

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

March 28, 2024

I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at the Tennessee Bankers Association located at 211 Athens Way, Nashville, TN 37228, on Thursday, March 28, 2024.

II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:**

Gail Carr Williams, Chair	Andy Burke, COO
Janet Miller, Vice Chair	Renuka Christoph, CCO
Jessica Dauphin, Member	Vince Malone, COSA
Kathryn Hays Sasser, Member	Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning & Grants
Aron Thompson, Member	Marilyn Yokley, Access Manager
Tyler Yarbro, Acting Board Secretary	
Stephen Bland, CEO	
Monica Howse, Sr. Exec. Asst. & Board Liaison	

A quorum was established, and Board Chair Carr Williams called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m.

III. **Approval of Minutes:** Ms. Jessica Dauphin made a motion to approve the February 22, 2024, Nashville MTA Board minutes. Ms. Kathryn Hays Sasser seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the minutes.

IV. **Public Comments:** Board Chair Gail Carr Williams opened the floor for public comments. The public was reminded that comments were limited to two minutes. The following members of the public gave public comments:

- Roger Womack
- James Oliver
- Dawn Craik

V. **Informational Items:** The following items were presented for the Board members' review:

- Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget – No questions
- Monthly Operating Statistics – No questions
- Upcoming Procurement Projects List – No questions

VI. **New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report:** Committee Chair Miller introduced the following items for discussion and action:

a. **Connect Downtown Final Action Plan (M-I-24-011):** Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning & Grants, and Marty Sewell, Transportation Planning Director of the Nashville Department of Transportation & Multimodal Infrastructure provided the following item for discussion:

A Connect Downtown Draft Action Plan was released in November 2023 outlining recommendations built on detailed research, technical analysis, and feedback from the public and stakeholder outreach. The draft recommendations include priority loading areas, transit priority corridors, mobility lanes, and traffic operations and congestion management strategies, along with many more investments that will make it easier, faster, and safer to move around Downtown Nashville. The project team conducted additional public engagement on the draft action plan including open houses and special briefings with several stakeholders and organizations. Adjustments to the recommendations were considered and implemented based on feedback from the outreach resulting in a Final Action Plan.

The [Action Plan](#) includes projects and programs that support all modes of transportation and are critical to Nashville and regional mobility. More specifically to transit, the recommendations focus on moving more people by prioritizing buses on key corridors and increasing service to provide faster and more reliable trips. The following is a summary of the transit-specific recommendations from the plan:

- **New Mobility Centers** in the East Bank and SoBro areas to facilitate transfers and enhance network connectivity. These centers will help reduce reliance on WeGo Central and serve growing areas of downtown.
- **Transit Priority Corridors (TPC)** with dedicated bus lanes and transit-priority signals, to provide for faster transit vehicle movements and a better connected local and regional network. Three TPCs are being recommended.
 - **The Westside TPC** will run between WeGo Central and the SoBro Mobility Center via James Robertson Pkwy, Rosa L Parks Blvd, 8th Ave, and Lafayette St.
 - **The James Robertson TPC** will transform James Robertson Pkwy and Bridge between WeGo Central and the East Bank Mobility Center.
 - **The East Bank TPC** will link the East Bank and SoBro Mobility Centers along the new East Bank Blvd, Korean Veterans Blvd, and 3rd and 4th Aves.
- **Additional Transit Priority** including transit signal priority, queue jump lanes, and dedicated bus lanes in select Downtown locations that serve high-frequency regional routes would better connect riders to the many places they need to go each day.

As a result of these projects, transit service will see improvements resulting in better coverage to newly developing areas, more trip availability, and more frequent service.

Over the following weeks, the Action Plan will be presented to different commissions and boards culminating with a presentation before the Metropolitan Council for adoption in April.

CEO Bland asked Mr. Sewell what the next steps would be. Mr. Sewell said the process has taken some time because of the engagement with the different Commissions and Boards, but from there, they will take it to the Council for the Transportation and Infrastructure Committees next week. Then, they plan to take the resolution to the Council at their second meeting on April 16th. CEO Bland suggested that the Board draft a letter of support to the Mayor and Council in adopting the plan, similar to the letter of support that the Board wrote for the Imagine East Bank Vision Plan.

Mr. Thompson asked when phase I would begin with transit corridors. Mr. Sewell said that some of the projects are already underway. CEO Bland also noted that assuming the Council endorses the plan, Westside Transit Access and Transit Priority Corridor, we're currently funded to initiate the Murfreesboro Pike Corridor Planning Project. Initially, we looked at the project boundary at the SoBro Mobility Hub. Assuming the plan is adopted, we could extend that project boundary plan up to the Elizabeth Duff Transit Center at WeGo Central via the Westside Access and start doing the technical work to justify transit priority in that corridor to State. Additionally, if the plan is adopted, we can begin having SoBro Hub conversations with the Convention Center, which currently owns that piece of land. As for the Eastbank Hub, this would take a longer because of the need to redevelop and realign James Robertson Parkway.

Board Chair Carr Williams said she loved the collaboration between MTA and NDOT and how everybody works so closely together.

CEO Bland and members of the Board thanked Marty Sewell and Felix Castrodad for an excellent presentation.

Committee Chair Miller made a motion to forward a letter of support; Jessica Dauphin seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved it.

- b. **Amendment to Planning Support Services Task Order (M-A-24-005)**: Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning & Grants provided the following for action:

In December 2023, the MTA Board authorized a task order in the amount of \$940,000 to HDR Engineering, Inc. for planning support services in advance of the agency's broader long-term strategic service plan currently in procurement. After that award, Mayor O'Connell announced his intention to pursue a transportation funding referendum for November 2024. Under the requirements of the IMPROVE Act, certain additional documentation needs to be generated to respond to various iterations of the Transportation Improvement Program, as well as to generate publication documents and associated collateral material. This effort will exceed the authorized ceiling amount for this task order.

Staff recommended that the Board authorize the Chief Executive Officer to execute an increase of \$450,000 to the existing task order with HDR Engineering, Inc. to a combined amount not to exceed \$1,390,000. There will be no change in the recommended project duration, with all work completed before December 31, 2024. Funding for this effort is available through previously programmed capital funds to support the update of our long-range plan.

Ms. Hays Sasser asked if the \$450,000 was sufficient for this project. Mr. Castrodad said yes because contingency was already built into the project for additional support beyond completion. CEO Bland said the work should be completed in May, but we may need their support in case some technical questions arise.

Mr. Thompson asked what happens if the Board does not approve this action item, and if so, does it mean the application to Improve Act funding won't happen at all? CEO Bland said that we would be unable to authorize the work and would have an incomplete plan. He said there's a fair amount of material now, but chances of success would be greater with additional documentation and support. Mr. Thompson asked if the timeline would change from what they were doing previously. CEO Bland said a substantial amount of work is complete now, but a task order would be needed to finish the tasks.

The NICE Committee made a motion to approve the Amendment to Planning Support Services Task Order. Ms. Hays Sasser seconded the motion, the Board unanimously approved it.

- c. **Authorization for a Free Fare Day on Saturday, April 20, 2024, in Recognition of the Dedication of the Diane Nash Plaza (M-A-24-006)**: CEO Bland provided the following item for action:

In 2021, the Nashville Metropolitan Council recognized the contributions of Diane Nash to the Civil Rights Movement by naming the plaza in front of the Historic Metro Courthouse in her honor. The Diane Nash Plaza features the Courthouse steps and large fountains in front of the building. On April 20, Metro Nashville will celebrate this occasion with a dedication ceremony for Diane Nash Plaza. Ms. Nash is expected to be in attendance, as will other dignitaries who played a significant role in those historic events.

The organizing committee for the event has requested that the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Transit Authority consider making April 20, 2024, a free-fare day on all services within Davidson County to encourage maximum participation in this celebration by the community at large. Previously, all system-wide free fare days have been authorized by vote of the Board of Directors. A copy of the Committee's request letter is attached for your information.

Staff recommended the Board authorize a system-wide free fare day for all services within Davidson County on Saturday, April 20, 2024, in recognition of the dedication ceremony for Diane Nash Plaza.

The NICE Committee made a motion to approve the Authorization for a Free Fare Day on Saturday, April 20, 2024, in Recognition of the Dedication of the Diane Nash Plaza action item. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved it.

VII. Operations & Finance Committee Report: Committee Chair Dauphin presented the following items for discussion and action:

a. ADA & On-Demand Access Transportation Services Contract Award (M-A-24-04): Access Manager Marilyn Yokley presented the following item for action:

The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (WeGo Public Transit) provides Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit services utilizing a combination of in-house service and strategic engagement with third-party providers. This approach allows WeGo to optimize operational efficiency, enhance service delivery, and provide customers with a comprehensive suite of services. The flexibility offered by third-party providers enables WeGo to scale operations up or down based on fluctuations in demand. More recently, WeGo Public Transit has been offering demand-responsive services that do not fall under the provisions of the ADA, including Access on Demand same-day service and WeGo Link first mile/last mile connector service.

Recognizing the complexity of Accessible services, the decision was made to issue two separate RFPs to ensure a more targeted and efficient process. This approach enabled us to engage with specialized providers who were able to address our needs in each of the two distinct areas of Accessible services.

