



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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MTA Board discusses WeGo's financial future

Looming Metro budget, need for transit improvements, dominate end of year board meeting

NASHVILLE – Today, the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors discussed possible scenarios surrounding the \$22.8 million in funding cut by Metro last year and its implications on the upcoming FY2021-22 budget. Staff anticipates a remaining balance of just under \$9.8 million in CARES Act funding to plug any short-term holes in next year's budget if Metro is unable to replenish full funding for FY2021-22.

WeGo has determined that if CARES Act funding is not needed to address a one-year shortfall in funding from Metro, it could be used to jump start several projects in the Metro Nashville Transportation Plan, which was endorsed by the Metro Council earlier this week. These projects would include stop and safety improvements aimed at increasing the number of bus stop shelters in the system and improving pedestrian safety around busy bus stops.

Scenarios discussed include:

1. Metro's financial position being sufficiently strong to address WeGo's full funding request for baseline services as well as Better Bus enhancements called for under the recently approved Metro Transportation Plan.
2. Metro's financial position only restoring some of last year's funding reduction, placing WeGo in a position requiring the agency to re-prioritize services given current and likely short to medium-term ridership patterns resulting from the pandemic.
3. Metro's financial position requiring a funding cut so sufficiently deep that CARES Act funding will not fill the gap, requiring more permanent changes such as an overall reduction in service levels and possible fare increase for the second year in a row.

"Metro Council's vote to support the transportation plan this week signaled a first of its kind commitment to major transportation improvements in Davidson County. But the road ahead of us isn't cleared quite yet," WeGo Public Transit CEO Steve Bland said. "As excited as we are to work with the Mayor and other Metro agencies to bring these transportation projects to life, the fact is we'll find ourselves further from our goals if we are asked to bear another year of funding cuts."

Nashvillians have consistently used transit to access essential services such grocery stores, employment, and public service offices. While ridership overall has decreased due to many employers instituting work-from-home policies for the majority of 2020, ridership activity is inextricably tied to essential needs and further budget cuts could put that critical access in jeopardy.

Members of the public are encouraged to sign up for WeGo's newsletter, follow them on social media, and visit WeGoTransit.com for continuous updates.

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