



Columbus Consolidated Government

Georgia's First Consolidated Government

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Audit of METRA September 10, 2019

AUDIT AUTHORIZATION

An audit of METRA was requested by previous City Councilor, Mayor Skip Henderson and current City Councilor Walker Garrett; it was authorized by the City Council on August 28, 2018.

Background

METRA provides transportation services to the Columbus area with 10 fixed routes Monday through Saturday. METRA also provides a paratransit service, called Dial-A-Ride, to eligible persons with disabilities who are, because of their disability, unable to board or disembark from an accessible vehicle in METRA's regular bus service.

METRA is also responsible for Parking Management in Uptown, the Citizens Service Center and Lakebottom.

General Audit Process

The audit process began with an entrance conference on September 4, 2018. The Director of METRA, Rosa Evans, and her management team were present.

The audit was comprehensive; routes were observed, employee interviews were conducted both formally and informally. Maintenance of the vehicles, as well as the maintenance of the facilities, were reviewed. Processes and internal controls were reviewed for effectiveness and applicability. Employment issues, including critical vacancies, employee morale and management issues were addressed.

Based on the audit conducted, it is recommended that action be taken to stabilize the operation.

Expanding routes, longer hours of operation, issues with the current fleet and a change in management has led to the ineffectiveness of the operation.

Auditee Response: *METRA has faced many challenges since July 2016. A major turnover in staff, primarily tenured staff, created some setbacks in the operation of the department. With the turnover, new employees have had to train new employees. With all of the challenges, METRA staff continues to provide service that is effective to the citizens using the service. The mission is still being accomplished. Below are critical positions that became vacant from 2016 to date, but not limited to the following.*

1. *Parking Manager resigned in 2016 – left after 19 years*
2. *(2) Planners resigned in 2016 – left after 35 combined years*
3. *Planning Manager hired July 2016 – left after 1.5 years*
4. *New Transit Manager hired in 2016– dismissed during probationary period*
5. *Maintenance Transit Specialist resigned in 2017 – 28 years of service*
6. *Administrative Secretary (Planning) hired in 2012- transferred to another City department in 2017 – after 5 years of service*
7. *Safety & Training Coordinator resigned in 2017– after 11 years*
8. *Maintenance Tech II resigned in 2018 – after 10 years of service*
9. *Maintenance Tech II resigned in 2018 – after 5 years of service*
10. *Parking Enforcement Officer resigned in 2018 – after 17 years*
11. *Parking Management office closed at RiverCenter in Jan 2018 – Duties transferred to METRA Admin*
12. *Office Manager transferred to another City department in August 2018 – after 12 years*
13. *(2) Transit Supervisors resigned in 2018 – with a combined 7.5 years*
14. *Maintenance Manager retired in May 2019 – after 20 years*
15. *Correctional Detail Officer retired in June 2019– after 15 years*
16. *METRA Parking Manager transferred to another City department in June 2019 – after 1 year*
17. *Two tenured Maintenance Technicians dismissed in August 2019 – with 69 years of combined service (1 Supervisor)*

Maintenance Transit Specialist resigned in August 2019 – after 11 years

Operations

Route Observations

In October 2016, METRA underwent route changes to better serve our citizens.

The first of a series of route changes consisted of the following:

- The number of trips increased from 269 trips daily to 413, an increase of 54%.
- The number of miles increased from 5,198 miles daily to 8,299, an increase of 60%.
- The hours of operation were extended by approximately 35 hours daily.
- On the original schedule, all routes finished at 8:30 p.m.; current routes begin finishing at 8:30 p.m. and continue until 11:20 p.m.

In May 2018, the route schedules were revisited. The number of trips were reduced by 67 trips and the number of miles decreased approximately 1,000 miles.

Auditee Response: *In October 2016, METRA underwent route changes to better serve our citizens. The 2016 route changes consisted of the following:*

- *The number of routes was expanded from 9 to 12, a 33% increase.*
- *The number of weekly revenue trips increased from 913 (161 each weekday and 108 each Saturday) to 1,264 (213 each weekday and 199 each Saturday), an increase of 38%.*
- *The number of weekly revenue miles increased from approximately 17,439 (3,160 each weekday and 1,639 each Saturday) to 24,978 (4,210 each weekday and 3,928 each Saturday), an increase of 43%.*
- *The number of weekly revenue hours increased from 1,217 (215 each weekday and 142 each Saturday) to 1,850 (312 each weekday and 290 each Saturday), an increase of 52%.*
- *Prior to the service changes, routes went out of service between 6:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.; the majority of the new routes went out of service at either 10:50 p.m. or 11:20 p.m., with only two routes going out of service earlier (7:30 p.m. and 9:50 p.m.)*

In May 2018, the service was revisited to “right-size” the service to match lower than anticipated ridership demands. The 2018 route changes consisted of the following:

- *The number of routes was reduced from 12 to 10, a 17% decrease.*
- *The number of weekly revenue trips was reduced to 1,078 (183 each weekday and 163 each Saturday), a decrease of 15%.*
- *The number of weekly revenue miles was reduced to 22,745 (3,858 each weekday and 3,455 each Saturday), a decrease of 9%.*
- *The number of weekly revenue hours was reduced to 1,603 (272 each weekday and 243 each Saturday), a decrease of 13%.*
- *After the service changes, the majority of the new routes now go out of service between 10:20 and 11:20 p.m., with three routes going out of service earlier (between 8:20 p.m. and 9:50 p.m.)*

In 2017, authorized personnel at METRA increased: bus operators +11, mechanics +1.

Auditee Response: *There were no additions or reductions in staff positions in 2017. In 2016, (16) FR Bus Operators, (4) DAR Bus Operators, (1) Maintenance Tech II, (1) FR Transit Supervisor, (1) Principle Transit Planning Manager and (1) Detail Officer were added to METRA's department, primarily as a result of TSPLOST.*

Audit Test: Route Observations

Of the 183 weekday trips provided by METRA daily, we observed 88 (approximately 50%). Riding the trips allowed us to observe the following: 1) vehicle condition, 2) driver training and competency, 3) total number of passengers per trip and 4) maximum number of passengers occupying the vehicle at one time.

Audit Findings: Route Observations

Bus rules state that there is no food, drinking or smoking allowed on the buses and headphones must be used for audio devices. Because these rules are upheld, the buses are very clean and the ride with other passengers is pleasant and respectful. In addition, each night, Community Service Workers clean each vehicle inside and out.

Driver's conduct was observed and found to be well above average. Passengers were greeted as they entered and exited buses. Drivers were also responsible for helping slower moving passengers on and off of the buses in a safe manner as well as helping passengers in wheelchairs. Several times drivers had to enforce the bus rules or address unruly passengers; this was found to be done in a firm, friendly and professional manner.

In the State of Georgia, anyone driving a vehicle which transports sixteen (16) or more passengers, including the driver, must maintain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with a "Passenger" endorsement. According to the Federal Transit Administration, the rule states fifteen (15) passengers, including the driver. A driver's license review was performed to ensure that all drivers met the qualifications. Of the 61 licenses reviewed, nine (9) had not completely met the requirements but were either Dial-A-Ride drivers which did not require the certifications or were in the process of obtaining them.

Auditee Response: *Bus Operators must meet certain CDL license qualifications before an interview is conducted. (1). They must possess a CDL Class B License with a Passenger Permit. (2). At the conclusion of a four-week training with METRA's Safety & Training Coordinator, they must then pass a road test and bus pretrip inspection with the City's Third-Party Safety & Training Officer and the certified Department of Transportation Tester.*

On average, there were approximately 125 passengers *observed* daily per route. This average excludes routes 3, St. Mary's Road (258), route 4, Ft. Benning Road (286) and route 7, Columbus South (180).

Those routes had significantly higher passengers; an average of 241 passengers *observed* per day. A total of 1,600 passengers traveled with METRA during our observations.

The average number of passengers at any one time is 10. Of all trips observed, route 3, St. Mary's had one trip that at one time reached 32 passengers. That trip was the 6:30 a.m. route on October 18, 2018 coming in to the transfer center.

All routes have consistent ridership but there are "legs" of several routes that are not supported by citizens. See pages 33 – 36.

- Route 3 (St. Mary's Rd/Buena Vista Rd/Schatulga Rd) travels north on Schatulga Rd. to Corporate Ridge Parkway.
 - This route was observed 9 times at various hours throughout the day. There was an average of 9 passengers entering and departing the vehicle on this leg which is approximately 6.2 miles in length (112 miles daily). After 8:30 p.m., there was no one entering or departing the vehicle. It appears that this leg may not be needed after the 8:30 p.m. route.

Auditee Response: *While the ridership is not heavy, there is steady ridership to the East Industrial portion of Columbus. Trips departing METRA's Transfer Center after 8:30 p.m. have low ridership on all routes.*

- Route 4 (Ft. Benning) travels Torch Hill Rd to Custer Rd.
 - This route was observed 10 times at various hours throughout the day. There was an average of 2 passengers entering and departing the vehicle on this leg which is approximately 7.5 miles in length (128 miles daily).

Auditee Response: *Route 4 only makes 2 trips each day, Monday-Saturday, into Ft. Benning. Ridership to and from Ft. Benning was determined to be low. METRA reduced trips to the military installation Monday-Friday prior to the Transit Assessment in 2016. Otherwise, Route 4 ridership is steady. METRA continues to provide service to Ft. Benning. METRA's Route 4 extends out South Lumpkin Rd to Custer Rd. Service on this portion of the route is for those needing to get closer to Ft. Benning and to persons visiting Westville and the National Infantry Museum.*

- Route 6 (Columbus State/Milgen Rd) travels to the Gateway Walmart and heads west to Schomburg Rd.
 - This route was observed 8 times at various hours throughout the day. There was an average of 1 passenger entering and departing the vehicle on this leg which is approximately 6.5 miles in length (91 miles daily).

