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Oct. 26, 2018

The Honorable Dennis M. Clough  
Chairman, Board of Trustees  
Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority  
1240 West 6th Street  
Cleveland, Ohio 44113-1302

Dear Mayor Clough,

I am writing to urge GCRTA's Board of Trustees to pass a resolution urging the City of Shaker Heights and RMS Real Estate, the developers of the Van Aken District, to reserve a public right of way about 40-50 feet wide from the end of the Blue Line to the Northwest corner of Chagrin Boulevard and Warrensville Center Road to retain the flexibility for future transit needs.

The reason why All Aboard Ohio is requesting this resolution is because it is our understanding that RMS is ambitiously pursuing the next phases of Van Aken District development. This is exciting news. However, conceptual plans for future phases show new buildings placed between the end of the Blue Line and the NW corner of Chagrin and Warrensville because GCRTA's prior administration informed the city and developer it would not pursue extension of the Blue Line for the foreseeable future. Van Aken District's land use guideplan, if followed, would effectively preclude any transit extensions for decades if not a century or more.

To show how quickly things can change, since the Blue Line extension study was done in 2012, the following has occurred:

- The Federal Transit Administration's criteria has changed for scoring transit extensions;
- Amazon is building a massive distribution center in North Randall with more than 2,000 jobs plus several substantial spin-off developments are planned;
- Fairmount Properties/DiGeronimo Companies have built on Harvard Road the high-density, mixed-use Pinecrest development with more than 2,300 office and retail jobs.

We recognize that GCRTA lacks its own funding for a local share of any major transit expansions at this time. But GCRTA made a statement to the developers of Van Aken based on short-term land-use and policy conditions that could have permanent consequences. Recent events show how quickly conditions can and do change. We urge GCRTA's Board of Trustees to communicate to the City of Shaker Heights and RMS Real Estate about keeping the door open to future opportunities. We hope you agree that retaining such flexibility is good urban planning.

Sincerely,

Ken Prendergast  
Executive Director

## SAMPLE RESOLUTION

Whereas, RTA sponsored a Blue Line Extension Alternatives Analysis / Environmental Study in 2009-12, conducted by PB Americas Inc. The result was that the initial alternatives studied, namely light-rail extensions or full BRTs from the Warrensville station in Shaker Heights, following Chagrin/Harvard to I-271 or Northfield/Warrensville to North Randall likely would not be rated highly enough by the Federal Transit Administration to win federal funding at that time;

Whereas, thus RTA chose a hybrid locally preferred alternative involving express buses between North Randall and Harvard/I-271 and University Circle via a new intermodal terminal proposed to be sited southeast of the planned Van Aken District and the Blue Line proposed to be extended across the intersection of Chagrin/Warrensville Center to the new intermodal terminal;

Whereas, further declines in RTA finances forced RTA to at least delay the express bus plan and abandon further consideration of even a short rail extension. RTA's prior administration informed the City of Shaker Heights that it would not pursue a Blue Line extension;

Whereas, Van Aken District developer RMS Real Estate was also informed of RTA's decision and amended its conceptual plan for the district, with future buildings between the end of the Blue Line and the Northwest corner of the Chagrin-Warrensville Center intersection;

Whereas, since 2012, FTA project scoring criteria was amended and one or more Blue Line light-rail extension alternatives could potentially earn a rating high enough to win funding – had the planning process begun under that criteria. Major transportation project plans typically have a shelf life of 10 years before the planning has to be restarted if an inactive project is revisited;

Whereas, since 2012, E-commerce giant Amazon chose the site of the closed Randall Park Mall in North Randall for a Fulfillment Center distribution facility, requiring the hiring of more than 2,000 people many of whom will rely on low-capacity bus services to reach the site;

Whereas, since 2012, Fairmount Properties/DiGeronimo Companies have built on Harvard Road at I-271 the high-density, mixed-use Pinecrest development with more than 2,300 office and retail jobs, directly served by only one bus route which has infrequent service;

Whereas, advocacy organization All Aboard Ohio has recently learned that RMS is “ambitiously pursuing the next phases of the Van Aken District” development based on the leasing success it experienced with its first phase;

Whereas, policy changes and land use developments since 2012 show how quickly external factors can and do change which may affect RTA's future and its flexibility to respond to it;

Now, therefore be it resolved by the RTA Board of Trustees on \_\_\_\_\_, 2018 that:

The board urges the City of Shaker Heights, Ohio to pursue a perpetual public right of way easement of not less than 40 feet in width from the eastern terminus of Blue Line right of way to the northwest corner of the intersection of Chagrin Boulevard and Warrensville Center Road.

The board directs the secretary to transmit a copy of this resolution to the office of The Honorable David Weiss Mayor of Shaker Heights, Ohio and to Luke Palmisano, President, RMS Real Estate Corp. for their records.

END