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Euclid residents voice grievances over RTA cuts

Jacob Lammers

JLammers@News-Herald.com

Euclid residents may have to walk farther to get to the bus.

Residents aired their grievances Tuesday night during a public hearing hosted by the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.

Visitors who attended the meeting at the Euclid Public Library were upset that RTA plans to reduce service levels by 12 percent. The average bus fare is not anticipated to change and will remain \$2.25.

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The public hearing was the third of 10 meetings that RTA representatives plan to host to inform the public about proposals to modify/realign/discontinue bus services.

The reductions in services are necessary to make up a \$20 million drop in sales taxes, which accounts for about 70 percent of RTA's revenue, CEO Joseph A. Calabrese said. In 2008, RTA collected \$173.6 million in sales taxes, which fell to \$154.6 million in 2009.

Calabrese added that RTA

also has less monetary support from the state. In 2002, public transit funding was cut by 75 percent.

"We just can't spend more money than we have," said Calabrese, adding that RTA does not plan to "cut any more service than what we're proposing to cut."

Some of the affected areas include:

■ Discontinue service on route No. 39/39F, which includes Lake Shore Boulevard in Euclid

■ Discontinue service on route No. 239, which is on Babbitt Road between Interstate 90 and Lake Shore Boulevard

■ Reduce frequency and span of service on route No. 32, which includes segments of Cedar Road east of Interstate 271 near Lyndhurst

"People will be inconvenienced; that's not the same thing as being unable to travel," said RTA's Joel Freilich, adding that route No. 39 will be discontinued except during rush hours. Also route No. 30 is expected to serve route No. 39 stops east of East 185th Street.

Euclid resident Donna Foster said her bad knees force her to see doctors on several occasions. With the changes in service, Foster said walking farther, especially in the snowy weather, will be challenging.

"I can walk short distances,"

she said. "If I have to walk to Lake Shore (Boulevard), I wouldn't make my appointments."

An area business owner who did not give her name said she was worried about the discontinuation of route No. 34.

"I need the bus," said the woman, who is visually impaired. "Without the (route No.) 34, I won't have a job. I just don't want the bus route to change for me."

State Rep. Kenny Yuko, D-Richmond Heights, attended the public hearing and said the recently passed casino ballot in Ohio could go a long way in providing funding sources for public transportation.

"I do understand the importance of transportation. We do need a steady public transportation system if we're going to make a success out of the gaming program," Yuko said.

RTA representatives said Ohio ranks 40th in the country among states that provide funding for their public transit systems.

"This is something that's not being overlooked by our friends in Columbus," Yuko said. "We're very aware of the impact."

Euclid Mayor Bill Cervenik, who sits on the RTA Board of Trustees, encouraged city residents to contact state and federal legislators and ask for more funding for public transit systems.