

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

December 16, 2021

- I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department located at 5500 Charlotte Pike, Nashville, TN 37209 on Thursday, December 16, 2021.
- II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Janet Miller, Vice-Chair; Walter Searcy, Member; Jessica Dauphin, Member; Margaret Behm, Board Secretary; Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner; Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant; Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke; Chief Development Officer Trey Walker; Deputy Chief Operating Officer-Operations Systems Dan Freudberg; Director of Marketing & Communications Renuka Christoph; Director of System Safety & Risk Management Nicholas Oldham; Transit Planner Hannah Schaefer; Sr. Transit Planner Justin Cole; Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad; and Sr. Executive Assistant & Board Liaison Monica Howse.

A quorum was established, and Chair Gail Carr Williams called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m.

- III. **Approval of Minutes:** Vice-Chair Janet Miller made a motion to approve the November 18, 2021 minutes; the motion was seconded by Walter Searcy, and unanimously approved by the board.
- IV. **Public Comments:** Chair Gail Carr Williams opened the floor for public comments. The public was reminded that comments were limited to three minutes. The following members of the public had these comments:

John Bull

Mr. John Bull's comments were as follows:

- Mr. Bull said that he appreciates the initiative and implementation of WeGo providing transportation for the cold weather response plan; and the other services provided to the overflow shelter.
- Mr. Bull said that he likes the Better Bus Service Expansion & Improvement Update and Direction for Next Phase Expansion.
- QuickTicket fare capping is pertinent for the bus riders.

Darius Knight

Mr. Darius Knight's comments were as follows:

- Mr. Knight said some of the visual displays on the WeGo Nabi 60ft and the New Flyer 60ft buses (front, side, and back) aren't working.
- Mr. Knight said there needs to be more enforcement regarding the mask mandate because customers are riding with no mask and this is a law by the federal government.
- Mr. Knight said that bus operators are being threatened by customers and asked if there could be more of a security presence at Central to ensure that bus operators and staff are safe. He also asked if the security team can pay closer attention to the younger kids and young adults that are hanging around Central in the evening time.
- Mr. Knight said not all customers have access to social media platforms and suggested that we provide additional signage on the buses of upcoming virtual meetings and bi-annual changes so that all customers are informed.
- Mr. Knight said that he appreciates the hard work and efforts of bus operators, maintenance staff, customers service, and admin staff during these times. He asked the executive staff to appreciate and recognize staff as well.

- Mr. Knight encouraged the executive board to continue advocating for better transit for Nashville.

V. **Operations & Finance Committee Report:** Walter Searcy introduced the following items for discussion and action:

- a. **Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget (OF-D-21-035):** Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant reported and reflected on the statement of operations for October 2021 compared to the budget and a balance sheet as of October 31, 2021. There was no further discussion at this time.
- b. **Monthly Operating Statistics (OF-D-21-036):** Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through October 2021. There was no further discussion at this time.
- c. **ITB Light & Heavy-Duty Batteries (M-A-21-21-037):** Director of Maintenance Carl Rokos reported the following:

The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority operates approximately close to 300 vehicles of all kinds for its operations. These vehicles are used in revenue service and in non-revenue support services.

In the past, parts acquisition and ordering of light and heavy-duty batteries have been accomplished by seeking multiple bids for replacement batteries and selecting the most reasonably priced, batteries. We sought to obtain competitive pricing from interested bidders and initiated an Invitation to bid from firms interested and qualified to provide these heavy and light-duty batteries while still meeting Federal Transit Agency procurement requirements.

The Invitation to Bid (ITB) was published on WeGo Public Transit's website and the Transit Talent website on July 30, 2021, we also reached out to the vendors that we have listed on file. We received 3 responsive bids.

Due to the type of commodity being sourced and limited subcontracting opportunities, the project has a 2% DBE participation goal. These responsive Bids were received from:

- Jamison Transportation Products
- Expoquip, Inc
- Interstate Batteries of Middle Tennessee

The Procurement and Maintenance Departments conducted a final evaluation on November 15th, 2021. After careful review of the bids, it was determined that one firm, Jamison Transportation Products had the lowest price for all 5 parts for which substitute sample batteries were supplied to be evaluated and tested. In addition, Jamison Transportation Products will exceed the 2% target DBE participation goal while subcontracting with Napa Auto Parts.

Staff requested the Board to give the Chief Executive Officer the authority to execute the contracts with Jamison Transportation Products to provide Light and Heavy-Duty Spare batteries to the agency. The single contract will not exceed \$400,000 (four – hundred thousand dollars) for the duration of five years which is covered as part of the annual operating expenses.

The committee made a recommendation to approve the ITB Light & Heavy-Duty Batteries action item and it was unanimously approved by the board.

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

- a. **North Nashville Transit Center Community Engagement and Design Overview (NICE-D-21-014)**: Chief Development Officer Trey Walker and Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Tuner presented the following project update at the Board Meeting:

WeGo staff along with the North Nashville Transit Center's design team including Smith Gee Studios and duGard Communications provided an overview of public engagement and incorporation of the Community Advisory Committee's recommendations into the design of the transit center. As this input will be incorporated into final construction documents shortly after the first of the year for construction bidding in the early Spring of 2022, the MTA Board was encouraged to provide any additional significant design input as soon as practical.

- b. **Monthly Fare Capping Approval (M-A-21-038)**: Transit Planner Hannah Schaefer presented the following project update at the Board Meeting:

WeGo Public Transit's QuickTicket system makes fare payment simpler and expands payment options for riders following the nMotion plan strategy to Make Service Easier to Use. The system includes several elements that have led to necessary revisions to the agency's fare policy. Over the last few years, the board has approved several provisions within this new policy, most recently in February of 2020 with the adoption of the account-based system. These new policies included mitigation strategies associated with the potential adverse effects to low-income and minority populations identified in the equity analysis, as well as addressing the concerns voiced by the public. Among those strategies is the addition of daily fare capping, or best value, providing patrons an alternative to the elimination of magnetic day passes previously available at the farebox. Automatic fare capping also brings reduced fare payment options to those unable to add or convert dollar amounts to a pass, otherwise required through a credit card or smartphone.

Since then, staff has continued to pursue additional strategies to reduce barriers to entry of the new fare payment system and amplify the benefits to riders. One of those strategies includes the expansion of fare capping to monthly passes. Similar to daily fare capping, as fares are paid individually throughout the month, once a single cardholder reaches the accumulated amount of a monthly pass, all future trips for that month would be free using that card. Because the upfront cost of a monthly pass can be out of reach for some individuals, monthly fare capping expands the benefits to more riders, and in a more meaningful way.

During the outreach for the Fall 2021 service changes, staff presented monthly fare capping at all public meetings and received no comments specific to the policy. However, the public has been introduced to this concept in the past where we received overall positive feedback and follow-up requests to implement fare capping.

Extending the fare capping benefit monthly aligns with the overall project goals to:

1. Ensure fare payment structures and options are equitable for all customers and
2. Establish a fare system that is accessible for all customers including customers without access to bank accounts, credit cards, or smartphones.

TITLE VI REVIEW SUMMARY

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the Federal law that protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of their race, color, or national origin in programs that receive Federal financial assistance. WeGo Public Transit's Title VI policy is intended to ensure equity and equal access in the provision of public transportation services in Davidson County regardless of race, national origin, or income. Policies and practices that have such an effect must be eliminated unless a recipient can show that they were necessary to achieve a legitimate nondiscriminatory objective.

Before implementing the proposed monthly fare capping, WeGo must determine whether the planned changes will have a disparate impact on the basis of race, color, or national origin, or

if low-income populations will bear a disproportionate burden of the changes. Since fare capping is a customer incentive, the equity analysis was conducted to determine if non-minority or non-low-income riders will receive disproportionate benefits to their counterparts. Using survey data from the 2017 origin-destination survey, staff found that minority customers are 24% less likely to use a monthly pass or a 20 ride pass than non-minority customers and 3% more likely to ride frequently. Based on this we can conclude that fare capping would provide a substantial benefit to minority riders by allowing them to receive the value of a monthly pass. The analysis found no disparate impact.

Survey results also showed low-income customers were about as likely to use a monthly pass or 20-ride pass as non-low-income customers. They are also as likely to ride frequently. Because many respondents did not provide either income or household size (19.8%) staff also reviewed the monthly pass usage for those respondents and found that only 12.5% used a monthly pass.

This does show a limitation to this analysis in that it is not known how many of that 19.8% are in low-income households. Another limitation is that the survey only questioned riders on their current riding behavior. Not shown in these numbers is the potential for riders to be able to ride more often than they currently do because the value of a monthly pass is more attainable. Nevertheless, the results here show no disproportionate burden on low-income riders.

Overall, the proposed implementation of monthly fare capping will provide significant benefits to minority and low-income populations allowing system users to access bulk discounts that were previously out of reach.

The committee recommended the MTA Board of Directors the adoption of monthly fare capping to take effect January 1, 2022, and it was unanimously approved by the board.

Note: The following agenda items and reports were deferred to the January Board meeting:

- WeGo Link Program Review (NICE-D-21-015):
- Better Bus Service Expansion, Improvement Update and Direction for Next Phase Expansion (NICE-D-21-016):
- FY2022-23 Operating Budget Discussion Workshop (NICE-D-21-017):
- CEO's Report:
- Chair's Report:
- Other Business

VII. Adjournment: Due to a security issue in the building, the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department requested that we adjourn and evacuate the building. The meeting was adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary