

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

September 23, 2021

- 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, Ste. 100, Nashville, TN 37228 on Thursday, September 23, 2021.
- II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Walter Searcy, Member; Jessica Dauphin, Member; Mary Griffin, Member; Secretary Margaret Behm; Chief Executive Officer Stephen G. Bland; Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner; Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke; Chief Development Officer Trey Walker; Director of Marketing & Communications Renuka Christoph; Director of Procurement & Business Diversity Amber Gooding; Comptroller Shelly McElhaney; Capital Grants Administrator Billy Higgins; Procurement Manager Kim Hereford; Director of Maintenance Carol Rokos; Parts Manager John Dealmeida; Sr. Transit Planner Justin Cole; Performance Oversight Manager Bryan Williams; 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.

Approval of Minutes: Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the August 26, 2021 minutes; the motion was seconded by Ms. Jessica Dauphin, and unanimously approved by the board.

Public Comments: Chair Gail Carr Williams opened the floor for public comments. The public was reminded that comments were limited to three minutes.

John Bull

Mr. John Bull's public comments were as follows:

- Mr. Bull said that he takes no more than a couple of essential trips a week and he continues to wear his mask.
- Mr. Bull said that he was sold on the QuickTicket app. He said it's one less plastic card that he has to carry. He suggested that people have a small zip lock baggy handy to keep their touch screen dry from the rain.
- State Highway 41A/Nolensville Pike. Route 52 goes right by the bus stops/shelter at the MLS Stadium/Fairground. The stadium is set to open in May next year with additional crowds of 20 to 30 thousand. Traffic on that route is unreal at times already. Have recently contacted the chair of the Fairground's board on this matter.
- Mr. Bull said that he was looking forward to WeGo Link

Darius Knight

Mr. Darius Knight's written comments were as follows:

- Mr. Knight said that he appreciates all of the staff working hard each day to serve the public while trying to remain safe.
- Mr. Knight said some customers are voicing their concerns over the crowding issues on buses and staff and customers are not wearing masks.
- Mr. Knight said some customers are still not being served on route 43 and he's still seeing these people walking and it deeply bothers him, especially when it's older adults.

- Mr. Knight said not all of WeGo (MTA employees) do not want to take a vaccine just to be able to work. He said that he's heard of employees that are contemplating leaving if it becomes a federal government mandate. He said he believes in the freedom of choice and if employers don't start to speak up on behalf of the employees, there may be a great industry loss.

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

a. **Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget (OF-D-21-025):** Comptroller Shelly McElhaney reported and reflected on the statement of operations for the month of July 2021 compared to the budget and a balance sheet as of July 30, 2021. There was no further discussion at this time.

b. **Resolution for FY2022 Annual Grant Application (M-A-21-026):** Capital Grants Administrator Billy Higgins reported the following:

The attached resolution comprises the annual submittal of Certifications and Assurances for FTA funds and authorization to submit applications for grants with the FTA, the TDOT, and other grant funding entities.

We are asking the Board to:

- Adopt the attached resolution;
- Authorize the application for 5307, 5339, and 5310 funding and State/local match;
- Authorize the submittal of the application for State Operating Assistance; and,
- Authorize the submittal of applications and execution of contracts for any other federal, state, or local grant funding that may become available during FY2022 for the benefit of the Nashville MTA.

Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the Resolution for the FY2022 Annual Grant Application and it was unanimously approved by the board.

c. **Procurement Policy Revisions (M-A-21-027):** Procurement Manager Kim Hereford reported the following:

After a recent assessment of the procurement policies and procedures, staff recognized that WeGo Public Transit's Procurement Policy lacked the provision for unsolicited proposals and should contain additional language regarding protest procedures.

A policy allowing for unsolicited proposals allows WeGo to explore new business opportunities or concepts that are beneficial to the agency. The policy will not circumvent the competitive bid process. It will instead give us insight into an innovative proposal. As with any proposal, an evaluation would be made whether such goods or services represent a clear and necessary sole source or require a competitive bid process to procure.

