

1.0 Purpose

This plan documents the public involvement process and procedures of the Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA). If requested, a Spanish translation of this plan will be provided. Those who are blind or have low vision may request a large type format or braille version of the plan. Additionally, the plan is available on the RGRTA website at www.myRTS.com.

2.0 RGRTA's Current Business Profile

RGRTA is comprised of nine subsidiary transportation service companies, the largest of which is Regional Transit Service. One of these subsidiaries, RTS Access, provides comparable complementary paratransit service in Monroe County.

| Ridership | Service Area Pop. | RTS Monroe Employees | Fleet Sizes | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|---|
| Total 15,490,200 RTS (14,441,143) | 1,185,940 Total RTS (747,642) | 610 Total | 396 Total | RTS (216) RTS Genesee (12) RTS Access (53) RTS Livingston (19) RTS Ontario (25) RTS Orleans (6) RTS Seneca (8) RTS Wyoming (7) RTS Wayne (42) |

3.0 Language Assistance

Data gathered by our paid market research consultant has indicated that bi-lingual customers of our largest subsidiary, Regional Transit Service (RTS), are not experiencing difficulty using our system, communicating with our staff, or reading our schedules and informational materials used to guide and inform our customers. Nonetheless, RGRTA acknowledges that, with a ridership of over 15 million and a service area population of 1,185,940, the likelihood of limited English proficient customers certainly exists. This Public Participation Plan was created to encourage community involvement while meeting needs for language assistance for Limited English Proficient customers.

4.0 American's with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 encourages the involvement of people with disabilities in the development and improvement of transportation and paratransit services. In accordance with ADA guidelines, all meetings conducted by RGRTA take place in locations that are accessible to persons with mobility limitations.

When necessary to ensure effective communication, auxiliary aids and services are furnished to allow a person with a disability to participate, unless an undue burden or fundamental alteration would result. "Auxiliary aids" include such services or devices as qualified interpreters, assistive listening headsets, television captioning, and decoders, telecommunication devices for deaf persons (TDDs), videotext displays, readers taped text, embossed braille materials, and large print materials. RGRTA public meeting notices specify that special accommodations will be provided upon request.

5.0 Public Participation

The vision of RGRTA is to be the innovative mobility choice. To achieve this vision, it is incumbent upon the Authority to provide an affordable and accessible, high quality transportation service to the constituents of its service area. Essential to creating transportation service that meets these fundamental transportation needs is an open, responsible organization that provides clear and timely messaging about services, is transparent in process, and encourages input through an inclusive involvement process. This open communication and involvement is expressed unequivocally to all customers as well as to community leaders and transit

stakeholders from the business, social services, and institutional sectors.

To ensure that citizen input occurs on a regular basis, public meetings are scheduled routinely and in the event of special projects. The advent of new technologies has afforded RGRTA the opportunity to interact with and seek involvement from members of its service area more broadly than in the past. Social media, texting, and email are invaluable tools for soliciting input about the needs and desires of the community, thereby allowing the Authority to gather public input to tailor programs and initiatives to serve the citizens in the area.

5.1. Social Media, Email and Text Outreach

RGRTA uses social media, text messages, and email newsletters to interact with individuals, groups, businesses, and strategic partners to improve customer satisfaction. Social media and direct email communication is used as a method of public participation as well as information sharing and gathering.

5.2. Public Website

RGRTA provides transparency into the organization through the posting of minutes and other governance related documents on its website (www.myRTS.com). The website is also utilized for customer outreach and includes an interactive route planner, a “Special Projects and Route Planning” section and comment submission capabilities.

The website provides basic information about RGRTA, including the most up to date information regarding fares, schedules, events, programs, and news. All public workshops, information meetings, and hearings are advertised on the RGRTA website. The website is also used as a medium in which customers and the public can provide comments during a study.

5.3. Digital & Newspaper Advertisements, and News Releases

To solicit participation, these media are used to advertise changes in fares and service, as well as the meetings and hearings associated with such changes. These mediums are also used to advertise and disseminate information about RGRTA that at times may be strictly informational only and may not require public participation.

5.4. Meetings

Public information meetings are valuable for offering information, gathering community input, raising community awareness, and for developing trust and a sense of partnership with the community. For RGRTA, public information meetings are held in the following formats:

5.4.A. Neighborhood Meetings

These meetings are intended to offer information and gather input from residents living directly around the RGRTA campus in the City of Rochester. The Authority has fostered a strong relationship with the Beechwood Neighborhood Coalition, the North East Main Neighbors United, and the East Main Street Business Association.

RGRTA often provides slides and image boards to illustrate topics of discussion. Participants are encouraged to ask questions of RGRTA staff members in attendance. Questions are answered during the meeting or, when needed, in-depth answers are provided as a follow up to the meeting. All customer and community feedback are entered into our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool.

Neighborhood meetings are advertised by the neighborhood association via email to its membership as well as on its website. RGRTA also mentions its attendance at neighborhood meetings on its social media outlets.

5.4.B. Public Meetings

Notices for public meetings are advertised on the RGRTA website, and via other social media outlets, as well as

in buses, on bus shelters and community bulletin board locations in the service area where the meeting is scheduled to take place. Targeted customers may be sent an email, text, or direct mail communication regarding information meetings thought to be of particular interest to them. For example, a meeting seeking to provide information to and receive input from the paratransit community would be promoted by sending email or direct mail communication to all registered paratransit customers in addition to the general postings in the community and on the Authority website and Facebook and Twitter page.

1. PUBLIC LISTENING/INFORMATION SESSIONS

The sessions are held at handicap accessible facilities at varying times during the day to accommodate the schedules of those interested in attending. Meetings are facilitated by members of the RGRTA Service Planning Department along with staff from the Communications & Marketing Department and other relevant staff members as appropriate for the issue at hand. Public Information Sessions typically include an American Sign Language Interpreter. If attendees request the presence of one or more language interpreters, or request other auxiliary aids, those are provided as well.

2. PUBLIC MEETING PRESENTING DRAFT ALTERNATIVES

As routes are revised, customer input is collected and incorporated where possible. A public meeting is held for presenting draft route adjustment alternatives. These meetings are held at an accessible facility. Public meetings presenting draft Alternatives are facilitated by members of the RGRTA Service Planning Department along with staff from the Communications & Marketing and Customer Service Departments and other relevant staff members as appropriate for the issue at hand.

3. PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OF FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

If a recommended route adjustment does not require a public hearing, final recommendations are posted on RGRTA's website along with a timetable for implementation.

5.4.C. Public Hearings

If a formal public hearing is required, a presentation will be made that provides information about the need and purpose of the proposal being presented.

Members of the public are invited to register to speak at the hearing or to submit written comments. The presentation will also be posted on the Authority's website and the public will be able to submit written comment for at least 3 days following the hearing.

Basic questions regarding the proposal may be addressed during the hearing at the discretion of the presenter; however, detailed questions will be answered in writing and posted on the Authority's website within a reasonable amount of time after the close of the public comment period. These questions and answers will be made a part of the official transcript of the proceeding. Public hearings are facilitated by staff from the Communications & Marketing Department along with members of the Service Planning Department, other relevant staff and a member, or members, of the Executive Management Team.

These meetings are advertised as public hearing notices in the local daily newspaper, the *Democrat and Chronicle*, as well as on the RGRTA website, via social media posts, signage on buses, news releases issued to local media outlets, and invitations to customers and special groups. When prudent, paid public hearing notices will also run in the community newspapers prevalent to the affected town or village. Paid advertisements include contact information about the availability of language assistance.

All attendees are asked to register their attendance regardless of whether they have asked to speak. RGRTA will provide all attendees with a comment card for their use. Public hearings are recorded by a stenographer so that the meeting, along with all written commentary, questions, and answers are recorded and made a part of the public record. The entire record of the hearing is presented to the RGRTA Board of Commissioners before a decision is made on the proposal.

RGRTA will provide a report of all public comments received, RGRTA's responses to the comments, and any recommended changes in the proposal because of public comment to the Board of Commissioners. The report will be posted to the website. The Board of Commissioners may authorize the implementation of the changes or may direct other action.

5.4.D. Open House – RTS/Paratransit

These meetings are intended to offer information and gather input from customers and community stakeholders about RTS service. They are held on a quarterly basis in various accessible locations around the RTS service area and are typically facilitated by members of the Communications & Marketing Department, the Customer Service Department, and a member or members of the Executive Management and Leadership Teams. Some RTS Open Houses have a scheduled topic for discussion that is publicized before the meeting and others are conducted as an open forum to address any issues that members of the public bring forth. RGRTA will track the customer feedback received during the open houses in our Customer Relationship Management System and customers are contacted, if they indicate they would like a follow up regarding their concern or question within 1 week after the open house is held. Future consideration may be given to host these "open forum" meetings virtually in an on-line chat format to allow even greater public participation.

5.4.E. Informal Community Meetings

These meetings are held at the request of specific community groups who take on the responsibility of advertising the meeting and inviting the participants. RGRTA personnel make every effort to provide complete, accurate, and timely information at these opportunities. Questions asked and concerns raised that cannot be resolved at the meeting will be resolved afterward and the resolution communicated to those in attendance, either in written form by the project manager or at a follow-up meeting. Meeting organizers are encouraged to inform RGRTA meeting planners of the need for language assistance service prior to the meeting so that arrangements can be made. Some of the meetings of this nature are held to gain public input, while others are organized to provide instruction on how to ride the bus.

5.5. Regional Customers

In addition to RTS and RTS Access, RGRTA is comprised of seven regional transportation subsidiaries. They are RTS Genesee, RTS Livingston, RTS Ontario, RTS Orleans, RTS Seneca, RTS Wayne, and RTS Wyoming. RGRTA provides information to and seeks commentary from customers residing in the communities serviced by these transit subsidiaries utilizing the same methods employed by RTS. In addition, regional bus schedules printed in Spanish (paper and electronic format) are made available in those regions with a high Hispanic population, as are bus shelter schedule information posters. A "How to Enjoy the Ride Guide" (paper format) is also distributed by the regional subsidiaries.

6.0 Equity Impact or Fare Changes

RGRTA undertakes public participation and outreach process for

4. Major service changes determined to have disparate impact; or
5. Major service changes determined to have disproportionate burden; or
6. Fare changes.

This process includes public outreach, solicitation of public comment, and may include public hearing(s).

RGRTA will translate materials into, and provide translation services for, the language of any LEP language group as specified in the Language Assistance Plan.

Special promotional fares are not included in the requirements of this section.

6.1. Public Outreach

RGRTA posts information and accepts comments regarding the proposed changes in person (written or verbal), on its website, and via the USPS mail. RGRTA will:

- a. Hold multiple public information meetings in affected communities;
- b. Hold stakeholder group meetings; and
- c. Present changes to elected government officials.

RGRTA will consider the population likely to be affected and the resources available to determine how best to enhance participation by affected minority, low-income, and/or LEP persons. The purpose of these efforts is to include minority, low-income, and LEP populations in the planning stages.

6.2. Soliciting of Public Comment

RGRTA will disseminate information, solicit public comment, and respond to public comment on transit service and fare changes to the extent reasonable and practical.

Fare changes or major service changes are submitted to the RGRTA Board of Commissioners upon an initial round of public discussion.

6.3. Public Hearing

Anytime RGRTA conducts a public hearing, the RGRTA Board of Commissioners will authorize formal solicitation of public commentary. RGRTA will conduct public hearings for situations including, but not limited to, a major service change found to have either a disparate impact or a disproportionate burden, or a proposed fare change.

RGRTA will publish a notice of the proposed change(s) in newspapers of general circulation and, if applicable, in newspapers oriented to the specific groups or communities affected and in buses. Such published notices will include the date, time, and location of any public hearings.

Not sooner than 30 days after the notices are published and posted at least one public hearing shall be held.

RGRTA will provide a report of all public comments received, RGRTA's responses to the comments, and any recommended changes in the proposal because of public comment to the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners may authorize the implementation of the changes or may direct other action. Final public notice of major changes in service or any changes in the fare structure will be given via the methods stated above.

7.0 Proposed Minor Route/Schedule Changes or Route Overhaul Projects

7.1. Route Overhaul Projects

RGRTA's Service Planning Department will hold two or three Public Listening/Information Sessions to get initial input from customers about the route. Communications & Marketing will notify the media about the sessions and publicize the sessions through social media, on buses, email and text messages. Communications & Marketing solicits public input through all its communication channels: social media, online, phone, and in person.

Then, the Service Planning Department will hold two to three Public Meetings Presenting Draft Alternatives to show proposals and get feedback. Finalized route overhaul changes are posted on the website and communication through the Communications & Marketing Department during regular quarterly schedule change communications.

7.2. Minor Route and Schedule changes

Except when impossible because of an emergency condition, advance notice of not less than two weeks will be given to the affected public of minor route and schedule changes. Methods of providing such notice include but are not limited to: distribution of revised timetables, handouts, posted notices and/or media releases. In addition, one month's advance notice of any permanent route change will be provided to the elected officials representing any affected local government entity.

8.0 Additional Participation Tools

8.1. Language Line

In order to be responsive to the language needs of its constituency, RGRTA has established a Language Line account, which provides the Authority with reliable and swift access to interpreter services in more than 100 languages.

8.2. Spanish Bus Schedules

All RTS Route schedules are complemented with Spanish language translations, when requested by customers.

8.3. Comment Cards

Comment Cards are used to solicit customer input on specific complaints, suggestions, compliments, and questions. The feedback is tracked within the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

8.4. TTY

The RGRTA Customer Service Department provides a TTY line for customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

8.5. braille

RGRTA utilizes a braille translation service for customers who require braille transcription files. These are provided upon request.

8.6. Large Print Brochures / myRTS.com Font Size & Screen Reader

Large print format is available upon request for materials. The www.myRTS.com font size can be enlarged and is compatible with online screen readers to assist customers with low-vision or vision loss.