RFP 2023130 ADA Access Transportation Services

- Supplemental service to WeGo Access directly operated vehicles.
- Operations must follow the specific requirements of ADA regulations
- Provider must follow all ADA regulations including drug and alcohol testing of safety-sensitive employees

RFP 2023131 On-Demand Transportation Services

- Services that do not fall under the requirements of ADA regulations.
- User choice services – WeGo Public Transit does not require customers to use these services, they are considered above and beyond the requirements of the ADA.
- Drug and alcohol testing of safety-sensitive employees is not required.
- Includes WeGo Link, Access on Demand, and WeGo Access Flex.

The distinction is important in order to open up the availability of significant providers (such as Uber) whose business model does not mirror that of a traditional commercial transportation provider. Efforts were diligently undertaken to inform potential bidders about the upcoming ADA Access Transportation Services and On-Demand Transportation Services Request for Proposals (RFP). The Procurement Department publicly disclosed the agency's intent before releasing both RFPs, enabling potential bidders to preview the scope of work and express their interest. This proactive approach resulted in an overwhelming response from interested providers.

For this project, MTA established a 0% Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) participation goal due to a lack of certified disadvantaged business providers in the region.

On September 7, 2023, both solicitations were published on WeGo's website, Transit Talent, and emailed to over twenty providers. By the October 27, 2023, closing date, the ADA Access

Transportation solicitation received twelve responsive proposals, and the On-Demand Transportation Services solicitation received eleven.

Evaluation criteria encompassed qualifications, experience, trip administration, communications, reporting, capacity, and cost. Additionally, ADA Access criteria included customer service and reliability, while On-Demand Transportation services were evaluated on project approach and work methodology. Top-ranked providers underwent interviews after preliminary evaluations.

Staff recommended the Board provide the Chief Executive Officer the authority to enter contracts with the following providers for a term of five years not to exceed \$25 million:

For ADA Access Transportation Services:

- American Music City Taxi
- Z Trip
- Mobility Solutions
- Navarre
- Saint George

For Non-ADA On-Demand Transportation Services:

- American Music City Taxi
- Z Trip
- Mobility Solutions
- Uber

The not-to-exceed amount is higher than the anticipated cost of service to allow for flexibility to adapt to changing customer preferences and implement innovative solutions to meet the market demand for flexibility.

Funding Source: Funding for these services is provided through WeGo Access operating funds in the FY2025 operating budget. Funding for future fiscal years remains to be allocated during each year's respective budget planning and approval process.

Ms. Hays Sasser asked if it was a standard practice to have a 5-year contract. CEO Bland said it's standard in the industry to do either a 5-year contract or a 3-year contract with two (2) single year extension options. Board Chair Carr Williams asked if putting a 0% DBE goal is typical when they can't find a minority-women-owned business. CEO Bland said the Procurement Dept. typically goes to a state-certified DBE list, categorized by industry codes, to determine if disadvantaged businesses exist in the subject area of a procurement. In this case, no such providers were registered as DBE's resulting in the 0% goal. However, three of these businesses are minority owned, but have not gone through the certification process, so we are not allowed to count them toward DBE goals. Any of these providers could choose to go through the certification process and, once certified, we would be able to include them in our DBE participation rates.

The Operations and Finance Committee made a motion to approve the ADA & On-Demand Access Transportation Services Contract Awards, Ms. Hays Sasser seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved it.

VIII. CEO's Report: CEO Steve Bland provided the following report:

1. WeGo's Spring Service changes go into effect this weekend. Most of the changes relate to changing service patterns to serve the Dr. Ernest Rip Patton Jr. North Nashville Transit Center when it opens later this year. Included are a new crosstown, route 71 – Trinity connecting North Nashville to East Nashville along Trinity Lane; extensions of the 9 – Metro Center and 14 – Whites Creek buses with improved frequency to serve the new center, rerouting and improved frequency on the 42 – St. Cecilia/Cumberland; rerouting and improved frequency on the 75 – Midtown, new routing, and improved frequency on the 77 – Thompson Wedgewood, a new WeGo Link zone in Bordeaux/Buena Vista, making the route 70 – Bellevue Connector permanent, and various schedule adjustments on some routes to improve reliability. WeGo expects to see some hiccups in the first month or two of service, as we receive new buses and there continues to add new operators, and just due to the sheer magnitude of the changes.

2. On March 1, WeGo revised its bicycle policy to allow e-bikes on our bike racks, subject to the conditions approved in the new policy. Customers can visit the website to get a better understanding of what will be allowed with respect to E-Bikes within the Bike & Ride section. To date, WeGo has not experienced any significant issues with respect to the new policy.
3. WeGo met with staff from Metro Finance and the Mayor's Office to review our FY2024-25 operating budget submission. Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant, as usual, was highly prepared for the meeting, and there was a good discussion on various budget trends and WeGo's investment requests. The Mayor's proposed budget should be released to the Council around May 1.
4. With the announcement by Mayor O'Connell of his intention to pursue a transportation funding initiative on the November ballot, CEO Bland and several staff continued to work toward the completion of a transit improvement program meeting the requirements of the Improve Act under which such initiatives are authorized in State Law. This has included internal working meetings as well as meetings with a Technical Advisory Committee and a Community Advisory Committee. The action taken earlier today to expand the HDR contract will allow WeGo to complete this work and undertake follow-up support throughout this year. WeGo anticipates completion of the plan document by the end of April.
5. Work continued to advance on three significant planning efforts:
 - a. Stantec has spent the past few months collecting data to support our Zero Emission Fleet Transition Plan, including a workshop on key issues with many of the staff. Later this spring, WeGo anticipates having Stantec present information to the Board on issues associated with the Zero emissions fleet for the Board to be in a better position to adopt informed policy direction after the effort.
 - b. Marine Tiger has been on site several times to conduct fieldwork associated with WeGo's System Security Plan. This is the first time WeGo has comprehensively examined the security planning and systems through an outside consultant. CEO Bland thanked Chief Drake and the Metro Nashville Police Department for actively participating in this process.
 - c. WeGo received proposals for the next update to the comprehensive service development plan – the update to the nMotion Plan. Staff from WeGo, Metro Planning, and NDOT are reviewing these proposals and anticipate recommending a contract award at your next meeting. This process will be a collaboration among the 4 entities (including MTA and RTA) and will also include an update to the Major and Collector Street Plan for Metro Nashville.
6. CEO Bland participated on a panel with Jessica Dauphin and Kendra Abkowitz from the Mayor's Office on Transit and Mobility for Leadership Nashville's Quality of Life Day. The panel was informative, and the class asked a lot of very good questions.
7. WeGo facilitated a meeting this month between the East Bank Development Team at Metro and environmental planning staff from the Federal Transit Administration to review required elements that the team will need to include in the Federal Environmental process to ensure that WeGo doesn't risk future possible FTA funding for improvements like bus rapid transit on the East Bank Boulevard, or the East Bank Transit Center, even though WeGo likely won't initiate these projects for several years. FTA staff expressed appreciation for being brought into the process early.
8. WeGo had an initial meeting with leadership from the Tennessee Titans to discuss potential approaches to event management and promoting greater use of transit to get to stadium events, both during construction and after completion of the new stadium.
9. CEO Bland had the opportunity to participate in my 5th of 7 Leadership Tennessee sessions, this time in Knoxville. The program has been an excellent opportunity to learn more about the

State overall and to network with some outstanding leaders, including several County Mayors and State Legislators.

10. On the RTA side:

- a. WeGo continues to advance land acquisition toward a permanent park-and-ride location in Murfreesboro. At this point, we are awaiting final approval of the property sale by the current owner and engaging in the environmental assessment of the property. The design will commence upon completion of the sale transaction.
- b. Hatch Consulting Group continues to advance the WeGo Star Future Vision Study. Following a review of the preliminary findings with the RTA Board last month, Hatch is working with our rail operator, RJ Corman, to model the preferred scenarios in more detail.
- c. WeGo continues to work with the development team of HG Hill and Southeast Venture on a joint development project at Donelson Station. WeGo has arrived at a preferred layout for the property and transit center that would be co-located there and is in the process of surveying the land with the purpose of likely replating the land to accommodate the preferred development pattern. WeGo's attorneys and real estate advisors are also outlining a joint development agreement that would form the basis of the partnership and would have to be approved by the RTA Board and the Federal Transit Administration.
- d. Governor Lee did sign legislation that had been passed by the General Assembly extending the RTA through June 30, 2032.

IX. Chair's Report: Board Chair Carr Williams presented the following report:

Board Chair Carr Williams congratulated all of the collaboration between WeGo and other entities in Nashville with respect to the Connect Downtown initiative and the Mayor's pending ballot initiative.

She reminded the board members of a planning session regarding the referendum transportation improvement plan at the end of April and asked everyone to keep their calendars open for that meeting.

She concluded by saying that she was excited that this Board approved the free fare day in honor of Ms. Diane Nash. It reminds us of the purpose of transit and transit equity in Nashville. Ms. Hays Sasser said it was noteworthy that Mr. Kingston Oldham, the son of Chief Safety and Security Officer Nick Oldham, knew the history behind Ms. Diane Nash and asked that his name be recorded in the minutes.

X. Other Business: There was no further business to come before this Board.

IX. Adjournment: With no further business, Vice Chair Miller moved to adjourn the meeting, which adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary