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Canton, Ohio – January 28, 2009

***** For Immediate Release *****

SARTA AND UNION AGREE ON THREE YEAR CONTRACT

Cooperation Helps Keep Buses Running Despite Economic Climate

Canton, Ohio - During the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority's (SARTA) January 27th Board of Trustees Meeting, a three year contract was approved with Ohio Council 8, of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO, Local 1880. The agreement is effective from January 5, 2010 to January 4, 2013. This is the culmination of nearly 4 months of negotiations. The contract was approved on a vote of 76 to 23.

This contract, along with other expenditure cuts, allowed SARTA to eliminate a nearly \$500,000 budget deficit. The 2010 budget of \$13.9 million was also approved at the same meeting. This was a reduction from the previously revised budget from July 2009 that was \$14.9 million.

"I am thankful to the members of Local 1880 for being professional, creative, and flexible through this process. Without their diligent work, SARTA would not have been able to continue providing the same level of public transportation service for Stark County," said Charles DeGraff, SARTA's Board President.

The tone of the negotiations was set in part from SARTA's involvement with the Northeast Ohio Labor Management Council. The Council consists of leaders from business and labor with the goal of improving relations and interactions between the two groups. Because of this involvement, SARTA began a process of meeting with labor to resolve issues to improve SARTA's service.

"Tom Bernabei started this process while he was interim CEO that I have continued. The process built trust and a good working relationship between management and labor that allowed these contract negotiations to be successful. Without this understanding from both sides, we would not have been able to achieve resolution on the wide number of issues in this contract," said Kirt Conrad, SARTA CEO.

The major provisions of the contract include:

- Vacation is calculated at the beginning of each year and awarded based on years of service. Transition years' weeks are awarded based upon hire date.
- Reduction of designated holidays by one in exchange for an additional floating holiday.
- Extra board operators will no longer be guarantee 8 hours per day; however the 40 hour weekly guarantee remains.
- Hospitalization deductibles were increased from \$0 to \$500 single/\$1,000 family, at 90% reimbursement. Out of pocket maximums of \$1,500 single/\$3,000 family were added. A Flexible Spending Plan was added.

- The grievance process can begin at step 2 regarding contract interpretation.
- SARTA will give Local 1880 five (“5”) days notice of any new or modified work rule or regulation.
- A wage increase of 1% in 2010 and 2011(an additional 1% in 2011 if sales tax receipts reach \$11,500,000, and a raise of 2% for 2012.
- A \$100 signing bonus will be given in 2010 only.
- Technician’s tool allowance will be increase by \$100.

“This contract means job security for our members. Our members wanted to support the company during these troubled times. Management worked with us to address our concerns and questions regarding the proposals. They were flexible to our proposals and input which helped greatly in reaching this agreement,” said Omar Abdullah, Local 1880 President. Local 1880 represents 139 hourly bus operators, vehicle technicians, and vehicle service personnel.

The contract allows SARTA to avoid further layoffs. In September SARTA implemented a 12% service reduction (the single largest service cut in its history). SARTA operates 89 buses and facilitates 2.6 million rides per year on Proline and fixed routes services. The public bus service supports nearly 1,850 jobs and 450 students on a daily basis. An additional 370 riders are transported to medical services every day.

“I would like to thank the members of 1880 for their consideration and help in keeping SARTA running. Without their support, continuing to operate through 2010 would have been impossible,” said Kirt Conrad, SARTA CEO.

See the SARTA website (www.SARTAonline.com) for possible updates or other details.

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Media outlets can find photos to use for articles at www.SARTAonline.com/press.