advancing sustainability; and
7. Quality transportation provides seniors and people with disabilities freedom to continue to engage with their community and access education and employment independently; and
8. SORTA convened the Metro Futures Taskforce, made up of representatives from across the community, which make six key findings and six recommendations that are being implemented in whole or in part by this Board; and
9. A review conducted by EY and in partnership with the business community confirmed the \$184M operating and capital deficit that SORTA faces over the next ten years and benchmarked SORTA's operational efficiency favorably among peer transit authorities; and
10. SORTA's ridership has fallen by more than 3 million rides over the last five years, a drop of more than four percent over the five year period due to dwindling resources that have necessitated cuts to frequency, span, and service, making it harder and harder for our customers to get where they need to go; and
11. SORTA has conducted and participated in community conversations over the past three years with bus riders, local businesses, community and town councils, civic associations, and

countless individuals to ensure that the Reinventing Metro plan meets the needs of the community we serve; and

12. Through more than three years of engagement with AECOM, a global engineering firm, SORTA has developed the Reinventing Metro plan to expand its bus system; and

13. The Reinventing Metro plan calls for eight new crosstown routes, 24 hour service on six major routes, fifteen minute or better frequencies and longer service hours on more than half of the routes, improved weekend service, bus rapid transit, and expanded Access service for seniors and people with disabilities; and

14. The state of local roads and bridges that SORTA's bus system operates on continues to deteriorate as municipalities and townships continue to grapple with tighter budgets; and

15. A recent analysis conducted by Stantec and commissioned by the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber identified more than \$1B worth of road, bridge, sidewalk and other infrastructure projects that overlap with our bus system and are in need of maintenance, repair or replacement; and

16. The SORTA board endorsed Issue 22, the repeal of the City of Cincinnati's 0.3% earnings tax dedicated to transit contingent on a County- wide sales tax for transit being passed in 2020.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

17. That the Board of Trustees endorses and supports a 0.8% sales tax plan that would raise \$130-135MM annually and fully fund the Reinventing Metro plan and dedicate 25% of the levy funds to maintain and improve infrastructure in Hamilton County, our service area; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

18. That it is the intent of the Board to place this sales tax levy before voters to support this plan in the primary election of 2020 and no later than the general election of 2020; and

19. That the growth in SORTA's service laid out in the Reinventing Metro Plan (approved unanimously in January 2018) will be accompanied by an expansion of Metro's Access service, expanding our ability to provide improved service for seniors and people with disabilities; and

20. SORTA, in accordance with state law, will partner with the Public Works Integrating Committee to evaluate all infrastructure projects to ensure equitable distribution of funds across Hamilton County; and

21. SORTA reaffirms its commitment to seeking long-term opportunities to enhance access to transit across the entire Greater Cincinnati region by creating direct relationships with peer transit authorities such as TANK, BCRTA and CTC and elected and community leaders across the eight-county region to connect people to jobs, education, and health care in the most efficient and affordable way possible no matter where they are trying to go; and

22. SORTA will maintain its policy that no tax dollars or resources are expended on the operations or maintenance of the Cincinnati streetcar and will work to finalize the transfer of operations to the City of Cincinnati by 12/31/2019; and

23. SORTA will maintain its goal of a competitive farebox recovery rate and implement a fare structure that ensures that riders throughout Hamilton County pay a single fare and eliminate transfer costs, all while also working with the community to implement a Transportation Empowerment Fund to support low-income riders, which is funded with \$500,000 per year in the Reinventing Metro plan; and

24. SORTA will continue to expand its bus shelter and bus bench program to ensure that riding Metro is safe and convenient to the growing number of riders we will serve in the future; and

25. SORTA will continue to work with mobility partners to drive integration of transit services with all modes of transportation, recognizing that the future of transportation is tech-enabled, shared, multi-modal, and above all, convenient for customers!

MOVED BY: Mary Miller

SECOND BY: Robert Harris

VOTE Aye: Ms. Black, Mr. Brown, Mr. Cull, Mr. Ethridge, Mr. Hinton, Mr. Hoffmeister, Mr. Keesee, Mr. McLinden, Ms. Robinson, and Ms. Wyenandt

Nay: Allen Freeman

Abstain: None

ABSENT AT
THE TIME: None

APPROVED: September 30th, 2019