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## City looking to put the brakes on cutting Circulator routes

By Kate Spirgen

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**LAKESWOOD** — Bus riders, residents and city officials are fighting the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority's decision to cut Community Circulator routes, number 804 in particular.

Mayor Ed FitzGerald led a rally on the steps of the Lakewood Public Library Main Branch the evening of July 30, expressing his outrage not only at RTA's decision, but also about the way it was made.

"I'm mad as hell about this situation," he said. "You don't make these decisions on a Friday afternoon when no one is paying attention."

FitzGerald stated that 25 percent of all Community Circulator ridership is on the Lakewood route.

RTA announced that all 12 Community Circulators would cease operations on Sept. 20 in order to combat a projected \$5.2 million deficit caused by a 33 percent cut in state funding and dwindling county sales tax revenues.

The cuts have caused a

public outcry in the city and petitioners at the rally asked all those in attendance to join in their efforts to reverse RTA's decision.

"I'm very concerned for our elderly in Lakewood," said petitioner Michaelle Palmer, who rides the circulator every day. "They use it to run their errands and get their groceries. I'm concerned because there are so many elderly, handicapped and disabled people in our neighborhood and I'm out here to speak for them because they need their independence to be happy."

"There's something going on behind the scenes and we're going to get to the bottom of it," FitzGerald said. "We're going to explore every legal option and keep petitioning until it changes."

According to RTA, large bus routes will cover all but 9 percent of the Lakewood circulator route, the most-used of all 12. RTA staff will be present 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Aug. 17 at Lakewood Public Library Main Branch, 15425 Detroit Ave. to help circulator riders plan alternative routes using other buses.



KATE SPIRGEN/SUN NEWS

**Lakewood Mayor Ed FitzGerald announces his refusal to accept the RTA decision to eliminate Community Circulators.**