



# METRO

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019



## LETTERS FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



Dawn Distler, CEO

The 2019 year was full of exciting change for METRO. We observed many milestones: we celebrated 50 years of dedicated service as METRO Regional Transit Authority, rolled out mobile ticketing to our passengers, and secured grant funding for a mobility solution to better serve Summit County job hubs.

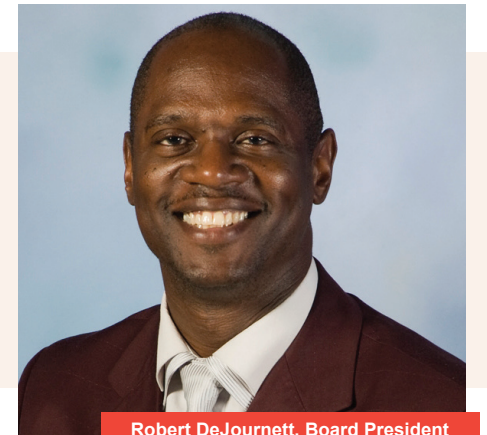
We are fully committed to providing the best public transportation service possible to residents and visitors of Summit County through our current and future mobility options, including line-service, paratransit service, and express routes to and from Cleveland.

Our strong performance throughout the 2019 year has created a powerful momentum as we continue serving our communities into 2020. We are confident 2020 will be a year to remember as we cultivate partnerships and plan for our future with the creation of a 10-year Strategic Plan.

As the Chief Executive Officer of METRO RTA, it is my privilege and honor to present you with our 2019 Annual Report. I could not be more proud to lead our organization into the future. Thank you for your support, and thank you for investing in the future of Summit County through public transportation.

METRO plays an essential role in the mobility of residents across Summit County. Our service is multifaceted and ubiquitous; there's something for everyone. Public transportation affects each and every person without exception. By investing in its future, we all reap the benefits of a stronger economy and thriving, vibrant communities.

At its very core, public transportation embodies and celebrates diversity, and diversity is essential to innovation and growth. I am proud to be a governing member of an organization that embraces these qualities daily in its efforts to serve the population of Summit County. Your service budget investment in METRO has led to impressive accomplishments in 2019. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am delighted to share these successes with you.



Robert DeJournett, Board President

## BOARD MEMBERS

**Mr. Robert DeJournett**  
Board President  
City of Akron Appointee

**Mr. Donald Christian**  
City of Akron Appointee

**Mr. Mark Derrig**  
City of Akron Appointee

**Ms. Renee Greene**  
City of Akron Appointee

**Mr. Nicholas Fernandez**  
Board Vice President  
City of Akron Appointee

**Ms. Louise Gissendaner**  
Summit County Appointee

**Ms. Heather Heslop Licata**  
Summit County Appointee

**Mr. David Prentice**  
Summit County Appointee

**Mr. Charles Rector**  
City of Barberton Appointee

**Mr. Vincent Rubino**  
City of Cuyahoga Falls Appointee

**Mr. Gary Spring**  
City of Stow Appointee

## DID YOU KNOW?

### ABOUT METRO

**427** employees

**4,960,026** boardings

**382,242** Customer Care calls

**124,507** passengers on the DASH in 2019

### FLEET INFO

**231** vehicles

- 139 large buses
- 92 paratransit vehicles

**10** Ford Transit vans were added to METRO's fleet in 2019 for paratransit service

**Average age** of fleet

- 5.6 years for large buses
- 3.34 years for paratransit vehicles

**7,674** miles between road calls, an 11% improvement from 2018

**In 2019**, repeat road calls for the same vehicle averaged 15.5 per month, an 8% improvement from 2018 and a 42% improvement over the last five years.

## METRO GOES GREEN!



In 2019, METRO awarded a five-year contract to Gillig, LLC, for the purchase of 75 buses (67 CNG buses and eight hybrid-diesel buses). By the contract's end, CNG and hybrid-diesel buses will replace all of METRO's diesel-fueled line-service buses.

**2,515 solar panels on the roofs of the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center and Kenmore Boulevard bus garages.**



**45 geothermal wells used to regulate temperature at the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center. Rainwater is also recycled and used for landscaping and non-potable purposes in the restrooms.**



**123 CNG buses make up 53% of METRO's fleet, plus four hybrid-diesel buses.**

# reworks

METRO is an Akron's ReWorks Program participant.

