

Annual Report

2020



South Central Transit Authority

Providing Public Transportation
for Berks & Lancaster Counties in Pennsylvania

SCTA Overview - Fiscal Year 2019-2020



David W. Kilmer
SCTA Executive Director

It has definitely been an interesting year in public transit. After being in the business for over 41 years, I thought I had pretty much seen and experienced everything in the public transit arena, but I guess if you are in it long enough you really do see everything! Prior to March, 2020 was on pace to show a nice increase in ridership in both communities. We were making progress on the building expansion in Reading, along with improvements to the BARTA Transportation Center and new buses were being delivered in Reading and Lancaster to keep the fleet up to date. After March, the bottom basically fell out and we have never experienced such dramatic decreases in ridership in the history of either service. COVID-19 has devastated the public transit industry across the country with decreases of 70% or more in ridership on fixed route services. BARTA and RRTA have also experienced nearly 80% decrease in ridership on our shared ride services. We moved early to go to rear boarding and free rides, protective barriers for our drivers, sanitizing the fleet, and obtaining PPE, although this was a real struggle early on.

The big question that I always hear is when will things get back to normal, which is hard to define under the circumstances. The reduced levels of service are nearly back to pre-COVID levels, but will the ridership return? Will unemployment levels decrease to prior COVID levels? What is going to happen to funding as the states and local governments experience record-setting revenue losses? How much longer will we need to wear face coverings? These, plus many more questions are already shaping up to make the next fiscal year almost as interesting. SCTA will continue to make riding transit a safe mode of transportation for the public and continue our efforts in cleaning and sanitizing the vehicles and facilities. We will also make every effort to keep our levels of service to enable access to jobs throughout the communities and keep the service financially sound. SCTA is proud of being able to continue providing service through this pandemic, but unfortunately, it is not over yet so everyone must continue to be vigilant and take the necessary precautions, like wearing a mask, washing your hands, and staying home if sick.



SCTA Board Members

Kevin Barnhardt, Chairman
June Wolf, Vice Chairwoman
Jeffrey Ouellet, Secretary
James Schlegel, Treasurer
Bonnie Glover
Gail Landis
Cheryl Love
Dennis Rex
Timothy Snyder
Sandra Thompson

Jill Nagy Solicitor

SCTA 2019-2020 Stats

Fixed-Route

Total Ridership: 3,847,187

Total Revenue Miles: 3,061,992

Total Revenue Hours: 239,829

Total Passenger Miles: 16,979,112

Paratransit (shared-ride)

Total Ridership: 405,164

Total Revenue Miles: 2,535,529

Total Revenue Hours: 165,345

Total Passenger Miles: 3,883,490

Total Operating Revenues, Federal & State Funding: \$32,339,627

Total Operating Expenses: \$32,301,858

RRTA - Lancaster Division

Red Rose Transit (fixed-route)

1,508,239 one-way trips

Total Revenue Miles: 1,579,591

Total Revenue Hours: 110,675

Total Passenger Miles: 7,405,646

Red Rose Access (paratransit)

209,490 one-way trips

Total Revenue Miles: 1,576,744

Total Revenue Hours: 98,625

Total Passenger Miles: 2,410,530

Financial Statistics

Operating Revenues: \$6,977,362

Federal Funding: \$3,793,446

State Funding: \$4,427,924

Lancaster County Funding: \$195,205

Operating Expenses: \$15,393,937

BARTA - Reading Division

BARTA Bus (fixed-route)

2,338,948 one-way trips

Total Revenue Miles: 1,482,401

Total Revenue Hours: 129,154

Total Passenger Miles: 9,573,466

BARTA Special Services (paratransit)

195,674 one-way trips

Total Revenue Miles: 958,785

Total Revenue Hours: 66,720

Total Passenger Miles: 1,472,960

Financial Statistics

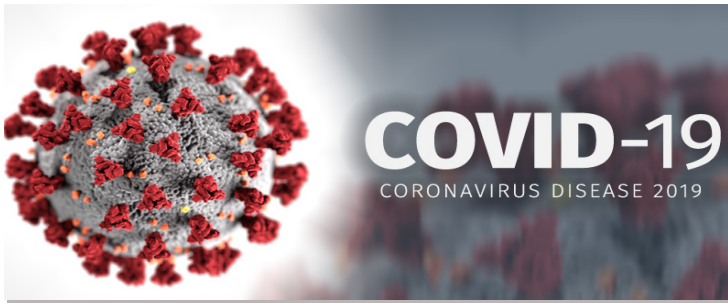
Operating Revenues: \$7,594,360

Federal Funding: \$4,527,930

State Funding: \$4,628,195

Berks County Funding: \$195,205

Operating Expenses: \$16,907,922



Public Transit has always been a vital service for our communities.

BARTA and RRTA were essential before COVID-19, essential during COVID-19 and will be essential after COVID-19.

BARTA and RRTA will continue to serve the community with vital transportation service.



The beginning of 2020 started off like any normal year, with SCTA looking ahead to the many projects and improvements planned for BARTA and RRTA. Then in the middle of March, all of Pennsylvania began to feel the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Schools closed. Businesses closed. People were asked to stay at home. The Great Pause began.

As an essential service, public transit continued to operate providing service to those essential workers needing to continue getting to work. Every day seemed to have new updates on the Coronavirus and how Pennsylvania was handling the spread of it. SCTA Staff, RRTA and BARTA employees, all essential workers too, had to adapt to the changes. Protective supplies at the beginning were a challenge to order due to demand. Ridership decreased with so many people staying home and not working or doing their normal travel routines. Service was reduced to be efficient with lower ridership and operating costs. BARTA and RRTA service was moved to Saturday schedules during the weekdays. To help with social distancing, both BARTA and RRTA cancelled fare collection and asked customers to board from the rear door of the buses. Enhanced cleaning measures were put in place on buses and at BARTA and RRTA transit centers.



Constant monitoring of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Pennsylvania's response became a daily task to help determine how and when everyone would be able to move to the different phases put in place by Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine and Governor Wolf. Those first months were challenging for everyone. As Pennsylvania began to slowly open up again, ridership slowly increased, but not back to a normal level compared to last year.

Moving into the Fall and Winter months, all staff and riders will continue to be required to wear masks while working and riding. Shield barriers and hand sanitizer stations on buses have become permanent fixtures. Unfortunately, COVID-19 is not going away quickly. BARTA and RRTA will continue to serve the community with vital transportation now and into the future whatever the "new normal" looks like.

COVID-19 Timeline

March 16	Governor Wolf orders Non-Essential businesses to close state-wide. Orders Schools to close and move to on-line learning.
March 23	Began free rides and rear door entry on BARTA & RRTA
March 30	Began operating a Saturday schedule on BARTA & RRTA
April 1	Governor Wolf orders a state-wide “Stay at Home” order
April 16	BARTA & RRTA participate in APTA #SoundtheHorn Campaign
April 20	BARTA and RRTA require wearing masks for all employees and customers
April 27	BARTA facilities BIO-Cleaned
April 28	RRTA Facilities BIO-Cleaned
May 11	RRTA makes schedule modifications to certain routes to add more service.
May 12	BARTA Special Services Operator tested positive for COVID-19
May 15	Ehrlich Pest Control, 10 Vanguard Drive, Reading, PA donated Thank You Gift Bags for the BARTA Special Services drivers for being essential workers
May 28	Outback Steakhouse in Reading donated salads for BARTA employees to say thank you for being an essential worker
June 1	RRTA resumes normal service except Rt. 16, Rt. 20 & Rt. 21. Rt. 6 will not operate
June 15	Thermometer Imaging Machines set-up at BARTA & RRTA Offices for Employee Temperature Checks
June 26	Berks and Lancaster County move to Green Phase
June 29	Shield Barriers Installation Completed at RRTA
July 6	Shield Barriers Installation Completed at BARTA
July 20	Hand Sanitizer Stations Installed on RRTA Buses
July 21	RRTA facilities BIO-Cleaned
July 24	Hand Sanitizer Stations Installed on BARTA Buses
July 23	BARTA Facilities BIO-Cleaned
August 10	BARTA and RRTA resume collecting fares
August 13	Hand Sanitizer Stations installed on BARTA Special Services Vehicles
September 8	HVAC System Upgrade for BARTA facilities completed
September 30	HVAC System Upgrade for RRTA facilities completed
October 5	RRTA returns to full service on all routes that were modified
October 19	BARTA returns to normal service

COVID-19 Ridership Impact

Fixed-Route Ridership

2019		2020		Loss in Ridership
BARTA	2,756,040	BARTA	2,338,948	-417,092
RRTA	1,778,283	RRTA	1,508,239	-270,044

Shared-Ride Ridership

2019		2020		Loss in Ridership
BARTA Special Services	238,516	BARTA Special Services	195,674	-42,842
Red Rose Access	279,425	Red Rose Access	209,490	-69,935

Statewide Purchase of Paratransit Vans

SCTA served as the lead agency for a Pennsylvania consortium of transit authorities soliciting proposals for the purchase of paratransit vehicles. The consortium included 43 Pennsylvania transit authorities and PennDOT. On March 18, 2020, the SCTA Board awarded three contracts for three different models of shared ride vehicles included in the request for proposal. The awarded contracts provided for the purchase of vehicles covering two years with the option to extend the contracts for an additional three years. In the initial two years of the awarded contracts, Pennsylvania transit authorities may order up to 1300 shared ride vehicles.



On March 18, 2020, SCTA authorized the purchase of new shared ride vehicles under the terms of the newly awarded contracts for paratransit vehicles. This purchase includes thirteen (13) wheelchair accessible shared ride vehicles for its Lancaster operation at a total cost of \$1,045,863 and sixteen (16) wheelchair accessible shared ride vehicles for its Reading operation at a total cost of \$1,287,216. These vehicles are projected for delivery in the fall of 2020.

Solar Powered Bus Shelters

In July 2019, SCTA ordered its first Solar Power bus shelters at a unit price of \$8,605 for the 5 FT x 8 FT shelter. The shelters were delivered in October 2019.

Muhlenberg Township, Berks County, was advancing Phase I of its 5th Street Highway Streetscape Improvement project. As part of this project, Muhlenberg Township's improvement plans included locations for bus shelters. The installation of the first four Solar Powered Bus Shelters was completed in December 2019 by Muhlenberg Township's contractor. The four shelters are located on 5th Street Highway northbound at the Madeira Plaza entrance; 5th Street Highway southbound at the Muhlenberg Shopping Plaza entrance; 5th Street Highway southbound across from the Plaza 222 driveway; and 5th Street Highway southbound at East Bellevue Avenue.



Solar Panel Bus Shelter on 5th Street Highway near Bellevue Avenue intersection.

RRTA's Route & Schedule Changes Provide Bus Service to Two Lancaster Hospitals

Red Rose Transit's annual route and schedule changes included minor time adjustments to schedules to improve on-time performance and modify some trips to continue to be as efficient with the Lancaster County service as possible. Two main highlights for the route and schedule changes was service to two hospitals on two RRTA county bus routes.

On August 26, 2019, **RRTA's Route 11/Ephrata** bus route began traveling to WellSpan Ephrata Community Hospital on Martin Avenue in Ephrata. The Route 11 route was modified around the downtown area of Ephrata to begin serving the hospital. Many employees and patients trying to travel to the hospital were eager to begin using the service.

Due to the closure and merger of Lancaster Regional Hospital (formerly St. Joseph's Hospital) in Lancaster City, resulted in more employees needing to travel to the UPMC Pinnacle Hospital off of Lititz Pike. Previously, **RRTA's Route 10/Lititz** bus route had stopped deviating directly to the hospital. With the changes to the two hospitals, RRTA's **Route 10/Lititz** bus route did began directly serving the hospital again in August 2019.



BARTA Completes Bus Storage Facility Renovation & Expansion Project



New addition to facility. Photo taken on Bern Street at the rear of the building.

