



# SORTA Service Update: City Council Budget & Finance Committee



# Agenda

- ✿ Summary of the previous “Xtra” service model
- ✿ The necessity of a new service plan for the 2021-22 school year
- ✿ The collaborative creation of this plan with CPS
- ✿ Our ongoing assessment of this new model and continued collaboration with CPS
- ✿ Our goals for our service:
  - ✿ Improved service reliability for all customers
  - ✿ Provide the best possible service for CPS students

## “Xtra” service model (previous)

- ✿ Each year, SORTA and CPS build the service plan for the school year
  - ✿ 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade at the schools requested by CPS
  - ✿ Each Spring/Summer, we build a transit plan together based on CPS’ needs and SORTA’s capacity
  - ✿ SORTA staff attends all school orientations; regular dialogue with school principals and CPS transportation team
  - ✿ Assess and make adjustments through the start of the school year and beyond
- ✿ Current school year is the last year of a 5-year contract

## “Xtra” service model (previous)

- ✿ 2020-21 school year: 8 CPS schools and St. X were served by 100 routes
- ✿ 2021-22 school year: 12 total schools
- ✿ Avg. daily ridership (pre-pandemic)
  - ✿ 8,000-9,000 on Xtra service routes; 4,000 on regular routes
- ✿ Student bus pass: only valid on “Xtra” service routes
- ✿ Exceptions, at the request of CPS:
  - ✿ Approx. 1/3 of eligible students were provided regular Metro passes
  - ✿ In addition, students with Extracurricular bus passes all used regular service to get home
- ✿ Xtra service has **always** been open to the general public, as required by federal law

# The need for a new service plan

- ✿ Industry-wide challenge in hiring Bus Operators (public and private sectors)
  - ✿ Many transit systems continue to operate at reduced service levels or have cut service
  - ✿ Pandemic impact on Bus Operator attendance at Metro
  - ✿ We've added service as part of Reinventing Metro (Issue 7)
    - ✿ Required +25 Operators; Xtra service is 100s of daily trips
- ✿ Healthy start times at CPS schools
- ✿ Service reliability needs to improve
  - ✿ April and May 2021: SORTA failed to perform approx. 700 Xtra service trips, impacting hundreds of CPS students
  - ✿ Must address the reliability of regular Metro service

# A collaborative, mutually-beneficial plan

- ✱ Expand CPS student options to all of SORTA's services
- ✱ Methodology:
  - ✱ Partnered with CPS to best meet students' transportation needs
  - ✱ Together, mapped every student's home address to determine best routing option to school
  - ✱ Realignment of 12 routes to better serve the students
  - ✱ Created 2 new crosstown routes to reduce transfers in downtown
  - ✱ Increases our service reliability for CPS students
- ✱ Metro staff participated in all CPS student orientation sessions
- ✱ Metro Customer Care Center: 513-632-7575

# Improved Student Transportation Options

- ✿ **Increased access:** All eligible CPS students will have access to school on Metro
  - ✿ New service to Riverview East Academy, Woodward, and Hughes
  - ✿ Students in career/technical programs now eligible for a Metro transportation pass regardless of where they live
- ✿ **Shorter trip time:** Student travel times reduced on average by 10 minutes
- ✿ **More options:** Increased frequency on 12 routes and route options provide students with more flexibility
- ✿ **More direct service:**
  - ✿ 2 new crosstown routes (37 and 65)
  - ✿ **No** student needs more than one transfer
  - ✿ 48% of students have a direct route with no transfer

# Assessing the new plan

- ✿ Feedback from CPS Principals: very positive; better than expected
  - ✿ Service improving daily
- ✿ On Thursday 8/26<sup>th</sup>, CPS indicated that it's going well
  - ✿ Exception: parents' vehicles and traffic pattern at Shroder
    - ✿ Metro and CPS working together to alleviate the issue
- ✿ Ridership:
  - ✿ 2020-21 school year: peaked at 45% of previous levels
  - ✿ Aug. 2021: reached 70% of previous levels; growing daily
- ✿ Safety highlights and partnerships:
  - ✿ Increased presence of crossing guards, Metro staff, and CPD
  - ✿ Metro routes realigned to address safety concerns

# Service adjustments, as of Aug. 30

## \* Adding service to these routes:

- \* 4 – Withrow

- \* 24 and 51 – Walnut

## \* Schedule improvements:

- \* 37 – Western Hills, Dater

- \* 43 – Woodward

## \* Updated bus routing:

- \* 11 - Shroder

## \* Bus stop relocation:

- \* 28 – Riverview East

## \* Other routes currently under review:

- \* Routes 6, 15, 37, 41

# Feedback

Concern: Trip length is too long for students

- ✿ *The average trip time is about 45 minutes*

Concern: Students have to make multiple transfers

- ✿ *Students have multiple options; every student has the option of a single trip or one transfer*

Concern: Students have long walks to the bus stop

- ✿ *Vast majority of students have less than ½ mile to a bus stop*
- ✿ *Routes were revised to reduce walking distance*

Concern: Aiken students are waiting at a busy, unsafe intersection

- ✿ *More of these students should board Route 15 at the school instead of Route 17 at Belmont/Hamilton*
- ✿ *Metro will work with Aiken staff to communicate*

# Improved Service Efficiency for All

- ✿ New service went into effect Aug. 15
  - ✿ Free rides on Aug. 19 and 20 system-wide
  - ✿ Metro provided 2000 one-ride passes to CPS for parents to ride
  - ✿ Additional service improvements start Aug. 30
- ✿ Improved service reliability for all customers
- ✿ More routes and increased frequency benefit all customers
  - ✿ Includes service efficiencies on Express routes



# Appendix



## CPS and SORTA contract:

“Transportation shall be provided upon SORTA’s regular coaches, over SORTA’s regular routes, and according to SORTA’s regular schedules. SORTA shall, however, consult with CPS from time to time about routes and schedules.”

“SORTA will work with CPS to develop an efficient routing scheme; however, all routing decisions shall be made by SORTA. The amount of scheduled service planned will be limited by the number of vehicles and operators available to SORTA.”