## MARKETING BY THE NUMBERS

**312**

Facebook posts in 2019

**781,400**

Twitter impressions

**\$583,321**

in interior/exterior bus advertising

### CONNECT WITH US



Akron METRO Regional Transit Authority



@AkronMETROBus



metrobus\_summitcounty



AkronMETROBus



SummitStories.org

## 2019 AWARDS

**Certificate of Achievement for Excellence** in Financial Reporting (fiscal year 2018)

**Ohio Auditor of State Award** with Distinction (reflecting great excellence in financial reporting for fiscal year 2018)

**NEOSTAR Award** for METRO's contributions in developing the Freedom Trail

Akron Children's Hospital Holiday Tree Festival "**Best Original Design**" Award

“Kindness spreads and today, METRO is moving it!”

Greta witnessed METRO Operator David assist a passenger, who is visually impaired, off the bus and into the bank. She wanted to recognize him for going the extra mile to keep his passenger safe.

# DEDICATION TO SAFETY

## METRO TRANSIT POLICE

In April 2017, the METRO Transit Police Department was formed. METRO is one of two transit police agencies in Ohio. The METRO Transit Police Substation is located in the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center.

## SAFETY & SECURITY PARTNERSHIPS

Bus operators are the eyes and ears of the road, and METRO appreciates the organizations that support its mission to keep communities safe. METRO's longstanding partnership with the Akron Police Department and the Summit County Sheriff's office includes providing onboard footage from buses for police investigations. Akron Police and Sheriff's deputies also assist with security efforts on METRO buses and at METRO facilities.

## OPERATOR REFRESHER TRAINING

Every two years, METRO bus operators go through sensitivity and refresher training including accident prevention, proper mobility device securement, railroad crossing regulations, and backing safely.



### Customer Highlight - Elizabeth

Elizabeth spends about 80 hours a month traveling on METRO, whether it's getting her two toddlers to school, going to the grocery store, or heading to work in Cuyahoga Falls. Elizabeth also used to take Stark Area Regional Transit Authority when she was enrolled at Stark State College.

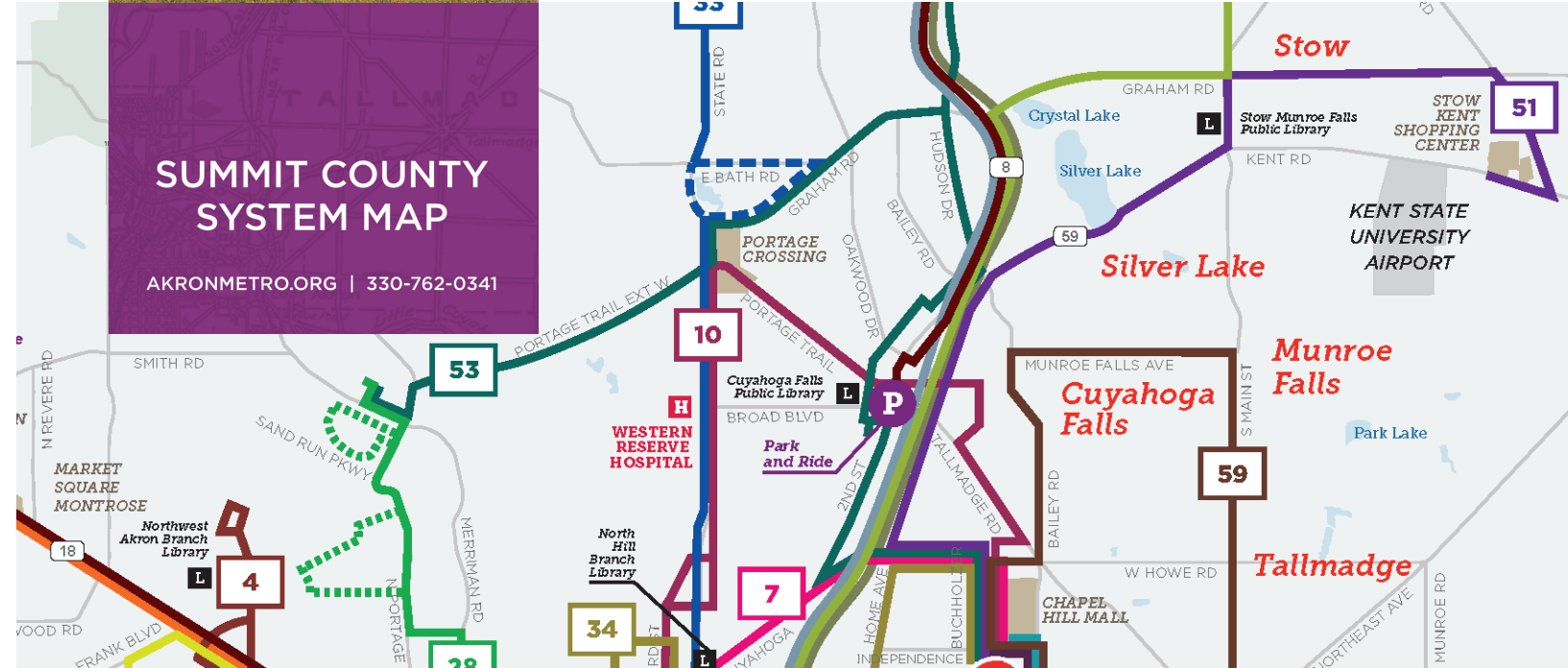
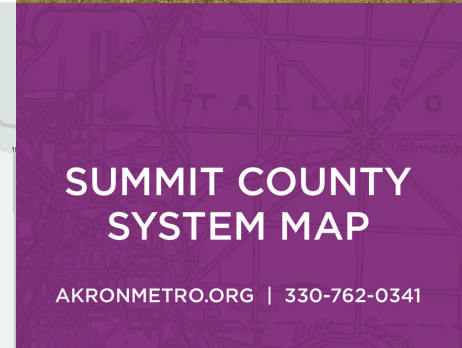
In 2019, preventable accidents dropped 31.66% and total accidents dropped 15.21% compared to 2018.



On average, METRO operators traveled 155,519 miles between preventable accidents in 2019, which is the highest to date! This accomplishment is a testament to METRO's commitment to safety.



More than 30 current METRO operators have achieved 20 or more years of Safe Driving (years without preventable accidents). In 2019, one operator achieved 30 years of Safe Driving; three operators reached 25 years; and five operators reached the 20-year threshold.



# TRY TRANSIT WEEK

For one week in October, METRO encouraged Summit County to ride transit during Try Transit Week, a campaign promoting the benefits of public transportation. Throughout the week, METRO highlighted transit tips on social media, coordinated bus trips with local news outlet The Devil Strip, offered free fares on all services, and partnered with ConxusNEO to host a job fair at METRO's Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center. Following an August launch on METRO's

Northcoast Express, METRO debuted its EZfare mobile ticketing app on all services on October 14, 2019. The EZfare app allows passengers to purchase their bus pass on a mobile device. From August to December 2019, METRO saw 35,158 mobile tickets activated. METRO's system map was also debuted during Try Transit Week. The map illustrates METRO's extensive coverage throughout Summit County and serves as an informational piece for METRO riders.



## INDEPENDENCE TRANSIT CENTER GROUNDBREAKING

In 2019, METRO's Board of Trustees passed a resolution to build a new transit center at the location formerly known as the Independence Turnaround. The property, which served as a transfer center for passengers since 2012, has an average of 600-700 boardings per weekday. On December 5, 2019, METRO's Board of Trustees gathered with local elected

officials, METRO staff members, and stakeholders to break ground on its new Independence Transit Center. Speakers included METRO Board of Trustees President Robert DeJournett, METRO CEO Dawn Distler, City of Akron Deputy Mayor Marco Sommerville, and City of Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Walters.

### Employee Highlight - Dawndavina, Operator

Dawndavina joined the METRO team in September 1997. She achieved 20 years of accident-free safe driving in November 2018. During her tenure, Dawndavina has operated both line-service and paratransit. She enjoys meeting

new passengers and seeing her regular riders. "It's nice to meet the people you serve and help them get where they need to go," Dawndavina said.



## OFFICIAL-LY ONBOARD

In winter of 2018/2019, METRO introduced its Official-ly Onboard initiative. The goal of Official-ly Onboard is to invite local elected officials and community leaders to spend a portion of the day riding bus routes in their constituents' neighborhoods with METRO CEO Dawn Distler.

The first segment of Official-ly Onboard included City of Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan, City of Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Walters, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro, Village of Lakemore Mayor Rick Justice, and City of Green Mayor Gerard Neugebauer. These officials traveled on various bus routes throughout Summit County, talking to passengers and METRO staff, and witnessing firsthand the role public transit plays in their communities.

"This experience was invaluable," Mayor Horrigan said. "I got a feel for the routes people take to get where they need to go. I rode in their shoes. As people look for ways to get to their destination, we need to look at how we can promote the bus as a transportation option."

