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SPORTS, 1B

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SARTA riders change buses at the Main terminal in downtown Canton on April 3. KEVIN WHITLOCK/MASSILLON INDEPENDENT

SARTA to seek sales tax renewal, not an increase

Kelly Byer

Canton Repository
USA TODAY NETWORK

CANTON – The Stark Area Regional Transit Authority will seek to renew — not increase — its existing sales tax levy this November.

During a two-hour special meeting on July 8, the transit board and its executive staff debated the merits and risks of seeking a 0.1% sales tax increase. Voters rejected the same increase in May by a 1,727-vote margin.

“I think everyone had an opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions,” board President Gregory Blasiman said after the meeting at SARTA headquarters.

SARTA’s current sales tax expires in September 2027. Voters first approved a 0.25% sales tax to fund the public transit service in 1997, and SARTA has not requested an increase since.

Executive staff members made their case for continuing to campaign for an increase, but several board members expressed reservations because of the

“The calendar’s just not our friend on this.”

Christopher Nichols
SARTA board member

political and economic climate. Others questioned whether there was enough time to adequately educate voters.

“The calendar’s just not our friend on this,” board member Christopher Nichols said.

SARTA’s funding needs

He and several other board members agreed that SARTA needs more money to provide countywide services but would have a better chance of securing a 10-year renewal. Nichols said he would rather secure a renewal and “lay the groundwork” for a future increase than risk a lack of funding.

“We only lost by a small margin,” Tammy Brown, SARTA’s director of Human Resources, countered.

Brown said that previous cuts to SARTA services and confusion contributed to the levy’s defeat and that continuing the status quo would not serve all residents or build trust.

SARTA operates 24 fixed bus routes in Alliance, Akron, Canton, Jackson Township, Louisville, Massillon, and North Canton. There is also a Proline service that can be scheduled for people who can not independently use the fixed routes.

SARTA officials have said that additional money would allow the agency to update vehicles, some of which are nine years old, and restore services cut in recent years. A new bus costs roughly \$700,000 to \$800,000.

SARTA board reaches decision

CEO Ralph Lee said that SARTA could have done more voter registration and door-to-door outreach, but he doesn’t expect an increase campaign to be any easier in a few years. He said

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Internet expansion raises risk for digging calamities

Gas lines, other utilities located underground

Amanda Garrett

Akron Beacon Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Many of us may not think much about the tangles of pipes and conduits carrying water, electricity and other modern necessities beneath the ground we live and play on.

But a recent boom in businesses bringing high-speed internet cables across the country has also led to booms of another kind: Explosions after digging crews inadvertently slice through gas lines.

Locally, three Twinsburg Township homes were decimated and 36 others damaged when contractors struck a gas line June 25 on Hiram Lane in the Woodlands neighborhood.

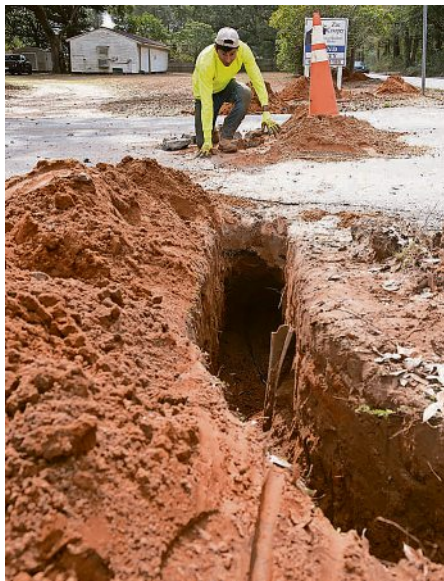
Nationally, Common Ground Alliance – a nonprofit trade association dedicated to protecting underground infrastructure – reported that water and sewer projects were the leading type of work involved in damages, followed by telecom/CATV, construction/development and natural gas work.

Common Ground is still working on its 2025 report, but industry watchers

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More inside

What the color of tiny flags and paint markings in your yard means, Page 3A



The first wave of fiber optic cable being installed now is largely backed by private equity and involves major companies. The next wave, happening later this year, will be funded by the government and may involve start-ups and small companies fighting for millions of dollars. Here, a worker in Santa Rosa, Florida, is installing the cables for AT&T in February.

TONY GIBERSON/PENSACOLA NEWS JOURNAL

Ceasefire falls apart as Iran buries leader

Michael Loria and Rachel Barber
USA TODAY

The fragile ceasefire between the United States and Iran appeared to have fallen apart over continued strife over the Strait of Hormuz as Iranians buried their supreme leader, killed by U.S.-Israel forces at the outset of the war.

There were no new U.S. strikes on Iran overnight into July 10. But the United States previously struck Iran’s southern coastal and eastern provinces, after which Iranian armed forces launched attacks on U.S. military infrastructure in Persian Gulf states July 9.

Separately on that day, Iranian media reported multiple explosions

across southern Iran, including Bush-ehr, where one of the country’s nuclear plants is located.

A U.S. official told USA TODAY that President Donald Trump regards Iran’s recent attacks on commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical shipping lane, as “acts of terrorism.”

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