



Written Statement of

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before the

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2012-13 Executive Budget Proposal:

Topic "Transportation"

January 26, 2012

Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority
1372 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609

Bill Carpenter, CEO RGRTA
January 26, 2012
Testimony re: RGRTA STOA Funding – 1

Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell and members of the Committee, my name is Bill Carpenter and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA), the transit provider for Monroe, Genesee, Livingston, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, and Wyoming counties in Western New York.

It is my pleasure to be here today to share with you, on behalf of the Board of Commissioners and the 832 employees of RGRTA, our story of success and our focused vision for the future. This is our eighth consecutive year of increased ridership. Year to date, ridership across our seven county region is up nearly four percent. The national average is one percent.

Thanks to Governor Cuomo and Lt. Governor Duffy for their hard work on the Executive Budget. We are grateful for 6.9 percent increase in State Mass Transportation Operating Assistance, which will allow us to again deliver a balanced budget—our 14th consecutive. This funding also enables us to keep our fare at that affordable one buck a ride. This dollar fare is so critical to our customers – and to our community. Affordable transportation is a one of the key components of a strong economy; a dual benefit for both employees and employers that keeps our economy moving.

Our success as a public transportation provider is rooted in a disciplined private sector mindset that is embraced by all levels of our organization.

Bill Carpenter, CEO RGRTA
January 26, 2012
Testimony re: RGRTA STOA Funding – 2

This model has paved the way for our some good news from RGRTA. In addition to our increased ridership and strong financial position, we are managing capital investment projects of \$100 million to prepare facilities for the next generation of transit users. These projects include development of a new transit center in the heart of downtown Rochester. For the first time in Rochester's long history of public transit, customers will be sheltered in a temperate environment while waiting for a bus.

Our campus renovation project, now under way, is updating a tired, 40-year-old facility that, once completed, will greatly benefit our employees as well as the residential and business neighborhood surrounding our Main Street location. A third project called College Town, involves collaboration with Rochester's largest employer – the University of Rochester – and a private real estate developer. Together, we hope to ~~create a walkable village atmosphere at the fringe of the U of R Medical Center where a~~ satellite transit center will be developed. The College Town transit center will provide great convenience to those who work at the U of R, to college students who want to explore the community, as well as to the individuals receiving care at the medical center and the family members who visit them. Combined, these projects represent growth for our community and creation of hundreds of construction related jobs.

Bill Carpenter, CEO RGRTA
January 26, 2012
Testimony re: RGRTA STOA Funding – 3

We are introducing innovative transit tools to improve the customer's experience and expectations, including real time bus arrival signage at our busiest bus stops and a text message service that tells customers on their cell phones when the next three buses will arrive. GPS technology has been harnessed to connect our buses, our dispatch operations and our customers. With this technology, our customers have the reassuring peace of mind to know in real time – not traditional scheduled times – exactly when their bus is due.

Behind the scenes at RGRTA we've worked very hard to be lean and keep expenses down. Over the past three years, we've limited expense growth to a total of 1.7 percent. This is especially significant given the increased costs of diesel fuel alone. Since 2009, diesel fuel has jumped from \$1.46 per gallon in 2009 to as high as \$3.43 per gallon – a 135 percent increase.

I'm certainly proud to be able to cite some of our accomplishments, and the women and men of RGRTA are proud to be a part of an organization that is recognized nationally as an industry leader. However, we are ALWAYS cognizant that we must work within our financial means, and that by virtue of our public service status, our resources are limited. We are grateful for the 2012-13 STOA appropriation, particularly in light of the impacts posed by rising diesel fuel costs and the increased demands we are experiencing for our service.

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January 26, 2012
Testimony re: RGRTA STOA Funding – 4

In many ways, RGRTA is much like the transit dependent customers we serve. Take Nick Shippers, a 20-something resident of the City of Rochester and owner of Moxie, a web design and development business. A few years ago, when Nick made the decision to follow his dream of launching a business, Nick made the tough decision to sell his personal automobile for the capital required for start-up costs. Nick takes a 15-minute bus ride from his home in a section of the city known as the South Wedge to his office in the Cascade District. Today, two years later, Nick's company is successful. In fact, he employs a team of four, and the company is getting ready to launch a new branding campaign! And Nick is still an automobile-free City resident.

Like Nick, we are challenged every day to make tough decisions so we can make the most of our limited dollars. And we are not alone. Governor Cuomo has championed the "do more with less" message and all of us in New York State's public service sector are responding.

We applaud initiatives included in the Executive Budget that provide opportunities for joint purchasing amongst the Transportation Authorities. Learning from each other, sharing best practice, maximizing purchasing power all improve the value our customers and the taxpayers receive from their Transportation Authority

Bill Carpenter, CEO RGRTA

January 26, 2012

Testimony re: RGRTA STOA Funding – 5

At present we are working toward our bright future and have outlined three main areas of focus to help us get to this destination. They are:

One – To Modernize Our Infrastructure. We are doing this with the development of the downtown transit center, our campus renovation, College Town and improvements to our regional operations.

Two – To Develop Community Partnerships. This work involves engaging our employees, neighborhood, community stakeholders and leaders in the State and Federal delegation in partnerships that will be mutually beneficial.

Three – To Introduce New Products. Our goal is to maintain the “Bus for a Buck” as long as possible while expanding our customer base with the introduction of innovative products that allow us to remain financially sustainable.

Our vision and our constant quest for improvement have brought us here today to express our gratitude. We are thankful for the STOA funding awarded to us, and you have our promise that this and any other funding granted to RGRTA will be spent with the most deliberate and purposeful care.