The existing Bus Storage building located at the BARTA Administrative Center Facility, 11th and Exeter in Reading, was originally opened in the mid 1900's. The Bus Storage was undersized and unable to accommodate all of BARTA's bus and shared ride vehicle fleet. Due to its age and past usage, the Storage Building's overhead door vertical clearance limited the height of buses that could be stored in the building, such as the electric hybrid fixed route buses.

In June 2018, SCTA awarded construction contracts for the renovation and expansion of the Bus Storage building. The project included the expansion of the building to accommodate the indoor storage of additional vehicles and an indoor connection with the bus wash and maintenance facility. The renovation of the existing building included the removal and reconstruction of the overhead doors to increase the vertical height clearance; a new roof, concrete floor, lighting and heating/ventilating systems; and the installation of sky lights to reduce the demand for light as an energy saving measure.

The project was completed at a cost of \$7,000,000 and the facility opened for use in June 2020.



Inside renovated facility with improved lighting.



All BARTA vehicles can fit inside expanded facility helping with cleanliness of the vehicles.

BARTA Transportation Center Roof Replacement



The BARTA Transportation Center (BTC) opened in 2003. With a building that is almost 20 years old, SCTA has in place a program providing for the rehabilitation of the BTC in order to ensure its continued use as the transportation center in downtown Reading. One critical structural component needing replaced was the BTC roof. A contract for the replacement of the roof was awarded in October 2018. The roof replacement project was completed in September 2019 at a cost of \$2.3 million.

Santa's Free Pet Bed Express



The BARTA Bus stuffed with Pet Beds.

Free Pet Bed Distribution - Humane Pennsylvania

How does Humane Pennsylvania in Reading, PA distribute over 5,000 free pet beds to Berks County residents? They call BARTA and stuff a bus full of pet beds and travel to different locations on the Santa Free Pet Bed Express. Humane Pennsylvania, the management organization that oversees The Humane Society of Berks County, contacted BARTA for help in distributing the 5,000 donated pet beds they received from PetSmart. On Thursday, December 19, 2019, Humane Pennsylvania staff and BARTA staff traveled in a bus full of 700 Pet Beds to seven different locations. 100 Pet Beds were distributed at each location throughout the day. Other events were held by Humane Pennsylvania to distribute all the beds to the community during the holiday season.



People standing in line waiting for the Pet Distribution to start at Schell's along 5th Street Highway in Temple, PA



Humane Pennsylvania staff hand out Free Pet Beds to eager visitors.



People standing in line waiting for the Pet Distribution to start at Berkshire Mall.

Community Art Enhances BARTA Bus Shelters

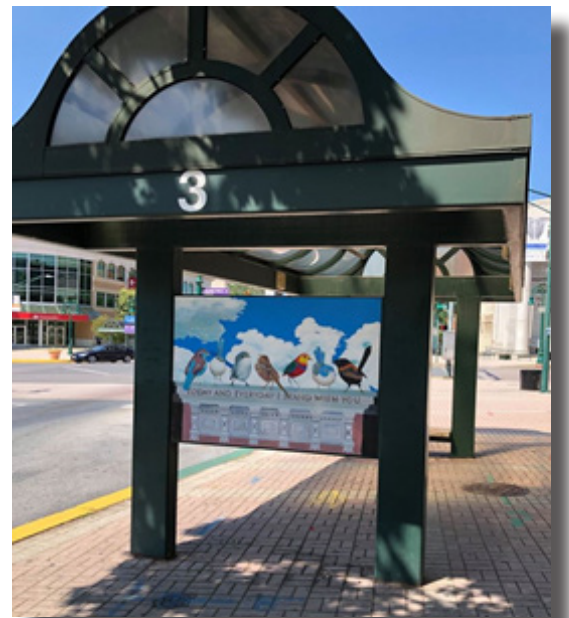


In response to COVID-19 and encouraging community partnerships, South Central Transit Authority (SCTA) who oversees Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority (BARTA) in Berks County, PA, partnered with Berks Arts Council, City of Reading and Greater Reading Chamber Alliance to launch a new art initiative in Downtown Reading, PA. The project, entitled Art for Hope, Healing and Community Unity in the Public Realm was created to bridge the social distance requirements by creating new ways of social connection through art. On Tuesday, August 18, 2020, the selected public art was unveiled on BARTA Bus Shelters in Downtown Reading.

The initiative commissioned local artists (amateur & professional) to produce artwork that would respond to and inspire the community during this current time.

The selected art was installed on eight BARTA Bus Shelters in the downtown hub of The City of Reading on 5th & Penn Streets. Dave Kilmer, SCTA Executive Director stated, “I think it has added a true improvement to the downtown of Reading. It’s something everybody can be proud of.”

A call for artists began in July with nearly 30 submissions. All artists were from The City of Reading and Berks County. City of Reading, Mayor Eddie Moran was pleased to see the murals and spoke at the unveiling. “It’s truly an honor to have this artwork in the city of Reading,” he said. “Our bus shelters are where the day starts and ends for many individuals. I am happy all the positive space it will bring and have for every rider throughout the day.”

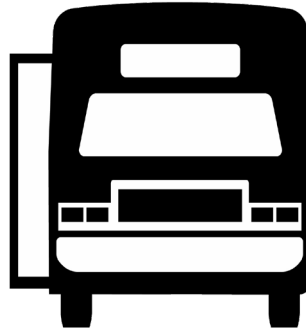
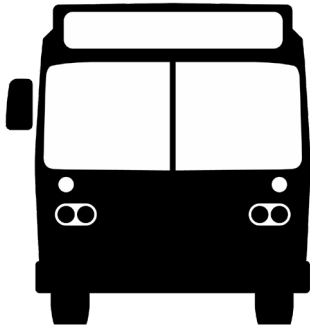


The mission of Berks Arts Council is to inspire, engage and unite our community through arts education, collaboration and presentation. The eight artists selected to have their art on display are Katherine Addison, Julia Cocuzza, Theron Cook, Nicolas Fay, Suzanne Fellows, Eric Leatherman, Jennifer Nitka and Alicia Tejada.



Meggan Kerber, Executive Director of the Berks Arts Council said, “This initiative to create outdoor galleries throughout the city of Reading was inspired by many local artists, art organizations, business and community leaders. This is the first of many outdoor galleries.”

SCTA Annual Performance Report



Fixed Route

Shared-Ride

Customer Service

Miles Between Major Roadcalls
BARTA - 8,121
RRTA - 9,446

Miles Between Minor Roadcalls
BARTA - 6,611
RRTA - 21,160

Major Bus Breakdowns
BARTA - 184
RRTA - 168

Minor Bus Breakdowns
BARTA - 226
RRTA - 75

Miles Between Major Roadcalls
BARTA - 85,545
RRTA - 67,707

Miles Between Minor Roadcalls
BARTA - 940,990
RRTA - 32,443

Major Vehicle Breakdowns
BARTA - 11
RRTA - 23

Minor Vehicle Breakdowns
BARTA - 1
RRTA - 48

Telephone Calls Received
BARTA - 143,282
RRTA - 125,435

Telephone Calls Answered
BARTA - 135,622
RRTA - 111,005

Call Answer Rate
BARTA - 94.65%
RRTA - 88.50%

Major Bus Breakdowns are failures that cause the bus to go out of service because of safety concerns. Examples are Brakes, Doors, Steering.

Minor Bus Breakdowns are failures of some other mechanical element that are not a safety concern but are not working properly and may need repair for proper service. Examples are Fareboxes, Wheelchair Lifts, Air Conditioning.

Annual Report 2020



SCTA Quick Facts



**Total Fixed-Route
Ridership**
3,847,187

of Buses in Fleet
BARTA - 51
RRTA - 43

of Bus Routes
BARTA - 19
RRTA - 17



**Total Shared-Ride
Ridership**
405,164

of Shared-Ride Vehicles
BARTA - 56
RRTA - 72

SCTA Employees: 58



Red Rose Transit Authority
Service Area: Lancaster County, PA
Square Miles: 984
Population: 542,903
RRTA Employees: 86



Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority
Service Area: Berks County, PA
Square Miles: 866
Population: 415,732
BARTA Employees: 141

South Central Transit Authority

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