Other participants of Official-ly Onboard have included Barberton Mayor William Judge and members of Summit County Council. Official-ly Onboard has also evolved to include local clergy leaders in its sister campaign, Clergy Onboard.

Partnering with local leadership is vital to the success of mobility in the communities METRO serves. Every Official-ly Onboard event allowed all participants to walk away with more knowledge about public transportation.

METRO is grateful for its partnerships with local officials and is looking forward to seeing Official-ly Onboard grow!



# 50TH ANNIVERSARY

In August 1969, the newly created Akron Metropolitan Regional Transit Authority successfully restored public transportation to the cities of Akron, Barberton, and Cuyahoga Falls.

On August 14, 2019, METRO celebrated 50 years on the road with a birthday bash at the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center in downtown Akron.



The festivities began with a welcome from METRO CEO Dawn Distler. METRO received proclamations recognizing its 50 year anniversary from Representative Emilia Sykes, District 34; Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro, and City of Akron Mayor Daniel Horrigan.

Each speaker praised METRO for its commitment to serving Summit County and for being an engaged community partner. METRO Board President Robert DeJournett ended the ceremony by thanking everyone for their support and helped kick off the event with confetti cannons.

Nearly 1,000 attendees received goodie bags with a commemorative 50th keychain and birthday treats. More than 50 community vendors attended to distribute information, share promotional giveaways, and host activities. A DJ added to the celebratory atmosphere and the photo booth was a big hit. METRO gifted the community with a free fare day to thank them for their continued support.

METRO's Touch-A-Bus activity was popular for children and adults alike. Everyone seized the opportunity to get behind the wheel of one of the many METRO vehicles to get an idea of how METRO bus operators see the road each and every day. Honking the horn was the extra bonus!

METRO also had an art gallery bus for partygoers to admire art from local artists. Some pieces were available for purchase, as they would be in a brick-and-mortar gallery. Outside the art bus, attendees decorated canvases to contribute to a collage commemorating the 50th celebration. Afterwards, the collage was put on display at the Transit Center for everyone to enjoy.

METRO appreciates everyone's support over the last 50 years and is looking forward to 50 more years on the road!





## PARATRANSIT VEHICLES



In 2019, METRO added 10 Ford Transit vans to their fleet. These vans provide a smooth ride for passengers on METRO's paratransit and FlexRide services. Features include:

- **A Sleek Modernized Design**
- **Rear Boarding**
- **Backup Cameras**
- **Narrow Body For Improved Maneuverability**
- **Clean Diesel Engines**

## LEADERSHIP LUNCHES

Each month, METRO's Leadership Team travels to different areas in Summit County for lunch meetings using their favorite mode of transportation: METRO buses. This allows for candid conversations with passengers on various routes about bus service, as well as the opportunity to support local businesses with their patronage.



### Customer Highlight - Joseph

In 2019, Joseph took his first trip on the DASH. Since his office is located in the heart of downtown, he often takes the DASH to lunch. His goal for 2020 is to take METRO to work at least once a week.

"I think riding METRO is one of the most important things anyone can do in our community," he said. "I'd love to see us depend less on our automobiles. I also think higher demand for public transportation would improve our environment and our cities' culture."

## FLEXRIDE

In summer of 2019, METRO was awarded The Paradox Prize grant in the amount of \$75,000. METRO also received \$100,000 in grant funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation through its Transit Partnership Program.

When The Paradox Prize competition was announced, METRO's goal was to develop a pilot program to better serve the changing needs of workers in northern areas of Summit County. The pilot program, called FlexRide, bridges the transportation gap for employees headed to and from work by enhancing their mobility options. Additionally, FlexRide will provide METRO with the opportunity to study the merits of a new type of service without using additional taxpayer resources.

METRO rolled out the program at the start of the 2020 year, allowing up to 20 participants to enroll through eligible employers in the Cuyahoga Falls and Stow-Hudson job hubs. METRO looks forward to seeing the program's impact on the lives of its participants and the employers it serves.

“Kudos to our driver Mark on the inbound from Cleveland. The wind was wicked bad tonight but he handled it like a champ! I appreciate these drivers who get us back and forth safely on these long daily commutes.”

Ms. L., Customer

## FREE FARE DAYS

- Arctic Blast
- Free fares for federal employees during the government shutdown
- METRO's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- Akron Pride Festival
- One day in celebration of Try Transit Week
- Election Day
- Veterans Day





## TOUCH-A-TRUCK & SAFETY TOWNS

Each summer, METRO has the privilege of taking buses to area Touch-A-Trucks and Safety Towns for families and children. Touch-A-Trucks highlight fascinating facts about METRO vehicles, such as how much they weigh and how they're cleaned, while Safety Towns place an emphasis on safe practices on and around METRO buses.