Auditee Response: Route 6 was extended to Gateway Walmart as a result of the 2016 Transit Assessment. Due to low ridership on Route 11, traveling Warm Springs Rd., Miller Rd, Weems, Rd to Columbus, Park Crossing, this route was discontinued. However, the Transit Study in May 2018 combined a portion of Route 11 (Flatrock Rd. and Warm Springs Rd.) to Route 6 to continue service to the northeast in the Midland area. While the ridership on Route 6 is still low, service is provided Monday-Saturday from 5:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m. The last lineup for Route 6 is at 6:30 p.m. with the bus going out of service at 8:30 p.m.

- Route 10 (Airport Thruway/Veterans Parkway) travels to the Airport Walmart and heads north on Veterans Parkway to the Social Security Administration.
 - This route was observed 7 times at various hours throughout the day. There was an average of 3 passengers entering and departing the vehicle on this leg which is approximately 6.5 miles in length (104 daily).

Auditee Response: Because of heavy ridership along Hamilton Rd, Beallwood community and Veterans Parkway, some portions of Route 10 travel the same streets as the Route 9. Route 10 services Airport Thruway, Columbus Park Crossing, and the Social Security Office while Route 9 services Bradley Park Dr., Columbus Park Crossing, Moon Rd, and the northern end of Veterans Pkwy. Many passenger trips that originate in the east and south have destinations located on Route 9 & 10.

Routes observed with a start time of 9:00 p.m. or later (6 of 10) had a total of 49 passengers. The maximum passengers at one time averaged 5 per trip.

Auditee Response: Agree. Trips departing the Transfer Center after 8:30 p.m. carries low ridership.

Recommendations: Route Observations

The capacity of our current fleet exceeds the number of passengers being transported at one time. It is recommended that our fleet integrate smaller vehicles with seating capacities less than 32. As you will see further in the report, vehicle costs are significant and reducing vehicle size would greatly improve cash availability for operating expenses and maintenance.

Auditee Response: Opposed to using 30-32 seat vehicles, METRA currently uses its Trolley buses with 23 seating capacity on low ridership routes i.e. 1, 6, & 12 and sometimes 9 & 10. It is not a transit practice to stockpile smaller buses for the purpose of switching out larger buses, nor is switching to a smaller vehicle guaranteed handle the load capacity. There may be 15 or more passengers on one trip and under 10 on the next. The ridership can fluctuate. Transit systems use a general practice of keeping the same vehicle assigned daily on the route & block to track all miles and hours, except in cases of a Road call when a bus has to be replaced. While standing is allowed on public transit when full to capacity, it is not

expected to be the norm. Downsizing to a smaller fleet creates a liability to transit system with passenger falls and fraudulent claims. In addition, smaller buses do not withstand the capacity load of mobility devices, miles, and wear and tear as a larger more durable vehicle with a heavier weight and longer life span. Smaller buses are 5, 7 and 10 years; whereas, larger more durable buses have a life expectancy of 12 years or more. Placing smaller buses on route proven to have low ridership routes and larger buses on high performing routes are recommended.

To help stabilize the operation, it is recommended that the less-traveled routes starting at 8:30 p.m. be temporarily suspended/discontinued as well as some of the less-traveled “legs” during the day (435 mile reduction daily). The lack of ridership suggests a lack of demand.

Auditee Response: *METRA agrees that service after 8:30 p.m. needs to be discontinued across all routes. However, METRA’s Transit Assessment in 2016 quantified adjustments to low ridership routes during certain trips, while increasing service on high performing trips. The Transit Assessment is currently being conducted by the hired consultants. The process will include public comments. Once the process is complete, the results will be provided to Council and the public.*

Although we have addressed less frequented legs, there are some areas that could use enhancements in the future. These would include the airport, driver’s license bureau, Technology Parkway businesses Pratt Whitney and the Trade Center.

Auditee Response: *Other than the Driver’s License Division, there is no data to support service to the locations requested above. In addition, METRA’s Route 4 (Ft. Benning) travels two blocks from the Trade Center, and Route 12 (Veterans Pkwy / Civic Center / Victory Dr., travels 4 blocks from the Trade Center. METRA has for many years had very low ridership to the Trade Center, even when Route 8 (Uptown) travelled Front Ave, directly in front of the Trade Center. Based on the METRA’s Transit Assessment, requests for service to the Driver’s License Division are primarily recommendations from non-transit users or occasional riders. Employment at Pratt & Whitney and the Technology Parkway are higher income jobs. Except in cases of traffic congestion, studies have proven that persons with median to high incomes are generally not transit dependent or frequent riders of public transit.*

Maintenance – Vehicle & Facilities

Vehicle Maintenance

Currently, METRA has 33 fixed route vehicles, of those 17 are **diesel buses**, 7 are **trolleys** and 9 are **hybrids**. There are 14 **Dial-A-Ride** vehicles. The most recent cost for each type of vehicles is as follows: 35’ diesel bus: \$419,719, trolley: \$441,946, hybrids: \$533,265 and Dial-A-Ride: \$115,068. In addition to the purchase price, there are \$38,180 in add-ons which include: security cameras (\$10,206), fareboxes (\$13,850), announcement systems (\$9,024), two-way radios (\$4,100) and bike racks (\$1,000).

Audit Tests: Vehicle Maintenance

In an effort to discern the maintenance issues, the condition and status of the fleet was reviewed. The data in ShopFax, the software that tracks bus maintenance, was accessed. Employee interviews were also conducted with the Fleet Technicians to learn about the fleet's technical aspects.

Audit Findings: Vehicle Maintenance

There are currently 47 vehicles listed in fixed assets as the current fleet, 12 are out of service (25%). The average age of all METRA vehicles *in service* is 5.92 years.

Of the 18 **buses**, 5 are out of service (27%). The out of service vehicles are approximately 14 years old; they are an average of 3 years past their useful life. The life given to these vehicles at their purchase date ranges from 10 to 15 years. The average age of the 13 buses *in service* is 7.71 years.

Of the 7 **trolleys**, 1 is only used for special events and 1 is out of service (14%). The out of service vehicle is 7 years past its useful life. The life given to these vehicles at their purchase date is 10 years. The average age of METRA's 5 trolleys *in service* is 7.30 years.

Auditee Response: *METRA uses any of its Trolleys available for special events. One trolley (96), traditional streetcar trolley, is manufactured with the engine in the front of the vehicle, opposed to the rear. This trolley was used in past years on METRA's Route 8 (Uptown) and primarily for special events. When portions of Uptown were reconstructed to one lane and with Vendors loading & unloading in the street, Trolley 96 could not safely maneuver the street because of the width and extended mirrors. In addition, due to the heat generated in the driver's compartment, the vehicle made it uncomfortable for the Operators to drive for an extended period of time. This vehicle is 14 years old, has low mileage and is now used occasionally on Route.*

The 9 **hybrid** vehicles have an average age of 4.63 years. The life given to these vehicles at their purchase date is 10 to 12 years.

Of the 14 **Dial-A-Ride** vehicles, 6 are out of service (43%). Four of the out of service Dial-A-Ride vehicles have a remaining life from 3 to 7 years. The life given to these vehicles at their purchase date is 10 years (1 has an assigned life of 12 years). The average age of METRA's 8 *in service* Dial-A-Ride vehicles is 4 years.

The 12 out of service vehicles are located on METRA's property. Seven of those vehicles have been out of service for longer than one year (the longest out of service vehicle, #97 trolley, has been out of service over 10 years). Of those seven, 3 have remaining life (1 - .85 yrs, 2 - 7.38 yrs and 3 - 2.81 yrs). Columbus Consolidated Government conducts auctions annually to help operations, such as METRA, dispose of out of service equipment. The last auction was September, 2018; another auction is scheduled for this September.

Auditee Response: METRA currently has 34 Fixed route buses in its fleet. Of the 34, (25) buses are 100% diesel and (9) are a combination of hybrid / diesel. METRA currently has 17 DAR buses.

METRA currently has 51 buses in its fleet. There are 26 buses needed daily for Fixed Route and Dial-A-Ride. METRA has a total of 7 spares for both Fixed Route and DAR, 6 buses are down for major repairs, 7 buses that have reached their useful life span will be auctioned in September, and 5 buses (Disposal pending FTA approval).

The maximum useful life of METRA current fleet is 12 years, with some buses exceeding their useful life by 4-5 years.

The hybrid buses were purchased in 2015 during the implementation of the new. Yes, however; the hybrid buses are 35 ft buses with a useful life of 12 years.

METRA currently has 17 DAR buses. Except when repairs are being made, 8-9 buses are in service daily, and 6 buses are inactive due to major damage or have reached their useful life. 5 of the 17 buses were newly purchased in 2019. A large bus with a 10-year useful life has been used on DAR to accommodate the ridership. This bus is scheduled to be placed in the auction in September 2019.

METRA will be placing 7 buses in the Auction in September 2019.

Because METRA used outside funding for the purchase of METRA vehicles, the stipulations dictate that we must keep vehicles until the end of its life. If a bus becomes disabled and considered out of service prior to the end of its life, insurance paperwork should be filed and insurance proceeds are reimbursed to the funding agency for their portion of any remaining life. Once the vehicle has been disposed of, METRA is free to purchase a replacement vehicle with the appropriate funding. METRA has not, to management's knowledge, filed insurance paperwork for vehicles out of service prior to the end of its life.

Auditee Response: “Early Disposition: FTA Circular 5100, FTA calculates the value of vehicles before the end of their minimum useful life on the basis of a formula using straight-line depreciation. Straight-line depreciation is a term most often used to indicate that personal property has declined in service potential. Removal of an FTA-funded vehicle from revenue service before the end of its minimum useful life, except for reasons of fire, collision, or natural disaster, leave the recipient liable to FTA for the federal share of the vehicle's remaining value. In the case of project equipment or supplies lost or damaged by fire, casualty, or natural disaster, the fair market value must be calculated on the basis of the condition of the equipment or supplies immediately before the fire, casualty, or natural disaster, irrespective of the extent of insurance coverage. Consistent with the policy, the suggested vehicle useful life standards stated above in years refer to time in normal service, not time spent stockpiled or otherwise unavailable for regular transit duty. Please see FTA's Grant Management Requirements Circular 5010.1 for more information on disposition.” This information is based on further recent research.

It should be noted that 10 of 20 (50%) fixed route vehicles reviewed had interior lights that were not illuminated. Eight of the vehicles (40%) have cracked windows and mirrors; in 3 vehicles (15%) the internal electronic/audio signage was not functioning. Frequently, the drivers name plate was not displayed and a review of the buses interior and external cameras found that 11 (of 27 vehicles 41%) were not functioning.

Auditee Response: *Each bus has 6-10 interior fluorescent lights which are repaired on a routine basis. Currently, 4 vehicles have lights needing to be replaced and are on schedule to be repaired. The two front interior lights are intentionally left out or included in specs to have blue lights. These lights are out for safety reasons to decrease the glare to Operator's windshield for better visibility. METRA has within the last 2 years experienced an increase in cracked windows as a result of vandalism. CPD responded to all incidents where objects were thrown, or some type of pellet gun used to damage buses as they traveled along the routes. Approximately 95% of the vandalism is done at night and cannot be seen on the outside bus cameras. Some windows have been replaced from these incidents. The cost to replace a window range from \$700 - \$1,700. Bus mirrors are also replaced routinely. Repairs to internal audio and bus cameras are an ongoing expense. METRA's bus camera system is approximately 10 years old. METRA was approved camera upgrades in its FY20 Budget. Two name plates are issued to Bus Operators upon completion of training. Operators are required to post their nameplate while on duty. METRA has a policy in place to enforce this requirement. New buses will be equipped with nameplate holders by our Maintenance Division.*

Repeated spot checks on the number of buses down found, at any one time, at least 4 buses were down (temporarily out of service due to mechanical problems).

Auditee Response: *This is not uncommon with a fleet of 30 or more buses in the fleet.*

The 9 hybrid buses, purchased between 2013 and 2016, have placed a large strain on the system. The average voltage for a passenger vehicle is 13 volts or above. The average voltage of a standard bus is 28 volts. The hybrid buses have the same 28 volts for the cranking system but also has an additional 600 volts. Each of the hybrid vehicles has 16 battery packs (\$2,500/pack; \$40,000/vehicle) with an expected life of 5 – 7 years. Currently METRA is not certified to work on these 9 vehicles because of the high voltage. Service on these hybrid buses is completed by mechanics located in New York state. Periodically these mechanics make trips to another bus facility needing repair work completed in Anniston, AL. At this time, METRA requests they come to Columbus to service our hybrids. This method has saved thousands of dollars in maintenance costs but has been offset with downtime of the vehicle.

Auditee Response: *METRA maintenance staff are certified to perform routine maintenance on hybrid buses; however, the above-mentioned electrical battery system must be serviced by a technician from the manufacturer. The manufacturer (BAE) travels to METRA to service the battery packs. METRA has*

made trips to Albany for bus repairs but not to Anniston, AL. Cummings Engines, located in Albany, sends a technician at METRA's request periodically to make repairs at our facility.

Between August 2017 and February 2019, bus #1222, a hybrid, traveled only 23,640 miles and was considered "down" from February 2018 until February 2019. This bus was essentially down for 1 year and 6 months. It was purchased in January 2013 (age: 6 years).

As of April 30, 2019, bus #1222 is down again and in need of an engine which costs approximately \$25,000. UPDATE: this vehicle has a rebuilt engine only to now be down to electrical issues.

Auditee Response: *Agree. Bus 1222 was repaired in in May 2019 and placed in service. It is currently down for electrical issues and is currently being repaired by METRA technicians. The electrical problems with bus 1222 are expected to be repaired this month.*

Bus #1304, another hybrid, is currently down and has been since December 2018. METRA is waiting on a "traction motor." This part costs approximately \$57,000. Because of contract negotiations between two vendors (METRA not included) we are getting a "prototype" for free. This bus was purchased in May 2016 (age: 3 years).

Auditee Response: *Agree. The bus has been repaired by the manufacturer at no cost to METRA or the City. Bus 1304 is operating in service daily on the routes.*

Not considering the hybrids, the rest of the *in service* fleet is approximately 7.5 years old; lives on the books is 10 – 15 years. With the age of the fleet and the maintenance issues of the hybrids, the number of "spare" buses, on a daily basis, is at a minimum. When spares are not available, buses go on the road not being completely serviced, hence, METRA's problem with breakdowns.

Auditee Response: *While METRA buses generally last longer, the maximum useful life of METRA buses are 10- 12 years (except smaller Pararansit buses, which are 5-7 years). METRA has experienced a severe shortage of mechanics over the last 1.5 years. Depending on the age and condition of the bus, there are reoccurring maintenance problems. Lastly, METRA recently addressed major personnel problems in the maintenance division that created some of the maintenance issues.*

According to the FTA, the spare bus ratio is defined as the number of spare vehicles divided by the vehicles required for annual maximum service. FTA recommends a 20% spare ratio. METRA needs 18 buses to satisfy the needs of the daily routes. Twenty percent (20%) of 18 is 4 buses. Currently, METRA meets that ratio. A frequently asked question on the FTA website challenges that ratio when hybrids, and their maintenance issues, are a part of the equation.

Auditee Response: *METRA's fixed route service requires 18 buses during peak, and the Paratransit (Dial-A-Ride) requires 8-9 buses daily.*

From FY2013 through May 2019, vehicle maintenance costs have gone from \$375,000 to \$842,000. A 124% increase. The increase is due to the increased mileage of new routes, maintenance issues with the hybrid vehicles, the heavy reliance on older vehicles and the use of outside technicians due to critical vacancies.

Auditee Response: *The use of offsite technicians from Cummings Engines, and Termo-King for HVAC repairs. Additionally, updating the fleet at their midlife cycle which requires an in-frame price, normally around \$20K, would also be a byproduct for the significant cost increase.*

ShopFax

ShopFax houses a detailed profile on all individual vehicles and inventory information. This software is to be used to schedule preventative maintenance, monitor costs and maintenance issues for individual vehicles and track inventory. It is an all-encompassing management tool for fleet management.

After reviewing the information in ShopFax, it was found that the data regarding maintenance on the vehicles was correct; inventory numbers were also found to be in order. Information regarding mileage and downtime proved not to be accurate. During certain times of the month, manual repair orders are kept outside of the system. ShopFax is not being used to manage the fleet.

Auditee Response: *The use of ShopFax as our main inventory program has been effective. The Transit Specialist and technician both work hand in hand and are familiar with the software. The Transit Specialist has since resigned his position, effective August 29, 2019.*

Employee Interviews

Employee interviews stressed the importance of getting the vehicles back on the road. Because of the extended hours of the routes, and the critical vacancies in the Shop, there is not much time to diagnose problems and complete the needed repairs. Shop personnel come in at 12:00 a.m. At 4:00 a.m. buses are being cranked for the routes to begin again. An additional stress comes with the lack of spare buses to call on.

Auditee Response: *Diagnosing vehicle problems during the latter part of the day is a process that the day shift conducts. The problems identified are recorded and briefed to the evening shift supervisor who schedules the buses for the routes. The evening supervisor briefs the midnight supervisor who in turn does the repairs throughout the night. Additionally, the midnight supervisor briefs the day supervisor on tasks (repairs) that weren't completed. Again, a personnel issue was discovered by METRA in August 2019, and 2 employees, including a Supervisor, were dismissed.*

Recommendations: Vehicle Maintenance

The need for Fleet Technicians is becoming a nationwide problem. According to a recent article in the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, AutoNation, the country's largest automotive retailer, is focusing its efforts on the auto mechanic shortage. Because of increasing demands of the profession (i.e. computer diagnostics) and retiring baby boomers, young people are not entering the profession because it is dirty, hands on work and provides uncertain paths for advancement. AutoNation says that it is willing to pay workers to serve as apprentices. It offers opportunities for continuing education, access to state of the art tools and technology that might otherwise be unaffordable and "a clear path with ample opportunity for advancement" for both part time and full time employees.

Addressing the hiring issues in the profession could prove to be beneficial for our community by working with our inmate population. The Mayor's Commission on Reentry could be a starting point for the rehabilitation of inmates involving training and job placement in the shop area after incarceration.

Auditee Response: *The maintenance department over the past three months has hired three new personnel with an average age of 22 years old. As mentioned in the report regarding the critical shortage of technicians, METRA utilized services such as the Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program in identifying soldiers in the separations/retirement process with automotive/mechanical skillsets which would be beneficial while conducting on the job training (OJT) here at METRA. This has resulted in the hiring of two personnel from this service.*

METRA participates in the reentry program for felons through the City's Felons Committee for all positions at METRA.

Although there would be a pay back to our funding agencies, it may prove beneficial to rid METRA of the hybrid vehicles and replace with a more stable vehicle.

Auditee Response: *METRA does not intend to purchase additional hybrid/diesel buses moving forward. However, FTA requires that buses reach their minimum useful life before disposal.*

Facilities Maintenance

The METRA facility on Linwood Blvd. consists of an administrative building, the transfer center, a main shop and a lower shop. A review of the facilities found the following:

Administrative Building and Transfer Center:

Condition at both buildings is in average condition. The exterior maintenance at both buildings is well-above average. There are 4 – 8 inmates maintaining the property and working in the main shop.

Lower Shop:

The lower shop is where the end of day cleanup of the vehicles occurs and fluids are replaced or topped off. Community Service Workers report here to clean the inside and outside of the buses.

Audit Findings: Lower Shop

Safety

There is a mechanic's pit (4' deep) for checking the vehicle's tires air pressure and looking for any problems under the vehicle's carriage. This area is a safety hazard for all workers. The floors are slippery with fluids. Fluid service is on the back of the bus; workers must work on two metal planks that span across the pit. One of the planks is 24" and the other is 12". In 2018, a worker slipped and fell into the pit. He hit his head, received 20 stitches between his bottom lip and chin, and lost six teeth. Another incident in April 2019; while working in haste, a worker had anti-freeze splash and burn him on the face and neck, just missing his eyes.

Auditee Response: *Safety is a major concern. Inmates in the maintenance area clean the bay areas before, during, and after any vehicle maintenance is performed throughout the day. A safety net has been ordered and is currently on hand awaiting installation by Public Works department. The occurrence mentioned above is the only known incident of an employee falling into the pit to this date.*

Equipment

- The vault for dumping daily bus collections is not working; an inconveniently located temporary vault is being used.
- The soap dispenser on the car wash is not working.
- The oil tank is not functioning correctly and sprays oil covering the floor.
- The remote control on the security gates is not working.
- Fueling stations are not secured and the #1 pump's gas nozzle is leaking fuel.
- The intercom system linking the dispatch center and the shop does not work.
- 40% of the lighting is not functioning (this operation begins work at 4:30 p.m. until 12:30 a.m.)

Auditee Response: Vault: *For many years, METRA utilized a money dump system that was effective. Approximately 15 years ago, METRA upgraded to a wall dump system for easier access. The wall system malfunctioned in 2018, and METRA reverted back to using the original system. METRA has been in constant communication with the manufacturer (Genfare) to replace or repair the wall unit. The company sent an upgraded system without realizing that both systems were different. METRA made numerous attempts to install the unit. We noticed that the new equipment had electrical components, requiring a power source. We contacted Genfare to inquire if we received the right equipment. We were informed at that time that our wall dump system was no*

longer manufactured. The City's Facilities Maintenance installed the power source and attempted to wire the unit. They referred us to our IT department to further assist with installation. IT checked the unit and advised that we needed to get the specific cable from the manufacturer. We are in the process of purchasing the wiring from Genfare. The old system requires the technician to enter the vault, as they are accustomed to doing, whereas access to the new system is conveniently located outside the vault. At no time during the dump process are maintenance technicians able to handle money retrieved from the fareboxes. No human hands can touch the money, nor can they see the money throughout the entire dump process by using the old system or the new wall dump system. It has been a challenge trying to get Genfare to assist METRA maintenance with shipping and the installation of the equipment.

- **Soap Dispenser:** The car wash system is more than 30 years old. According to the lower shop maintenance technicians, the soap dispenser stopped working approximately 2 months ago. On Monday, August 19, 2019, the brushes broke and are in need of repair. Buses are soaped and hand washed each night, prior to going through the bus wash. Funding available, METRA will be purchasing new bus wash equipment in FY21.
- **Oil Tank:** The oil tank is fully operational along with all the nozzles for both fuel and oil alike.
- **Remote Control:** The gate system works with the remote or manually. Staff chooses to close the gates either way.
- **Fueling station:** All leaking nozzles at the lower maintenance area have been repaired as July 2019.
- **Intercom System:** Communications between the shop and Transfer Center are conducted by 2-way radio or land line phones. This has always been the process and works best for our operation.
- **Lighting:** METRA replaces lighting routinely when reported by the technicians.

Main Shop

The main shop is where vehicles are serviced during the day; more advanced mechanical work is completed here. This operation runs 24 hours a day.

Auditee Response: The main shop closes at 5:00 p.m. Monday-Saturday and reopens at midnight on Sunday night. There is not a 3rd shift on Friday night for the main shop.

Findings: Main Shop

- The water fountain is not working.
- Over 50% of lightbulbs are not working. This included the main shop's interior and exterior lights, lights illuminating the pits that the mechanics work in and the parking lot.

- Four of the five vehicle lifts are inoperable and must be replaced. Due to their age, repairs are not an option. The floor jack was purchased in 1994 for \$24,000 with a 5 year life (age: 25 years). The 4 platform lifts were purchased in 2003 for a total of \$25,000 with a 10 year life (age: 16 years).

Auditee Response: *Currently, there are two water fountains located in the main maintenance area, one in bay 2 and the other in bay 3 and both are operational. Bay three however has a low stream. Employees have access to an ice machine with no issues or concerns with the low stream fountain.*

- *All the bulbs throughout the main shop have been replaced.*
- *METRA will be purchasing one floor jack in FY20 and 3 additional floor jacks in FY21. Quotes have been received from several Vendors.*

Recommendations: Lower Shop & Main Shop

Any equipment that is not working must be made operational. The fixed asset listing should be continually referenced to monitor all equipment for regular maintenance and to know the life of the equipment. Reviewing that list on a regular basis would help make decisions on whether the equipment should be repaired or replaced.

Auditee Response: *METRA keeps a current fixed asset list. Items are disposed of and repaired as needed on an annual basis. This is a continuous process.*

The safety of the employees working for METRA is of paramount importance. Floors must be routinely monitored for fluid leaks that make the floor slippery. The pits should be covered with protective netting to break falls into the pit. All light bulbs must be functional so that employees may clearly see work being performed as well as where they are walking and where potentials for injury could occur.

Community Service workers should be prohibited from working in the lower shop's garage area.

Auditee Response: *The bus bay areas are **continuously** mopped before, during and after any maintenance activity*

Community Service workers are instrumental in assisting our maintenance technicians with cleaning the fleet and facility. METRA also partners with the City's Juvenile Drug Court. The program provides a safe, secure and beneficial community service work environment for students in the Muscogee County Juvenile Court. This program began with METRA in September 2008.

Technology, Funding, Internal Processes and Controls

Technology: Software

METRA has two software systems, ShopFax and Genfare, in place to help manage the operations.

Findings: ShopFax

ShopFax has the capacity to interface with our financial system which should afford METRA greater efficiencies while performing their tasks. However, personnel struggles with cumbersome processes.

The interface is not set up correctly resulting in added work. Staff must manually change the interface file prior to submission to IT for application into Advantage. Changing an interface file should be a prohibited practice; interfaces from the control system are not to be manually edited.

Once the interface is complete in the Advantage system, METRA personnel must then go into each individual item in Advantage for preparation of payment. To illustrate the volume of work affected, during the month of February, there were 113 invoices entered into ShopFax; the interface file was adjusted and imported into Advantage. Once in Advantage, all 113 invoices must be individually approved. Both ShopFax and Advantage require multiple steps in order to complete the process. This manual processing reduces the advantages gained by using an interface.

Personnel in the maintenance area are diligent about entering repair orders into the system. They also are proficient in their use of handheld devices to scan work orders and parts if retrieved from inventory. Documentation is maintained but redundant. The same information is repeatedly keyed into multiple spreadsheets. When asked about what is really necessary, the response is that they didn't know what needed to be kept or filed so they keep everything.

Internal Audit observed the physical parts inventory of METRA at the end of April 2019. The observation included numerous test counts of inventoried items. The inventory counts were remarkably close to the perpetual inventory record maintained by the system.

METRA has a total of \$233,000 in inventory. There is approximately \$78,000 of obsolete items in METRA's inventory composed of parts not used since January 1, 2008 and items for buses and other vehicles no longer in service by METRA.

Due to a lack of training within the system, there are times during the month when all activity in ShopFax is stopped and manual records are kept by everyone. Once activity is allowed to resume, staff must input all of the manual records.

Downtime for vehicles is not tracked in ShopFax but kept on a manual log in the dispatch office. Mileage for each vehicle is managed outside of ShopFax; the mileage information in the system is not accurate.

After speaking with World Information Services (vendor for ShopFax) it was noted that the software was not being used correctly or to its full capacity.

Recommendations: ShopFax

A lack of training and poor implementation has shop personnel besieged with computer issues and paperwork rather than vehicle maintenance and inventory issues.

The interface needs to be corrected and corresponding accounting issues with Advantage need to be reviewed to see if any efficiencies could be gained between the two systems.

ShopFax needs to be implemented in METRA's dispatch center not just in the maintenance area. All manual logs kept outside of ShopFax (i.e. down vehicles, mileage) need to be integrated within ShopFax. This improvement will involve an additional computer terminal, training of personnel and an additional management module of ShopFax.

It is recommended that METRA auction the old and obsolete inventory in CCG's upcoming auction, September 2019. Afterwards, with whatever is left, we should work with one of our current vendors on a "buy back" program and rid METRA of the remaining equipment. It is also recommended that the inventory program in ShopFax be used to help maintain METRA's inventory levels. Currently, METRA orders parts on an "as needed" basis which results in shipping and delivery costs that could be avoided.

Another alternative for METRA would be to utilize the existing NAPA Auto Parts satellite location. NAPA currently operates in the Public Works Shop. The inventory is owned and managed by NAPA employees. Public Works collaborates with NAPA on an annual basis about what vehicles are being purchased and what equipment is being disposed of to help aid NAPA in having the correct equipment available to us in their inventory. The items in their inventory are not charged to CCG until we make a purchase for a specific need.

Auditee Response:

METRA also uses Routematch scheduling software for its paratransit (Dial-A-Ride) trips.

The ShopFax system shuts down for updates. New Staff will be scheduled to attend Shopfax Training.

Shopfax provides a number of systems as does most software. METRA utilizes these systems most important to our needs. The previous METRA employee who was most familiar with ShopFax resigned in March 2017. This employee had more than 25 years of experience. Her replacement worked beside her for more than 7 years before being transferred into her position. This employee resigned on August

29, 2019. Both employees attended ShopFax training in North Carolina and were knowledgeable of the system. The new employee hired will also attend ShopFax training.

Findings: Genfare

Genfare is a software that, through fareboxes, captures all route information, number of passengers and daily collections from the buses.

A comparison of the revenue amounts generated by Genfare and the actual dollar amounts retrieved from the vault show discrepancies. After speaking with Genfare, it was noted that a 1% variance rate is found to be acceptable. A comparison of reports from October 2018 through March 2019 found 3 months fell below the 1% variance, 3 months showed variances over 1%. There is no process in place to identify or correct the discrepancies.

Auditee Response: *This is not uncommon in transit especially if a bus did not get probed to upload the data. In these instances, the revenue will count towards the day that the bus was probed. An example is when a bus is pulled into the garage for maintenance work and remains in the garage for a period. The Genfare data system does not allow for data to be changed. Operation's Management and Supervisory staff monitors Operator errors from the Genfare data that is provided each day. The revenue and ridership are counted in the report; however, there are discrepancies whenever Operators enter incorrect information into the farebox. Nothing is done differently with our Genfare system than what has occurred in the past.*

Genfare should also be the reference point for all information provided to Connetics Transportation Group for changes to the routes. A review of the reports produced by Genfare reflect route information, specifically trip information, has not been entered into the system. This was explained as being a training issue; the results cause a domino effect; the bus operators do not enter complete route information into the fareboxes therefore the information in Genfare is not accurate information for Connetics. Connetics is being provided with manual logs kept by the bus operators.

Approximately 77% of the drivers are entered into the Genfare system.

Auditee Response: *Manual Surveys and reports generated by Genfare data system are used in conjunction to provide ridership data to the Transit Consultants. Bus Operator manual surveys are used by many transit systems to get stop by stop data. Genfare does not provide this detailed information. METRA has also viewed bus cameras to verify ridership information. Supervisory and management staff have also ridden routes to collect survey information. The Transit consultants verify data if there appears to be discrepancies. Genfare data records the total ridership and revenue, which is used for FTA reporting. Anytime money is deposited into the farebox, the ridership and revenue are counted.*

New Bus Operator information is entered into the Genfare data system, or before being released to drive by themselves. The Planning Transit Specialist enters new hire information into the Genfare data system.

Recommendations: Genfare

There should be two administrators for Genfare; a representative from Operations and a representative from Planning. The administrators should coordinate efforts to insure that the updating and maintaining of all information regarding drivers, vehicles, routes and trips is done timely.

Training on the Genfare system would include understanding the reports generated by the system and how to address the issues.

***Auditee Responses:** Staff roles for Genfare are completely different. Planning handles Genfare revenue and ridership data. Questions from Planning related to the data is forwarded to Operations. While the Operations staff is familiar with some of Genfare, this has always been assigned to the Planning division. With new Planning staff being unfamiliar with Genfare, Operations has provided assistance. Genfare training for Operations, Planning and Maintenance staff is being scheduled. METRA has always provided specialized training for all three divisions.*

Funding

METRA receives funding from Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and a TSPLOST, Transportation Investment Act of 2010 (TIA).

The FTA has apportioned to the Columbus area an average of \$1,836,517 between 2014 through 2018 for Capital and Operating Expenses (**5307**). In 2019, \$3,056,764 was apportioned to METRA. METRA has routinely not applied for the entire amount. This grant requires a 20% match from CCG; GDOT stopped providing matches in FY2016.

During the same period (2014-2018), an average of \$266,941 has been apportioned to the Columbus area from the FTA for Bus and Bus Facilities (**5339**). In 2019, \$489,687 was apportioned to METRA. 2018 was the first time METRA applied for these funds. This grant requires a 20% match from CCG.

GDOT serves as a pass-thru organization for Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) reimbursing planning expenses (**5303**). METRA is currently under contract for \$138,861. These funds serve as the reimbursement for the Transportation Director. This grant requires a 20% match from CCG; GDOT provides a 10% match.

Columbus is also operating with a TSPLOST under a project named TIA (Transportation Investment Act of 2010) from GDOT. TIA reimburses METRA 100%. The current available balance is: \$16,319,587.

Auditee Response: 5307: *The City's matches 20% and FTA pays 80%. 5339:* *In FY19, METRA was apportioned \$231,132 in 5339 funds and \$428,127 in FY20. The City's match was 20%. 5303:* *METRA was funded \$132,663 in 5303 funds in FY19 with City matching funds included.*

Audit Findings: Funding

The Planning area located at METRA performs the submission of applications and submits invoices for reimbursements to the various agencies. The employees in this area are new to their jobs each having less than 2 years of experience.

After reviewing work performed, it was found that there are no formal processes in place. The area operates with no overall structure or plan. There is no plan in place for application submission timelines or reimbursement submissions. METRA is currently in the process of submitting an application for FY2019 (\$2,612,111, the funds are from apportionments in 2014 and 2015). Columbus Consolidated Government has not invoiced FTA for any expenses reimbursed by the FTA's 5307 program for FY2019 (approximately \$2,000,000). UPDATE: The week of August 1st, 2019, METRA received approval of the grant to pay FY2019 expenses.

There are still \$435,718 in unliquidated funds from past contracts that have not been fully utilized.

Because there is not an overall plan with timelines, METRA struggles with having multiple priorities such as completion of the budget, requesting approval from City Council for the grant application and the submission of the application itself. METRA also had a triennial review occur this year requiring attention. The triennial review is scheduled every three years.

The FTA has no grant submission deadlines that METRA must meet. The submission/approval process takes FTA a minimum of 60 days; applications can be submitted anytime during the year except for the months of September through November annually. During this time FTA TrAMS system is closed and no applications can be submitted. In order to not let this closing disrupt processes for METRA, they must submit applications by May 31st to insure an approved contract is received prior to the shutdown.

While reviewing the last applications submitted, documentation supporting the grant applications was requested; it was hard to obtain and had to be searched for in multiple locations.

When asked how often reimbursements were submitted, the response was that were completed on a quarterly basis. After a review of FY2018 reimbursement submissions, it was found that items were grouped by quarter but multiple quarters are submitted for reimbursement at the same time. Submission of expenses for reimbursement were done 2 weeks to 5 months after the period in which the expenses were incurred.

The documentation to support the filing of reimbursements was lacking organization. Timing differences with Finance were not documented clearly on the spreadsheets. FY2018 4th quarter

information does not appear to be reconciled with Finance and no follow up was reflected. Payroll information was grouped by pay dates but the schedules did not reflect what the spreadsheets were for or what corresponding funding sources they represented.

Two of the funding agencies commented that our reimbursement submissions were lacking attention to detail and not documented entirely.

There is no reconciliation present in METRA's office reflecting open contracts, the reimbursements submitted or reimbursements received or pending. Documentation is gathered but not in a manner consistent with an office accounting for funds.

There are specific reimbursement inaccuracies noted:

In FY2018, \$13,265 in expenses were submitted to both the FTA (5307) and TIA resulting in being reimbursed \$23, 877 (\$10,612 + \$13,265).

Currently 5303 reimburses 70% of the Transportation Director's salary. We have recently learned from GDOT that this is incorrect. The expenses to be reimbursed by GDOT should consist of personnel whose time is dedicated to the MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) or, in the case of METRA, personnel working on items related to the MPO. The time needs to be accounted for and tracked separately. At this time, it appears that METRA's involvement with MPO activities is minimal.
Reimbursed in FY2018: \$75,896.31

Moving forward, it would be wise to allocate time based on job duties performed not individual people.

GDOT has requested that, because there is a finite amount of funds available, METRA only ask for the amount that will be submitted for reimbursement. The last three contracts with GDOT has left an average of \$38,000 in unliquidated funds for a total of \$114,000.

FTA (5307) currently reimburses the salaries of three Maintenance Leaders, three Paratransit Operators and a Transit Specialist. One of the Maintenance Leaders job title is Correctional Officer – Transportation. The responsibilities of this position include supervising inmates that clean parking garages and parking lots, cuts lawns and maintains appearances of METRA grounds. According to a representative at FTA, only positions related to transportation related activities can be submitted for reimbursement. Circular FTA C 9030.1E gives rise to the possibility of prorating this person's time between parking management and grounds keeping. Reimbursed in FY2018: \$46,496.60

Auditee Response: *The staff person in question assigned to FTA 5307 primary duties are the upkeep of METRA routes, bus stops, and facility. A staff person to maintain the City Parking garages is paid from TSPLOST.*

Audit Recommendations: Funding

The Planning area must be actively managed.

The funding/reimbursement process should be given a higher priority than it is currently given. An overall calendar, including long term planning and transitioning to a current plan, must dictate the specific time of year when certain activities should be conducted. Budgeting, requesting application submission approval from Council and application submission should occur at the same time every year. Reimbursements should be requested on a timely basis, preferably monthly, no more than 2 weeks after the financials have been published.

Documentation supporting grant applications and reimbursements must be maintained in an accessible format. Online backup is efficient and easily accessible; the corresponding hard copies could be filed in a storage area on site for up to two years before being filed at CCG's offsite Records Room. The documentation should be clear and understandable to the receiving parties. It should give a detail of activity supporting the application/submission and reimbursement request.

It is important to remember, the work product that METRA submits to outside departments and agencies is a reflection of who they are and who Columbus Consolidated Government is.

The employees in this area need: computer training, and management involvement. The implementation of annual, quarterly and monthly schedules would greatly increase the timeliness of submitting grant applications and requests for reimbursement.

There should be reconciliations for each funding source denoting opening balances, reimbursements received, reimbursements pending and unliquidated balances.

METRA Planning personnel and Finance Grant personnel must work closely together and communicate deadlines and cutoffs; all discrepancies between the two should be reconciled, resolved and clearly documented on the supporting workpapers.

Inaccuracies should be addressed and resolved.

Auditee Response: METRA has always had a Revenue Handling Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in place. The City's Internal Auditor reviewed and approved METRA's revenue handling procedures under previous administration. METRA continues to operate under these procedures. Any changes to the SOP are made annually. The last update was in January 2018. However, with the new staff learning their jobs and changes from FTA and GDOT, there are changes to the SOP. METRA Planning staff are new and still learning the process.

There were several mitigating factors that prevented METRA from submitting its FTA 5307 Grant Application, prior to the closing of the TrAMS database at the end September 2018. In December of

2017, FTA notified METRA of its upcoming Triennial Review Audit scheduled for August 6-7, 2018. The audit required METRA to provide FTA with a substantial amount of information in advance of the site visit. In December 2017, METRA's then Planning Manager vacated the position without notice. This employee had attended several FTA trainings and was the primary person responsible for submitting METRA's Grant applications for the department. The unannounced exit placed a hardship on the Planning staff and the department. METRA team worked after hours and weekends to provide the Pre-Site Visit information to FTA by January 31, 2018 for the Recipient Information Request (RIR) and responded to the findings by February 2019. METRA was dependent on two other departments within the City to assist with data collection and with attending the Triennial Review (Finance & Human Resources) to provide information to FTA. METRA staff worked simultaneously on the FTA Triennial Review findings and the department's upcoming FY19 City budget. Submissions to the FTA audit findings were scheduled for dates beginning September 2018 through February 2019. When METRA submitted their FY19 budget into FTA's TRAMS data base, shortly afterwards the Federal Government experienced a Furlough. When the federal government resumed, they were backlogged, and many transit systems' Grant Applications were delayed as a result of the Shut Down. METRA staff were also providing information to the Internal Auditors during this time period.

METRA meets its scheduled timeline for its annual budget and with Grant Application approvals from City Council.

While METRA did receive some deficiencies during the Triennial Review, FTA works with their Grantees to clear the deficiencies, and METRA provided responses to FTA as scheduled. METRA is still awaiting the Closeout Letter from FTA on the Triennial Review Responses submitted. In previous years, METRA was the system that FTA would refer other transit system to when those system had issues and needed assistance. The process remains today, even with our newer staff.

While the FTA is flexible and works with their Grantees step by step, there are deadlines in everything that is done.

1. The DBE Goal is due every three years. Our next goal is due August 1, 2022.
2. Title VI is due every three years. We have one due on Oct. 1, 2019. We are waiting on the PCC to approve it. They have had trouble getting quorum during their meetings to vote to approve. Our next one will be due Oct. 1, 2021.
3. The DBE Uniform Report is due twice a year every year. On June 1st and December 1st.
4. Our next Triennial review will occur in 2021. The FTA will tell us the time of the year when it will occur when we are closer to that year. It will probably happen around the same time of the year as the 2018 review.
5. Our EEO program is due March 1, 2022.
6. Our PTASP safety plan (we are under the state's plan) is due July 20, 2020.
7. Our NTD report is due yearly by December 1st.
8. Our TAM asset list must be updated by the end of June of each year.

9. *Our DBE Program is due whenever there is a major change to our program. It was last updated this year when METRA appointed the new Compliance Officer, also the new DBELO.*

METRA management had already discussed with FTA entering our Grant Application process into TRAMS as a working document as soon as TrAMS opens up each year. This will ensure that the application is ready to submit when the budget is approved by Council between May-June of each year.

Documentation is developed each year along with the City's budget request. METRA works closely with their Financial Analyst to identify capital requests that are included in the Grant Application.

METRA Planning will develop a comprehensive schedule for the funding and reimbursement process. This timeline will include the specific times of the year in which certain activities relating to the process will be conducted as well as submission deadlines.

Documents will be stored digitally on METRA's shared drive. Physical documents will also be stored in Planning for three years before rotating to METRA's onsite storage facility. In addition, METRA will follow the FTA regulation on the lifespan of documents keep readily available i.e., Title VI or EEO complaints

Management is involved in all processes regarding its Grant Application and reimbursement process with the FTA. However, METRA Planning staff will continue to attend training to increase proficiency in Microsoft Office and other essential software programs.

METRA Grants Management and Planning division has always worked closely with the City Grant Accountant. METRA Planning will create a spreadsheet that will track opening balances, reimbursements received, reimbursements pending and unliquidated balances. METRA will also research software that assists users in tracking this information.

There are mitigating factors that sometimes prevent deadlines from being accomplished.

Internal Processes and Controls

Throughout the organization there are internal controls and processes in place and being performed. For example: when cash is being counted, it is done under dual control; daily cash is balanced and reconciliation forms are kept.

Audit Findings: Internal Processes & Controls

Although internal controls are present and being followed, there is no follow up or resolution when the internal control notes a problem.

The cash register in the transfer center is balanced daily but when, during the day, it is balanced is not consistent. It is done during the next business day after business has resumed. This results in out of balance situations that are not reconciled or resolved.

Auditee Response: *The cash register and ticket sales are balanced at the end of the shift by the Dispatcher*

The next morning, a Planning staff will reconcile all sales transactions from the previous day. This process has been in place for many years and has worked.

All out of balance situations are resolved. Only during extreme circumstances will another supervisor/Dispatcher assist in the Dispatch office with sales. Prior to doing so, that person counts the money in the register and documents the dollar amount. They will also notate on the Mini Balance Sheet the ticket(s) purchased and the amount.

Diesel tanks are not secured, and are accessible for use at all times. There is no documentation for the use of the tank when it is unattended. Nightly, the tank readings are noted but if they do not match what was dispensed during routine refuelings, the difference is plugged.

Auditee Response: *There is a fuel shut off to secure the tanks. In addition, METRA's gates are secured nightly.*

Documentation is kept with each fueling. The Lower Shop Supervisor records the beginning and ending amount of fuel in each tank (4) as buses are refueled. This information is provided to the Transit Specialist.

All fueling is dispensed during regular hours of operation, primarily when buses are going out of service for the night. A log is kept documenting the fuel use. A fuel report is recorded by the Maintenance Transit Specialist, and the Shop Night Supervisors tracks when fuel needs to be ordered. Additional information is needed to conduct further research.

A reconciliation of collections from the daily routes is counted under dual control at the same time everyday. The totals from the daily collections are then compared with the Genfare reports and its reflection of the daily collections. A 1% variance is acceptable but when it exceeds 1% there is no explanation for the differences.

Auditee Response: *There will always be a plus or minus variation in the farebox count versus Genfare report. There have been no red flags to indicate any type of fraudulent activity with METRA's revenue handling processes. Again, revenue handling has been coordinated through the Internal Auditor.*

Recommendations: Internal Processes & Controls

Continue to use the internal processes in place. Many of the issues can be resolved with set routines (i.e. balancing the daily cash register in the dispatch office could be done at night once all activity has stopped for the day).

The diesel tanks should have a lock and require a manager to dispense fuel during hours outside of normal refueling. A log should be kept documenting this fuel use.

Once the computer systems are implemented and used correctly, the reports generated from those systems should be used to spot problems and better manage the operation.

Employment

Audit Testing: Employment

Employment issues addressed include critical vacancies, employee turnover, overtime, employee payrates and management.

Audit Findings: Employment

There are 7 positions grade 16 or above that require a 4-year college degree; a review of those employees for degrees was conducted. Two of the employees do not have degrees. One employee has been in his position since 2001; the second was promoted to his position in 2018.

Auditee Response: METRA's current Director was not involved in the hiring of an employee in 2001. METRA currently does not have G16 positions requiring a degree. All G16 positions allows for any combination of education, training and experience which provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the essential functions of the job.

Critical Vacancies & Employee Turnover:

Filling critical vacancies is a top priority of METRA. As of August 19, 2019, in Operations there are 17 full time Bus Operator positions and 2 part time positions available. Another position will become available August 30, 2019 due to retirement. In the Maintenance, there are 3 Maintenance Tech positions available.

Auditee Response: Currently, there are 4 Tech II positions and one Transit Specialist position vacant.

There are currently 66 authorized bus operator positions. In FY2017, METRA has employed 95 candidates 32 separating employment. In FY2018, METRA employed 97 candidates with 39 separating employment and in FY2019, METRA employed 78 candidates with 26 separating. This is an average turnover rate of 36%.

Auditee Response: METRA Operations has 57 Bus Operator positions. Two positions were converted into Part time positions. METRA Dial-A-Ride has 11 Bus Operator positions.

There is a nationwide shortage of commercial drivers, bus operators and truck drivers alike.

Because of the critical vacancies, annual evaluations, annual driver training and refresher training are not being completed.

Auditee Response: Agree. However, New Employee training is conducted for all METRA employees. In addition, there is a 4-week training for all Fixed Route Bus Operators. Annual Refresher training was last conducted in 2018. Due to the high turnover, many Bus Operators did not complete 6 months or a year with METRA. This turnover cycle reduced the number who would have required Annual Refresher Training.

The list below reflects additional causes and effects of the critical vacancies and employee turnover.

Overtime:

In FY2018, overtime dollars for bus operators increased 86% over FY2017. Overtime dollars for all of METRA have increased 104% since FY2017.

See page 37 for a sample of FY2019 4th quarter overtime detail.

A review of the overtime hours by individual bus operators found during the 3rd & 4th quarter of FY2019, 9 operators worked 12 consecutive weeks with overtime hours ranging from an average of 6 hours to 20 hours per week.

Four bus operators, who earned the most overtime in FY2019, worked 15 weeks out of a 16 week period with overtime hours averaging 18 hours per week during those 15 weeks. The time period referenced was April 5, 2019 through June 28, 2019.

Long hours and the lack of personal time off has led to low morale, overall employee dissatisfaction and turnover.

In both the operations area and the maintenance area, employees feel that they are unable to take personal time off. If employees 'earned time' meets certain levels and is not used, it rolls into catastrophic time (no longer eligible to the employee to take as vacation). Nine employees lost earned vacation time for not using it during FY2018. Six of the individuals affected by this have left CCG employment due to resignation or termination.

Auditee Response: METRA's extended service hours began in October 2018. In addition, transit systems and public-school systems across the country had already begun experiencing a huge turnover in Bus Operators. Commercial license holders are in high demand across the country.

Overtime use is due to staffing issues required to maintain the service provided on METRA's Fixed routes and Dial-A-Ride services in our service area. It is not uncommon for bus operators to work 5-10 hours of overtime each week, particularly with the severe shortage METRA is experiencing.

METRA employees are provided the opportunity to use vacation each year. Some employees opt not to take vacation but are never prohibited. METRA's process for employees using vacation has been in place for more than 30 years and is very effective. If an employee's vacation rolls over into Catastrophic, it is because the employee opted not to use their leave.

For many years, METRA has experienced a shortage of Fixed Route Bus Operators. The primary complaint from Bus Operators is fleet maintenance, and secondly, personal time off (except vacation and sick leave).

Pay:

METRA's bus operators have a starting payrate of \$15.15. A review of individual operators shows that regardless of their date of employment or experience, they are all receiving the same rate of pay. For example, a bus operator hired in 2007 (11 years of service) makes \$15.38/hour that is the same payrate as an employee hired in 2018 (<1 year of service).

METRA has three levels of Fleet Technicians, Fleet Tech I (G10), with a starting payrate of \$13.73, Fleet Tech II (G12)/\$15.15 and Fleet Tech III (G14)/\$16.73. A review of individual technicians shows that regardless of their date of employment or experience, they are all receiving the same rate of pay. For example, a technician hired in 2006 (12 years of service) makes \$15.38/hour that is the same payrate as an employee hired in 2017 (1 year of service).

In addition to the pay compression, there is a mandatory pension contribution for all employees of either 4% or 8% (depending on hire date). For a bus operator making \$15.38, this reduces the hourly rate for newer employees by \$1.23/hour.

Page 38 illustrates payrates for bus operators and fleet technicians.

Management:

Informal employee interviews were conducted throughout the process. The consistent message passed to Internal Audit was one of frustration and a dismissal of employee ideas and opinions by management which has led to a feeling of intimidation.

Auditee Response: *Every employee has a voice at METRA. All ideas and suggestions are heard and considered in the decision-making process.*

Recommendations: Employment

It is recommended that the employees that lost earned vacation time over the last fiscal year have it reinstated.

All training should be conducted by the Safety Coordinator in the Public Works area. The Safety Coordinator currently provides training to other departments within the city and is capable of taking this responsibility. This would alleviate the duplication of efforts within CCG and insure consistency and timeliness of training.

Auditee Response: *We disagree. METRA's training is 4 weeks and covers transit specific areas. METRA currently uses the City's 3rd Party Trainer to assist Bus Operators with completing two requirements for a commercial driver's license when needed. Those two requirements are bus Pre-tripping and Road testing. Time is spent with the employee at METRA to prepare them for the DOT testing after they have completed their 4-week training on other transit specific areas. The transit trainer is required to know the ins and outs of public transportation i.e., METRA Rules & Regulations, FTA requirements of Drugs & Alcohol, ADA announcements, Title VI requirements, Farebox key codes, Destination Sign, Route information i.e., directions, blocking, Runs, schedules, etc. Years of hands on experience are required to become knowledgeable of the aspects of public transit.*

Employee exit interviews should be mandatory and completed outside of METRA.

Overtime throughout the organization needs to be addressed through operational changes and management on an individual employee basis.

The pay plan must be addressed.

Employee issues must be addressed.

Auditee Response:

Critical vacancies, employee turnover and pay rates are critical throughout the City. As for management, METRA Management works well with their team in each division.

Consistent with the City's policy, exit interviews are encouraged but not mandated. METRA employees have been informed and are fully aware of the exit interview process. The management team talks with employees to discuss their decision for resigning their position. Thus far, employees exiting METRA have been very open in providing this information to METRA. They have expressed reasons such as, offered a higher pay and better work hours (off weekends and nights).

City Council approved an Incentive Pay Plan for METRA employees, which is included in the department's FY20 budget.

Employee issues are addressed by supervisors, division managers and the department director immediately. METRA has always addressed employee concerns, being fair to all employees while upholding the policies of the City and the department. The culture at METRA is one that is very close knit.

Financial

For the most recent three completed years, METRA revenues have ranged from \$7.5 million to \$8.0 million. Revenues fluctuate slightly by most categories, Property Taxes, Passenger Revenues, FTA, GDOT, and Investment Income. T-SPLOST Project Revenues are the most volatile, depending on the projects funded in a given year. Passenger Revenues provide about 15%, GDOT Provides from 0-4%, FTA provides about 30%, Investment and Miscellaneous Income provides about 1%, and Property Taxes provide from 50-55% of the Revenue.

Expenses range from about \$6 million to \$10.8 million, with variation attributable to capital expenditures and T-SPLOST projects. Operating expenses range from \$6-7 million annually.

Bottom line results fluctuate annually from a \$2 million gain to a \$2 million loss, depending on the timing of revenue receipts for capital projects and operational subsidies.

Over the past seven years (FY2013-FY2019), the fiscal year-end balance in METRA's investment account has averaged \$2,338,574. The annual investment income (the earnings) from this account has steadily increased over the same time period from \$2,855 in FY2013 to \$113,636 in FY2019.

Currently, the reserve (investment) balance has declined from high of \$5,600,475 in January 2019 to \$2,755,863 in July 2019, due to approximately \$2.0 million of unbilled and/or uncollected funds from FTA.

A fixed asset audit and a payroll audit was completed but no exceptions were found.

Recommendations: Financial

Management strives to operate within the expense budget for the department each year, but this often leaves expensive facility and bus repairs undone for lengthy periods of time. With METRA's accumulated cash reserves of approximately \$2.3 million, it would be prudent to address operational needs that have been left undone.

METRA is being managed as a "Department" with only an expense budget rather than an "Enterprise" as reflected on the City's financial records. METRA should manage both their balance sheet and income statement as well as their expenses. There is ample funding to make necessary repairs without waiting for a subsequent year's operating expense budget.

As an Enterprise, it is more appropriate that this entity be set up as an authority and governed by a board appointed by City Council.

Auditee Response:

Revenues and expenses attributable to a particular fiscal year are typically recorded in that fiscal year even if the transaction occurs after the fiscal year end date. With that, it is unclear how the statement has been made that revenues vs expenses have fluctuated in the \$2 million range year to year since the anticipated \$2 million reimbursement from FTA was recorded as a revenue receivable in FY19. Since the FTA reimbursement was received on 8/14/19, we anticipate that what is not needed to cover current expenses will be re-invested thus replenishing Metra's reserve balance. Having some reserves is not uncommon for an enterprise fund. GFOA Best Practices recommends enterprise funds have a minimum of 45 days of working capital with 90 days being the targeted goal. For Metra, this amounts to a minimum of approximately \$1 million with approximately \$1.7 million being the targeted amount. Metra's reserve balances are in line with GFOA recommendations. It is important that Metra, as an enterprise fund, maintain adequate levels of working capital to mitigate current and future risks (e.g., revenue shortfalls or delays and unanticipated expenses) and to ensure stable services and fees over time.

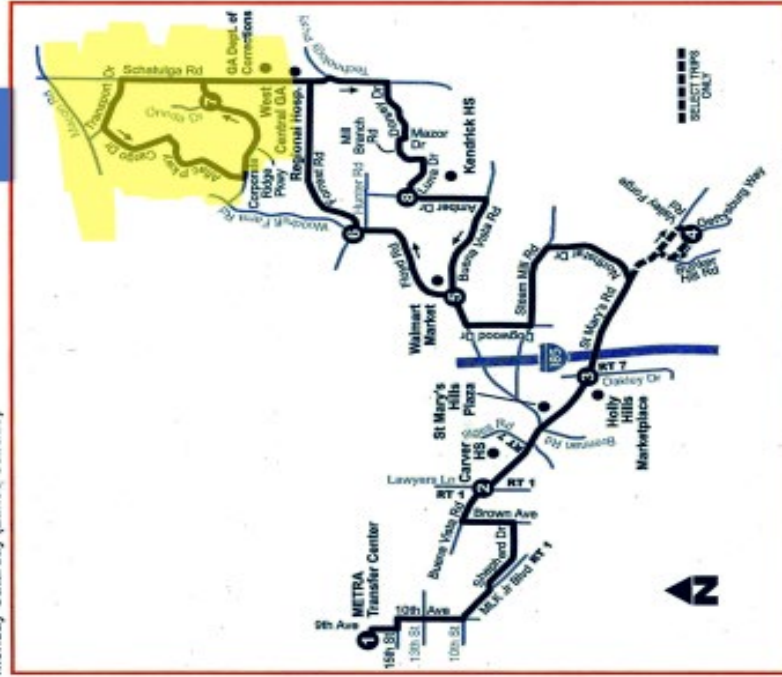
Metra operating as an enterprise fund under the direction of the City Manager is best suited for our Consolidated Government. Operating under the direction of an Authority would not change Metra's classification as an enterprise fund.

Poorly Supported Leg

- ▶ Route 3 (St. Mary's Rd/Buena Vista Rd/Schatulga Rd)
- ▶ Travels north on Schatulga Rd. to Corporate Ridge Parkway. 6.2 miles

3 ST. MARY'S RD / BUENA VISTA RD / SCHATULGA RD

Monday-Saturday (Lunes-Sábado)

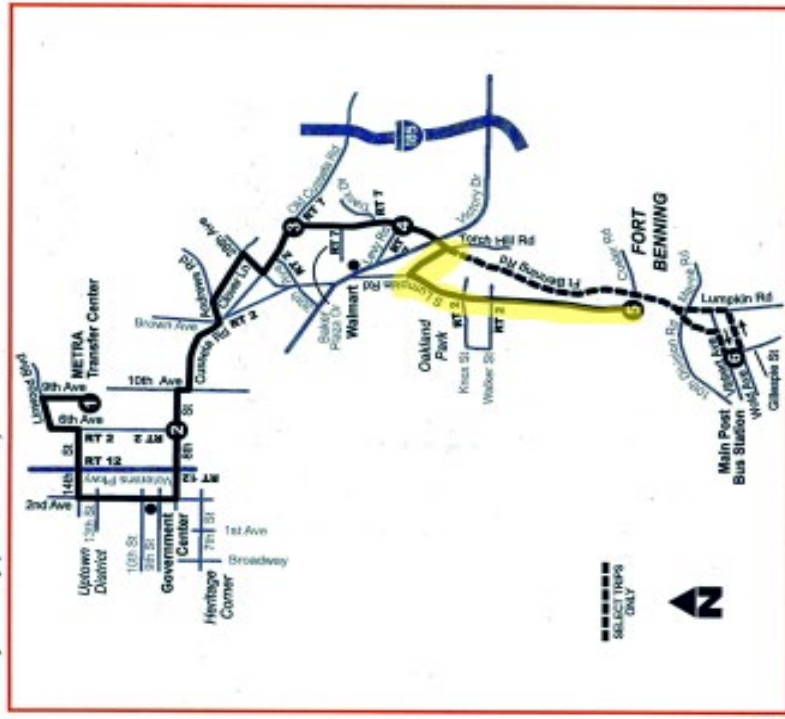


Poorly Supported Leg

- ▶ Route 4 (Ft. Benning)
- ▶ Travels Torch Hill Rd to Custer Rd. 7.5 miles



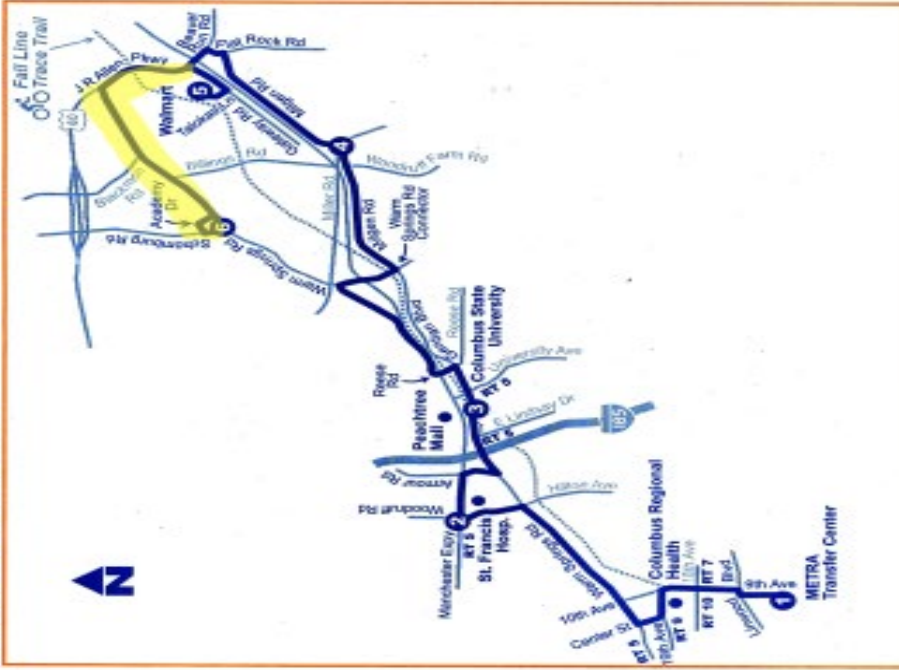
4 FORT BENNING
Monday-Saturday (Lunes-Sábado)



Poorly Supported Leg

- ▶ Route 6 (Columbus State/Milgen Rd)
- ▶ Travels to the Gateway Walmart and heads west to Schomburg Rd. 6.5 miles

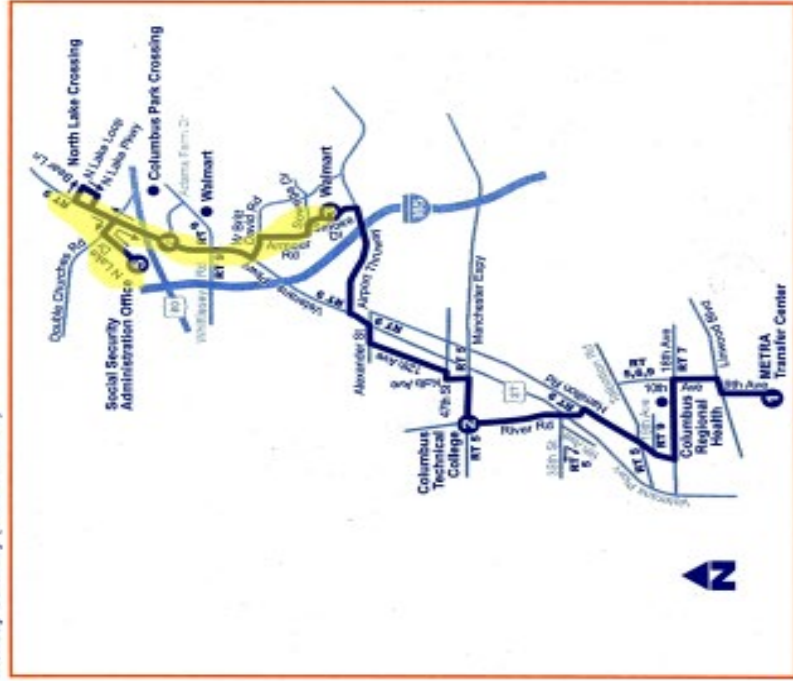
6 COLUMBUS STATE / MILGEN RD) Monday-Saturday (Lunes-Sábado)



Poorly Supported Leg

- ▶ Route 10 (Airport Thruway/Veterans Parkway)
- ▶ Travels to the airport Walmart and heads north on Veterans Parkway to the Social Security Administration. 6.5 miles

10 AIRPORT THRUWAY / VETERANS PARKWAY Monday-Saturday (Lunes-Sábado)



Overtime/Bus Operator FY2019		4/5	4/12	4/19	4/26	5/3	5/10	5/17	5/24	5/31	6/7	6/14	6/28	4th Qtr Total	Grand Total
Operator #1		20.05	19.25	32.55	23.00	22.50	35.40	32.60	24.05	25.00	23.50	18.20	18.20	276.10	587.58
Operator #2		21.27	20.45	25.45	22.34	25.40	23.00	23.05	22.90		28.30	21.80	21.80	255.16	472.93
Operator #3		11.26	14.00	9.70	15.25	8.15	9.65	7.35	14.48	7.59	12.65		12.70	122.78	388.60
Operator #4		23.31	24.10	29.65	23.05	28.20	14.05	9.50	1.00	18.35	24.00	18.20	18.20	236.86	382.44
Operator #5		10.00	10.00	10.00	12.00	3.00	10.00	10.10	10.00	8.50	10.00	10.00	10.00	113.60	366.50
Operator #6		7.21	16.10	18.10	14.55	9.45	17.00	7.45	[6.90]	9.45	14.30	7.00	10.65	124.36	350.14
Operator #7			25.06	8.45	12.05	5.70	9.20	7.40	5.70	13.02	11.80	13.75	14.80	126.93	333.12
Operator #8		10.08	10.40	12.40	14.50	6.10	6.02	6.02		10.10	12.00	14.75	6.10	108.47	323.56
Operator #9		15.03	12.17	11.10	16.55	7.00		7.60	4.40	6.70				80.55	323.30
Operator #10		12.08	14.55	9.50	11.15	7.05	8.15	13.25	8.15	8.15	8.20	15.05	5.55	120.83	318.45

Bus Operators							
Name	DOE	Time		Mandatory		Starting	
		On Job	Pay	Pension			
Employee #1	11/22/1976	41.8	20.19	0.81	19.38	15.15	
Employee #2	8/20/2002	16.1	15.77	0.63	15.14	15.15	
Employee #3	8/13/2007	11.1	15.38	0.62	14.76	15.15	
Employee #4	9/4/2007	11.0	15.38	0.62	14.76	15.15	
Employee #5	1/28/2008	10.6	15.38	0.62	14.76	15.15	
Employee #6	6/30/2008	10.2	15.38	0.62	14.76	15.15	
Employee #7	10/24/2011	6.9	15.38	0.62	14.76	15.15	
Employee #8	3/5/2012	6.5	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #9	1/21/2014	4.6	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #10	11/17/2014	3.8	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #11	7/20/2015	4.0	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #12	4/11/2016	2.4	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #13	9/12/2016	2.0	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #14	2/13/2017	1.6	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #15	2/19/2018	0.5	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #16	4/9/2018	0.4	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #17	6/18/2018	0.2	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	

Bus Operators

Fleet Technicians								
Name	Job	DOE	Time		Mandatory		Starting	
			On Job	Pay	Pension			
Employee #1	III	6/8/1987	31.3	23.40	0.94	22.46	16.73	
Employee #2	III	5/5/1990	28.4	16.97	0.68	16.29	16.73	
Employee #3	II	6/6/1984	34.3	20.19	0.81	19.38	15.15	
Employee #4	II	11/2/1998	19.9	15.77	0.63	15.14	15.15	
Employee #5	II	2/13/2006	12.6	15.38	0.62	14.76	15.15	
Employee #6	II	6/17/2013	5.2	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #7	II	2/24/2014	4.5	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #8	II	8/7/2017	1.1	15.38	1.23	14.15	15.15	
Employee #9	I	10/14/2014	3.9	13.93	1.11	12.82	13.73	
Employee #10	I	8/29/2017	1.0	13.93	1.11	12.82	13.73	
Employee #11	I	8/27/2018	0.0	13.73	1.10	12.63	13.73	

Fleet Technicians