

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

**September 17, 2020**

The Board of Directors External Committee meeting was called to order, at 10:01 a.m. on Thursday, September 17, 2020, via WebEx, Atlanta, Georgia.

**Board Members Present**

Robert Ashe **(Chair)**  
William Floyd  
Roderick Frierson  
Jerry Griffin  
Freda Hardage  
Alicia Ivey  
John Pond  
Rita Scott  
W. Thomas Worthy

**Staff Members Present**

Jeffrey Parker  
Rhonda Allen  
Luz Borrero  
Kevin Hurley  
Elizabeth O'Neill  
David Springstead  
Gena Major  
Virgil Fludd  
Lyle Harris  
Adam Shumaker

Other staff members in attendance: Dean Mallis, Stephany Fisher, Erica Pines, Kenya Hammond, Kirk Talbott, Tyrene Huff and Marie Peters

\* \* \*

**1. Approval of July 23, 2020, External Relations Committee Meeting Minutes**

On a motion by Ms. Hardage, seconded by Ms. Ivey, the minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 9 to 0 with 9 members present.

**2. Briefing – MARTA HOPE Homeless Outreach Pilot Project**

---

The Board received an update on the following:

- History and Background
  - Transit systems designed to move individuals to and from their destinations
  - Transit systems have become a haven for the unsheltered
  - Unsheltered individuals on MARTA's transit system is causing customers to be concerned about safety/security
  - Metro Atlanta's lack of affordable housing, fraying social safety net and COVID-19 compounding problems for vulnerable and at-risk populations

- MARTA’s leadership recognized the urgency in addressing homelessness
- Facing an Industry-wide Challenge
  - A survey done in 2016 showed that all major transit systems are facing homelessness on their systems
- Learning Curve to Better Solutions
  - Some of the learning curves that transit agencies have gone through to develop solutions:
    - Not our problem
    - Riders are unhappy – do something
    - Enforcement
    - Partnership and Enforcement
- Evolution & Collaboration
  - MARTA is working with HOPE Atlanta, Gateway Center, and Regional Commission on homelessness
  - Developed a one-year pilot program
    - MARTA HOPE – that focuses on direct engagement at MARTA locations commonly frequented by unsheltered persons
- How MARTA Hope Works
  - Working in pairs, the MARTA HOPE Teams crisscrossing the transit system to connect with the unsheltered
  - As part of the agreement, the teams expect to conduct a minimum of 100 “unduplicated” engagements monthly
- Early Progress
  - MARTA signed a contract with HOPE Atlanta (Effective August 10, 2020) – active outreach underway
  - Within the first two weeks, 51 engagements, 11 people connected to temporary housing
- Unsheltered in Atlanta – The total amount of unsheltered and sheltered homeless in Atlanta for the current year is 3240
- City of Atlanta Unsheltered Survey 2020 – showed contributing factors that cause homelessness:
  - Serious mental illness, substance abuse disorder, HIV/AIDS and fleeing domestic violence
- MARTA HOPE Team Next Steps
  - Coordinate with local jurisdictions on station-specific action plans
  - Generate communications materials to inform and engage customers and employees.
  - Continue to evaluate the project performance for the possibility to expand

### **Briefing – MARTA Heroes Video Series**

---

The Board received an update on the following:

- Original Concept
  - Presented MARTA’s workforce in an authentic way to customers
  - Improve morale, retention and recruitment
- Before the Pandemic

- Some stories were documented but not released to the public
- Emphasized work that improves customer experience
- Launching During COVID-19
  - Customers began asking if MARTA is safe and clean to travel during the pandemic
  - The pandemic was an excellent time to launch the series - MARTA Heroes
- COVID Cleaning
  - Showed how MARTA focus on keeping customers safe
  - Communicated MARTA's response to the public regularly
- Heroes
  - MARTA heroes videos featured stories of frontline workers working to keep customers safe
- Capital Improvements
  - Explained what MARTA is working to improve customer experience
  - Rail car life expansion
  - Rebuilding MARTA tracks
- Communicating About Service
  - Explain why we perform single track work
  - Showed the long-term benefit from performing track work
- Strategy
  - Continue to communicate about safety
  - Respond to customers significance concerns
- Social Media Response
  - Videos are great tools for responding to customers' concerns
- Completed Topics
  - COVID Response
    - Station & bus, breeze ticket machine cleaning and mask distribution
  - Capital improvements
    - Track work and rail car life expansion
  - recruitment efforts
- Future Topics
  - New COVID Safety measures
    - Installing air filters and mask dispensers
  - Capital improvements
    - New bus shelter construction, AVIS installation, elevator & escalator rehabilitation, station rehabilitation and corridors expansion
  - Initiatives to improve customer experience
    - Community policing and MARTA Hope outreach to unsheltered individuals

### 3. **Other Matters**

---

None

**Adjournment**

---

The meeting adjourned at 10:43 a.m.