## OHIO LOVES TRANSIT

METRO is a proud participant of Ohio Loves Transit Day/Week, an Ohio Public Transit Association (OPTA) initiative created to advocate for and support public transit in Ohio. To commemorate the occasion, METRO “bus stop cupid” distributed candy and bus

pass valentines at various bus stops and shared messaging on social media encouraging folks to use METRO’s services. Ohio Loves Transit coincides with OPTA’s Legislative Day, when leaders from Ohio’s public transit agencies work with state legislators to ensure public transit

receives federal, state, and local funding that will enable us to meet the needs of Ohioans today, tomorrow, and well into the future. In federal grant funding alone, METRO has seen a 15% increase over the last three years.

### Customer Highlight - Theresa

From Chicago to New York City, Cleveland to Akron, taking public transportation is second nature to Theresa. She drives to the Creekside Park and Ride lot in Twinsburg, then takes two buses to get to work at METRO’s administrative offices where she works in the Finance Department.

Theresa says taking public transit is a money saver, and that’s why folks ride. “You don’t have to pay to park, for gas, or car maintenance,” she said.



## APPRECIATION DAYS

METRO is able to provide service for residents of Summit County because of its dedicated and hardworking team members. For hours on end, METRO bus operators keep a schedule, check fares, give directions, and accommodate special requests, all while safely maneuvering an extra-large vehicle through unpredictable traffic, tough weather conditions, and some really tight spaces.

To show thanks, METRO recognized its operators the week of March 18th for Transit Driver Appreciation Day. Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan joined the celebration that week to issue a proclamation thanking METRO bus operators for their contributions to the community.

While bus operators are the faces of METRO, bus service would be nonexistent without contributions from each and every department in METRO’s framework. By working together toward the common goal of providing exemplary public transportation service, METRO’s complex departments are an achievement in themselves. This led to subsequent celebrations in the fall: Customer Care Appreciation Day and Transit Maintenance Appreciation Day.

Customer Care Appreciation Day celebrated the dedication of METRO’s call takers and paratransit trip schedulers; Transit Maintenance Appreciation Day celebrated the Maintenance team for working around the clock to ensure buses are clean, safe, and ready to serve METRO passengers.

METRO is grateful to have such an extraordinary team and continues celebrating their accomplishments each and every day of the year!



### Employee Highlight - PJ, Information Technology/Data Systems Assistant

PJ is self-taught when it comes to the world of information technology; it’s just a matter of keeping up with the times. “You constantly have to learn new things to keep up with technology and it forces you to think differently,” he said.

When PJ joined the METRO team in July 2018, he became one of the go-to guys for tech-related tasks, such as managing METRO’s bus-tracking program, software updates, and network security.







## REINDEER BUSES

METRO spread holiday cheer in December with a festive “It’s Lit!” bus and reindeer DASH buses circulating around downtown Akron.

The It’s Lit bus was decked out with holiday lights and decorations. The bus was assigned to different routes throughout Summit County daily and was free to ride. One day, it was also stationed at the Transit Center with special appearances by Santa and Mrs. Claus, plus Santa’s “elves” (METRO’s Maintenance crew) dressed in their finest ugly holiday sweaters. Following its time at the Transit Center, the It’s Lit bus, Santa, and his elves visited local

daycare Kozmic Korner to bring joy to the boys and girls there. The children were delighted to see jolly old Saint Nick!



## HELP DURING FIRE

On January 30, 2019, a severe house fire in sub-zero temperatures brought the Akron Fire Department to the scene. METRO donated a bus to assist with the care of emergency responders due to the cold.

In a letter to METRO, Akron Fire Chief Clarence Tucker wrote, “With your assistance, we were able to rotate staff in a safe manner to control the fire and keep our firefighters safe and warm. The courtesy received by your organization allowed us to do the best job to ensure the safety of Akron residents. Thank you again for your commitment to our community.”



## GIVING TUESDAY

In 2019, METRO formed a new partnership with ACCESS, Inc. during the holiday season. For every \$50 Giving Tuesday donation to ACCESS, METRO donated a 7-Day pass to the Akron-based women’s shelter. This partnership reflected METRO’s customer-focused mission and provided the agency an opportunity to give back to the communities it serves. As a result of this outstanding partnership, ACCESS was able to provide 182 bus passes to its clients. Additionally, METRO celebrated Giving Tuesday with its passengers at the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center. The Akron-Summit County Public Library gave away free books, while METRO distributed hats, gloves, and scarves. It was a special day of giving and everyone was feeling the holiday spirit!



## MECHANIC APPRENTICE PROGRAM

Since its inception in 2010, METRO has benefited greatly from its Mechanic Apprentice Program. Through the program, METRO can train apprentices to repair and maintain buses specifically. Outside of public transit agencies, there are no current programs that teach this particular set of skills as typical secondary and post-secondary training is concentrated on automotive, heavy truck, and heavy equipment. Mechanic apprenticeships last approximately two years, but the timespan can be adjusted depending on individual experience and proficiency.

Apprentices with superior knowledge may be accelerated through the program; some have graduated as early as one year into the program. In order to qualify for the Mechanic Apprentice Program, individuals must be at least 21 years old, have a high school diploma or GED, and one to two years of trade school. A safe driving record is also a requirement. In 2019, four mechanic apprentices graduated from the program. Upon completion of the program, apprentices continue their employment at METRO as journeyman mechanics.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE ROAD



Safety is METRO's highest priority and the responsibility of all METRO employees. In an effort to raise safety awareness, METRO established a process to ensure all employees are adhering to traffic laws while on the road and/or METRO properties, including parking lots. Observations from the Road are courtesy forms issued to employees, which document both safety violations and compliments for going above and beyond safety standards or requirements of the job. METRO operations supervisors are primarily responsible for Observations from the Road.



Not only are operations supervisors heading new initiatives like Observations from the Road, they're also representing professionalism and experience during their daily duties. METRO operations supervisors wanted to update their uniforms to reflect the unification and dedication of the team. As a result, they now stand out as polished professionals who exhibit leadership and skill to the team of operators they oversee.



## TRAVEL TRAINING

Not everyone is familiar with public transportation, which is where METRO's travel training program comes in! Travel training teaches individuals or groups how to read bus schedules, purchase bus passes via METRO's mobile ticketing app, load bicycles onto bike racks, use bus-tracking technology, and more! In 2019, METRO travel trained 1,185 individuals through one-on-one or group training.



### DOWNTOWN AKRON PARTNERSHIP (DAP)

METRO works with DAP to help improve the experience for those living in, working, or visiting downtown. METRO helps sponsor DAP's team of ambassadors, who work seven days a week to ensure a clean, safe, and welcoming environment by providing safety escorts, helping clean and beautify METRO bus shelters, and other services to make downtown enjoyable for everyone.

### FULL TERM FIRST BIRTHDAY COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM

METRO team members serve on several committees and work with the City of Akron to better help moms and infants thrive.

### NEORIDE

METRO and area transit systems work together to ensure the needs of our region are being met and look at how multiple agencies can pull resources together to enhance the rider experience.

### SUMMIT COUNTY STAND DOWN

Each year, METRO is part of this outreach effort to the Veterans of Summit County. The annual event gives veterans the opportunity to learn about vital resources available and receive services on site.

### SUMMIT LAKE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (CDC)

METRO's administrative office is located in the Summit Lake area. METRO works with the Summit Lake CDC to look at ways to make its neighborhood a vitally important part of the community and the residents it serves.

### THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

METRO and the University of Akron have partnered to offer bus services to UA students, staff and faculty throughout Summit County, as well as with the DASH service downtown Akron and around campus.

- ACCESS, Inc.
- Leadership Akron
- Adult Protective Services
- Living Green Task Force
- Akron Blind Center
- Local Emergency Planning Committee
- Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
- Northeast Ohio Travel Trainers
- Akron Public Schools
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
- Akron-Summit County Public Library
- Ohio Public Transit Association
- Akron Urban League
- Ohio Transit Risk Pool
- American Public Transportation Association
- Ohio Public For Greater Akron
- Black Pages of Ohio - Summit Magazine
- RAISE Good Jobs Safe Kids Summit County
- Bridges of Summit County Initiative
- Senior Independent Living Center
- Bridges Out of Poverty
- Stark State College
- City of Akron Senior Commission
- Summit County Department of Job and Family Services
- CSE Credit Union
- Summit County Drug Task Force
- Direction Home Advisory Council
- Summit County Public Health
- Elevate Akron
- Summit DD
- Fairlawn Chamber of Commerce
- Women's Transportation Seminar
- Goodwill Industries of Akron
- Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce

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