

# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



# A LETTER FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



**Dawn Distler**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Robert DeJournett**  
Board President

Our 2021 report message ended by promising 2022 would be an electric year for METRO. How right we were, as 2022 brought two fully electric buses to our fleet, continuing our commitment to run our fixed-route service with 100% alternative fuel. But what is a great bus without a great Bus Operator? Like many in our area, we faced the challenge of finding new team members and answered that challenge with our largest and most successful hiring event to date, "Come Ride With (B)us!" As a result, we now have 31 new METRO team members on the road.

METRO continues our commitment to Equity and Inclusion. It is extremely important to us to ensure that what we do and how we do it is inclusive and takes into consideration all the people we serve. To that end, we added METRO's first Chief Culture Officer to our senior leadership team. This position ensures a renewed focus on creating a transformative, equitable, and welcoming culture in accessible and safe transportation.

Throughout 2022 we continued to grow and value our partnerships. We truly believe there is no success for METRO without those partnerships.

We took great pride when our most important partners were recognized by the Akron Urban League (AUL) at their annual gala. METRO's passengers were recognized with AUL's Community Champion Award. Our commitment to our passengers has not wavered and we were especially proud to see them recognized as an essential part of METRO and the community we serve.

Thank you again for a great 2022. We are excited for 2023, the future of METRO, and to continue to strengthen community partnerships.



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Robert DeJournett**  
Board President, City of Akron

**Mark Derrig**  
Board Vice President, City of Akron

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Summit County

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**Charles Rector**  
City of Barberton

**Vincent Rubino**  
City of Cuyahoga Falls

**Gary Spring**  
City of Stow

# OUR PARTNERSHIPS

- Access, Inc.
- Adult Protective Services
- Age Friendly Advisory Council
- Akron Blind Center
- Akron Children's Hospital
- Akron Civic Theatre
- Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
- Akron Public Schools
- Akron Police Department
- Akron-Summit County Public Library
- Akron Urban League
- Akron Zoo
- Allstate
- American Public Transportation Association
- Arts Now
- Association of Travel Instruction (ATI)
- Barberton Public Library
- Black Pages of Ohio – Summit Magazine
- Bridges of Summit County Initiative
- Bridges Out of Poverty
- CANAPI
- City of Akron Commission on Aging
- Cleveland Clinic Foundation
- Community Action Akron Summit
- ConxusNEO
- CSE Credit Union
- Cuyahoga Falls Public Library
- Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad
- Direction Home Advisory Council
- Downtown Akron Partnership
- Elevate Greater Akron
- Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce
- Full Term First Birthday Community Action Team
- GAR Foundation
- Goodwill Industries of Akron
- Greater Akron Chamber
- Highland Square Neighborhood Association
- Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance
- Leadership Akron
- Life Services
- Lincoln Financial
- Living Green Task Force
- Local Emergency Planning Committee
- Medical Mutual
- NEORide
- Northeast Ohio Travel Trainers
- Not Just October
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
- Ohio Erie Canal and Railway
- Ohio Public Transit Association
- Ohio Transit Risk Pool
- Oswald
- Project Ujima
- RAISE Good Jobs For Greater Akron
- Safe Kids
- Senior Independent Living Council
- Summa Health
- Summit County Elder Abuse Interdisciplinary Team
- Summit County Public Health
- Summit County Sheriff's Office
- Senior Independent Living Council
- Stark State College
- Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library
- Summit County Drug Task Force
- Summit County Stand Down
- Summit Metro Parks
- Summit Lake CDC
- Summit Probate Court
- TL Worldwide
- Towpath Credit Union
- Twinsburg Public Library
- The University of Akron
- United Way of Summit County
- Women's Transportation Seminar

## METRO IS ON THE MOVE



**Jarrod Hampshire**  
Chief Operations Officer



**Tatia Harris**  
Chief Culture Officer



**Jay Hunter**  
Chief Administrative Officer



**Angela Neeley**  
Chief Financial Officer

METRO implemented four chief leadership positions that led to the promotion of three current team members in March of 2022 and an external hire in June of 2022. The promotions marked the first step within the supporting strategy of organizational development and realignment in METRO's 10-year strategic plan that was approved by METRO's Board of Trustees in November of 2020.

# IT'S ELECTRIC!



In March 2022, METRO debuted two electric buses, paid for almost entirely by grants, at a ribbon-cutting event held at the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center. Attendees were invited on a bus tour, with an option to attend a vendor fair, and were offered refreshments. The two new buses were dubbed, "Jolt" and "Volt."

Those present at the ceremony were members of the METRO Board of Trustees, METRO Board President Robert DeJournett, METRO Board Vice President Mark Derrig, METRO CEO Dawn Distler, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro, Barberton Mayor Bill Judge, and Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Walters, along with passengers and other community leaders.

Savings on fuel and maintenance costs are two key benefits of the electric buses versus compressed natural gas models. The 2,000 solar panels on the roof of METRO's bus garage power the new buses with an estimated weekly charging cost of only \$200.

Electric buses benefit the environment and the health of the community, releasing zero carbon emissions and resulting in better air quality. The braking system also generates more electricity to charge the battery, potentially extending both the range and efficiency of the buses. The buses last for approximately 150 miles before they need to be recharged.

METRO plans to track sustainability metrics, including the amount of carbon dioxide being produced to charge the bus, the amount of reduced carbon dioxide emissions by using electricity, miles per kilowatt hour, power recovered from regeneration while driving, and renewable energy used to charge the buses in order to determine the environmental benefits and impacts of electric buses.

The electric buses are quieter and feature an added feature of USB power outlets at each seat. Passengers can experience a smoother ride while charging electronic devices in transit.

"This is an important milestone in our history as we unite with our transit peers to be nationally recognized leaders in the use of alternative fuels. We are committed to making Summit County a better place to work and live by exploring and implementing sustainable technology and practices."

- Dawn Distler, CEO



Jolt and Volt have traveled 28,000 miles since their introduction in March. They have used roughly 59,000 kilowatts over this time and have an average fuel cost of .02 cents per mile as compared to our diesel and CNG bus fleets, which average .70 cents and .32 cents per mile respectively in fuel costs. Jolt and Volt helped to keep our community's air cleaner by removing an estimated 99,500 lbs. of CO<sub>2</sub> that would have been generated by the two diesel buses they replaced.

# SOCIAL MEDIA PHOTO CONTESTS

METRO held photo contests on social media for passengers in February and September. Our transit-loyal riders sent in photos of buses, bus signs, shelters, and pictures of themselves and loved ones on various trips throughout our community. The winners received 31-day bus passes and were featured on METRO social media accounts.



Photo by Deltrece Daniels

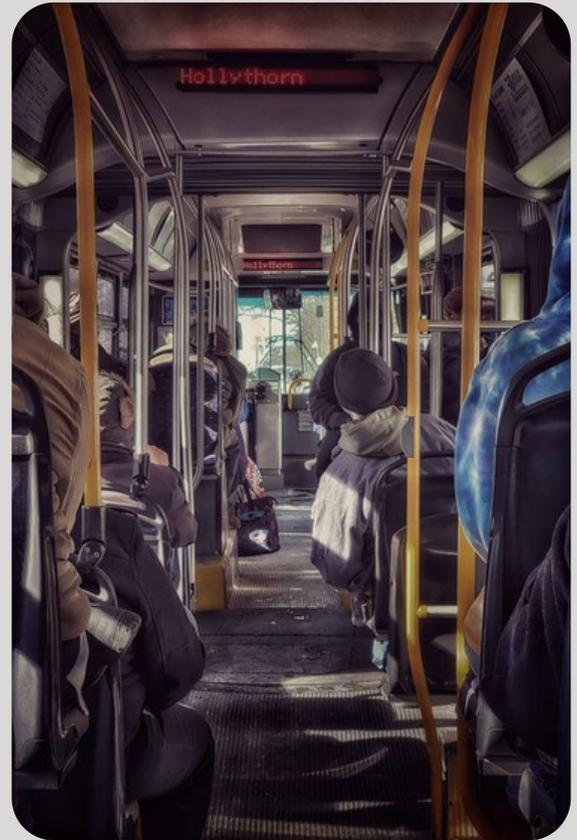


Photo by Thomas Skala



## TORCHBEARERS

In March, METRO hosted the monthly meeting of the Torchbearers, an Akron-based emerging leadership group. METRO CEO Dawn Distler welcomed the Torchbearers in March at their monthly meeting. Sustainability, essential workers, careers, Reimagine METRO, and mobility options were among the topics discussed. This was their first in-person meeting post-COVID and we were honored that they chose METRO as their meeting location.

## VACCINE CLINICS

METRO hosted Summit County Public Health COVID-19 vaccine clinics at the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center multiple times throughout 2022. Riders were given 31-day bus passes for receiving a vaccine or booster and were eligible for free rides to and from the clinics. METRO's partnership with Summit County Public Health has been a healthy initiative and beneficial to many of our riders.



## SUMMIT STORIES

METRO is proud to showcase our passengers, employees, and community members by sharing their stories. Summit Stories is a blog turned Facebook and Instagram platform created and curated by METRO. Summit Stories allows us to highlight the people who keep our community moving by sharing their stories with Summit County and beyond.

# SALUTE TO BLACK HISTORY MONTH

This year, METRO sponsored a Salute to Black History Month, an annual feature on WAKR. Every weekday in February, WAKR highlighted an individual or historical event that positively impacted the African American Community and our region of NE Ohio.

Ray Horner conducted the interview segments during his morning show and a recorded version then played throughout the day. The segments were also posted on a Black History Month landing page on the WAKR website.



# A VISIT FROM REPRESENTATIVE WEINSTEIN

METRO was thrilled to welcome Representative Casey Weinstein and his daughter Nora to our facilities in July 2022. Representative Weinstein is all about that electric bus— he even got behind the wheel himself for a quick test drive. METRO's Leadership Team led a tour of the 416 Kenmore facilities, highlighting our solar panels, electric buses, and bus wash. Representative Weinstein was impressed by METRO's latest and greatest go-green initiatives.



"On the morning of Friday, December 23, Akron faced the harshest winter storm in memory. I elected to take the METRO bus as I didn't want to contend with the hassle of driving. The bus drivers were professional and disciplined under the worst possible driving conditions. I write to salute their efforts and encourage your readers to use and support the Akron METRO system. The personnel of Akron METRO are doing more than their part to build a sustainable future for our city, and surely, we as citizens can recognize and contribute to their efforts."

-Dr. John Jakob, Akron

# IN MEMORIAM OF MR. BERNARD BEAR

The public transportation community mourned the loss of lifelong Akron resident and transit enthusiast Bernard M. Bear, who passed away January 27, 2022. Bear's passion for transit was exemplified daily as the longest-standing member of METRO's Board of Trustees, serving on numerous Board committees and as Board President. Mr. Bear left a lasting impact on METRO, and his dedication to transit will never be forgotten.



## MINORITY HEALTH FAIR

METRO hosted Summit County Public Health's annual Minority Health Fair at the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center on April 27 after a two-year hiatus. Health fairs meet a vital need for members of the community, providing important health related services free of charge. With more than 30 vendors in attendance, Summit County agencies presented a wide variety of resources to its residents.

Attendees had the ability to get COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters, have their blood pressure checked, have a confidential HIV screening, and receive free massages and haircuts. Those who received a COVID-19 vaccination were given a 31-day bus pass, an amazing incentive for many of METRO's core riders.



## AKRON PRIDE FESTIVAL

The annual Akron Pride Festival draws upwards of 20,000 to 30,000 people to the City of Akron every year. METRO was proud to represent equity and inclusion by participating in the 2022 Akron Pride March and sponsoring the Akron Pride Festival. Approximately 25 METRO team members, family, and friends participated in the March or worked the event. METRO contributed to event safety by parking two buses at either end of the festival area to assist in blocking traffic, as well as offering cooling stations and Wi-Fi to those that needed it on a hot Saturday in August.



# COME DRIVE WITH (B)US!

COVID-19 left transit agencies with a nationwide shortage of Operators, as routes and services were revised and team members left for new pursuits, retired, or left through typical attrition during the pandemic. METRO had no layoffs during this time but also did not hire. Therefore, in 2022 as METRO was starting to amend services, METRO felt the effects of the Operator shortage and knew drastic measures had to be taken to hire a large number of Operators at once.

Chief Operations Officer, Jarrod Hampshire, met with Dayton RTA to learn more about the two-day, hands-on hiring event they hosted over the summer. Hampshire presented the idea to the hiring committee for a proposed August event.

METRO implemented a one-day, hands-on event on August 6 in partnership with Stark State College, where potential candidates were asked to fill out an application, complete a short interview, learn how to secure a mobility device, and then test drive a bus around Stark State's Akron campus.

Heavy marketing efforts began about 20 days in advance, with paid and organic social media and website advertisement, features on local news networks, print ads, and billboards. METRO also had two buses wrapped to match the pop-art themed campaign. Additional marketing efforts included advertisement on Stark State's digital board, promotions at community events, printed flyers and grass roots campaigning, and a unique spin on radio advertisement.

Radio personalities were asked to visit Stark State in the weeks leading up to the event to test drive a bus themselves. They then shared their experience and promoted the hiring event on air and via social media.

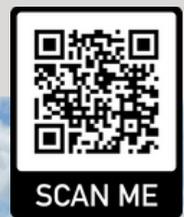
The hiring event turn-out landed METRO with 99 potential candidates on the day of the event within a three-hour time span. METRO extended offers to 71 candidates and hired 31 in September, who are currently out on the road, marking the largest Operator training class in METRO history.



**WOW!**



**BAM**



**WANT TO JOIN THE METRO TEAM? METRO IS STILL HIRING BUS OPERATORS! APPLY ONLINE AT [YOURMETROBUS.ORG](https://yourmetrobus.org) OR TEXT "HIREME" TO 330-516-6060.**

# FREE FARE WEEKENDS



Photo by Tim Fitzwater



Photo by Tim Fitzwater

With the unexpected arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, METRO passengers were hit the hardest. As the world stopped, transit-loyal riders did not hesitate to continue on with their lives and utilize public transit to get to their essential travel destinations. They were the first to put masks on, and the last to take them off. METRO was proud to offer free-fare weekends over the summer to help alleviate some of the financial burden on our passengers, as well as thank them for their continued support.

The campaign, called "Stay Cool, Ride METRO All Summer," gave riders free fixed-route and ADA services on Saturdays and Sundays throughout June, July, and August.

The campaign was promoted in a variety of ways, including billboards, paid and organic social media, radio commercials, bus advertising and more. Paid social media promotion reached over 66,000 Facebook users in June, July, and August.

METRO's PR & Marketing team also created a free Spotify playlist, filled with summer loving songs and songs related to the words "summer," "ride," and "free." Passengers were able to scan a QR code on bus flyers to pull up the playlist and listen for free during their commute.

As events reconvened in the summer of 2022, METRO promoted local events on bus routes, hoping to get passengers back out into the communities and back into a sense of normalcy. METRO posted weekend events taking place across Summit County on our website and social media. Some of the featured events included ongoing weekend events at Lock 3 and in Downtown Cuyahoga Falls, Juneteenth festivals, library access, local music venue access, Highland Square's PorchRokr Festival, and the Akron Pride Festival.

In turn, local organizations and event planners throughout the county were thrilled to have public transit as a viable, free option and further promoted the METRO free fares, creating more equitable access to events and services.

After taking a substantial hit in ridership due to the pandemic, METRO saw weekend ridership soar thanks to free fare weekends. With minimal change to weekday ridership, it was clear that passengers were not rescheduling their trips in order to only utilize the offered free fares. Saturday and Sunday ridership rose 25% over the course of the summer.

"I want to thank METRO for all the free rides this summer."  
- Nickie

"Thank you for being so generous to your customers."  
- James

"I used many buses and was able to save money this summer. Thank you for the free fare!"  
- Mitch



# GIVING BACK FOR THE HOLIDAYS

METRO strived to create new partnerships and to give back to our community during the holidays!

- Collected clothing, hats, gloves, and scarves to distribute at the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center on Giving Tuesday
- Decorated a bus and Transit Police car in Akron's Welcome Santa Light Up Parade
- Decorated the Rent-A-Center storefront on Kenmore Blvd.
- Collected Toys for Tots donations in collaboration with Goodyear, taking team members and children from a local daycare through the decorated blimp hanger
- Sponsored 15 local children in need through OPEN M
- Participated in Christmas with a Cop, where Chief Metcalf and Officer Woodruff took two Summit County children Christmas shopping
- Held a bus pass secret Santa, giving all employees two 1-day bus passes to give out random passengers



## HOLIDAY TREE FESTIVAL

METRO participated in the 41st Annual Holiday Tree Festival at the John S. Knight Center in November. Each year hundreds of trees, wreaths, and holiday decorations are available for purchase to benefit Akron Children's Hospital.

METRO is known for its entry of a tree made with all recycled materials, ranging from bus ad signs, denim, and jewelry. In 2022, the recycled tree was made entirely out of different sized lids. The trees are curated by METRO's PR & Marketing department.

# Reimagine METRO

*Come along for the ride!*

In early 2022, METRO rolled out a second round of public outreach to receive feedback on the Draft Reimagined Network and two growth scenarios showing where METRO would invest in service if more resources were available in the future. With a mix of focus groups, surveys, stakeholder meetings, and an open house, METRO continued to seek input from the public and METRO team members by bringing people together to discuss the future of public transit.

After this second round of outreach, the team made additional refinements to the Draft Reimagined Network based on the feedback received. From there, the Transit Development Plan (TDP) was developed, summarizing the process, the input received, the final proposed network, and a schedule for future engagement. The implementation date for the new network is slated for June 2023.



## AND THE WINNER IS...



The 2022 Ohio Public Transit Association (OPTA) Excellence Awards allowed METRO to recognize two long-term partnerships. Board Member **Gary Spring** was given the **Lifetime Achievement Award**, for his longtime dedication to METRO, and **Suzie Graham** from Downtown Akron Partnership (DAP) was given the **Collaborative Excellence Award** for DAP's role in the beautification of downtown Akron, including the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center. Dawn Distler proudly announced both awards at the OPTA Conference.



Safe Operator Award Recognition (SOAR) Awards are given to Ohio Transit Risk Pool members each year who have the best claims experience against their actual miles driven. In September of 2022, METRO won the **SOAR Division I Award for Safety**. There are three divisions based on each member's size.

**Chief Shawn Metcalf** accepted the award on behalf of METRO.

# 365 DAYS OF SERVICE

In 2022, METRO proudly provided service on the following holidays: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. METRO also continued service on the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and New Year's Eve, finishing out the year with 365 days of service!

Most of our passengers use METRO daily. By offering regular schedules on holidays, our riders can get to work, receive medical care, complete essential tasks, and move around the community as needed.

## NEW YEAR'S DAY

2,136 boardings

## MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

3,992 boardings

## MEMORIAL DAY

4,724 boardings

## INDEPENDENCE DAY

4,283 boardings

## LABOR DAY

5,116 boardings

## THANKSGIVING

1,989 boardings

## THANKS-FRIDAY

8,361 boardings

## CHRISTMAS EVE

3,582 boardings

## CHRISTMAS DAY

1,187 boardings

## CHRISTMAS DAY (OBSERVED)

7,027 boardings

\*Holiday ridership shows fixed-route data only.

# 2022 AT A GLANCE



3,473,534 boardings



255,577 student boardings



4,734,927 miles traveled



10,600 bikes transported



260,981 Customer Care responses to inquire about fixed-route and demand response services



437,460 social media impressions



365 days of service



10% of boardings used EZfare tickets



9 Operators achieved 20+ years of safe driving (years without preventable accidents)



159,756 miles between preventable accidents



# METRO RIDERS NAMED COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Akron Urban League holds nominations annually for persons and organizations creating positive impact on the community. In 2022, METRO nominated its passengers. METRO passengers were incredibly resilient throughout the pandemic, unable to shutdown with the rest of the world. They were the first people to put masks on, and the last to take them off. They kept the community afloat as front-line and essential workers.

**METRO passengers** were awarded the **Community Champion Award** by Akron Urban League. To honor the award winners, Akron Urban League hosted a red-carpet style gala at the John S. Knight Center in August. METRO invited a handful of both fixed-route and demand response passengers to attend the event where they were recognized as the faces behind the award.

To thank the passengers for their resilience and transit-loyalty, METRO also offered free-fares the week following the gala on all services.



**CONGRATULATIONS!**

METRO Passengers have been awarded the Community Champions Award from the Akron Urban League.

You are a champion with each and every trip you take. You make a difference in our community and METRO is better with YOU on board.

**Free Fares  
August 14-20**

in recognition of your efforts to keep our community moving

 Akron Urban League



"Thank you. I'm on a fixed income, so this really helps!!"  
- Vicki D.

"We couldn't have done it without you guys!"  
- Tim B.

# CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH

METRO celebrated Juneteenth at this year's company picnic by passing out commemorative Juneteenth pins and creating a video showcasing what Juneteenth means to our employees. Operators were also given extra pins to hand out to passengers. Team members, their families, and retirees were all invited to the annual company picnic event.



# GAS PRICES SURGED

Gas prices surged to record highs over the summer of 2022, reaching over \$5 per gallon across Summit County. METRO was proud to offer an affordable transportation alternative to residents and offered free fares on Saturdays and Sundays from June through August.

A METRO social media campaign compared gas and fare prices, encouraging residents to consider METRO for their transportation needs.

Problem?		Solution.	
Gasoline	Self Serve	<b>METRO</b>	
Regular	5 09 <sup>9</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	Single Ride	1 25
Plus	5 29 <sup>9</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	All Day Pass	2 50
Supreme	5 49 <sup>9</sup> / <sub>10</sub>	NCX Fare	5 00

Donna called in to thank the Operator that showed her kindness during a time when her family was struggling. She needed to go to the food pantry and had no money for a ride, so she walked the five miles. However, the pantry gave her a week's worth of food and she realized she wouldn't be able to make the five mile walk back. She saw the bus coming and thought she would take a chance to see if the driver could help her out. Operator Danna G. indeed helped her, and Donna wanted that driver to know that she is so happy that people like her still exist.



# OFFICIALLY ONBOARD

Officially Onboard is back! The initiative began pre-pandemic and gave METRO the opportunity to take elected officials out on routes throughout the community. In November, Judge Oldfield was Officially Onboard with her team from Turning Point.

Turning Point provides help to those struggling with housing, transportation, mental health, securing jobs, cognitive therapy, and addiction. The majority of the Turning Point clients utilize public transit, so the team wanted the opportunity to ride a day in their shoes.



## BETTER TOGETHER CONNECTIONS GROUP

Chief Culture Officer, Tatia Harris, formed the Better Together Connections Group in mid-2022. This committee consists of team members who want to bring a focus of diversity, equity, and inclusion to METRO.

Not Pictured: Lavar Jacobs & Shawn Metcalf



# METRO ELECTRIC BUSES HELP TEST TIRES



METRO partnered with Goodyear in October for a photo and video shoot to promote tires for electric vehicles around the globe. METRO has been testing the tires on the road to evaluate tire performance.

**YOURMETROBUS.ORG**

**@YOURMETROBUS**



**@SUMMITSTORIES\_**



**METRO REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY**  
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