In addition to adding a policy for unsolicited proposals, staff also recognized that our current protest procedures should be updated to include Protest Point of Contact/Response Time, Appeal Process / Response Time, and FTA Notification.

The proposed policy addition and updates promote structure and guidance internally as well as externally for potential receipt of unsolicited proposals or protests. If the Board approves, the Procurement Department will publish the new policy on WeGo's website as we work to finalize a revised hard copy of our Policy manual.

Staff recommended the Board approve the attached proposed new policy for unsolicited proposals and updates to the protest procedures as discussed.

Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the Procurement Policy Revisions action item and it was unanimously approved by the Board.

- d. **Monthly Operating Statistics (OF-D-21-026)**: Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through July 2021. There was no further discussion at this time.

- e. **Operations Dashboard Reformulation Discussion (OF-D-21-027)**: Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke reported the following:

Each month staff presents ongoing monthly reports to provide an overview of various KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) of the agency. The Operation's Dashboard includes data such as ridership, productivity, safety, maintenance, complaints, and others. It is the intent to provide an overview of Operation's performance to the Board for discussion and to provide a high-level view of the functionality of the system.

Staff led a discussion with the Board to be engaged in revamping the Operation's Dashboard monthly report. Chief Operating Officer, Andy Burke, will be presenting a reformatted version of the Operation's Dashboard to include recommended data points the Board may be interested in reviewing on an ongoing basis. Staff will be encouraging questions and input from the Board to tailor a helpful and useful monthly report for the Board to provide guidance and direction in future discussions and meetings. During the discussion, Board Chair Gail Carr Williams expressed a desire to see more information on safety-related performance.

- f. **Workforce Planning Update (OF-D-21-028)**: Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke and Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner reported the following:

In preparation for the phasing of the Better Bus Plan and increased service levels in the fall, which were discussed at the July Board meeting, a cross-section of departments has worked together to begin thinking strategically about ensuring our service readiness. We have identified what we believe are three key focus areas for review with the Board:

- 1) Recruitment
- 2) Retention
- 3) Fleet availability

Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner and Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke reviewed a draft action plan for Board discussion and next steps in preparing for the Spring service expansion. This will become a recurring discussion item.

III. New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report: Ms. Mary Griffin introduced the following items for discussion and action:

- a. **Downtown Traffic Study MOU Approval (M-A-21-029)**: CEO Steve Bland presented the following project update at the Board Meeting:

The nature of Nashville's street network as being primarily radial in nature dictates that most "high level" transit services travel to/through the Downtown core. With increasing Downtown activity, traffic (pedestrian and vehicular), and more frequent disruptions for construction, special event closures, etc. We have been observing significant challenges in service reliability, with Downtown traffic being one of the most frequent causes of service delay and disruption. Over the years (and including the MTA's current strategic service plan "nMotion") various plans and studies for transit in Nashville have pointed to the need for "transit priority corridors" through Downtown Nashville to simplify the bus network, as well as to increase average operating speed and reduce disruptions to the system. However, given the dozens of competing uses that vie for utilization of the Downtown Street network, efforts that have focused specifically on transit priority (without accounting for all the other various uses of the

network) have not met with any success.

The Metro Nashville Transportation Plan adopted by the Metropolitan Council in December 2020 includes a project titled “Downtown Neighborhood Traffic Project.” This project distinguishes itself from earlier efforts in that it anticipates a scope that is more holistic with respect to Downtown infrastructure. It will include transit flow/transit priority, but also account for other uses including auto and truck traffic, pedestrian and bicycle activity, curb management (valet lanes, sidewalk cafes, delivery zones, etc.), micro-mobility (scooters, bike-share, etc.), transportation networking companies, and various “transportainment” (pedal taverns, party buses, horse-drawn carriages, etc.), among other uses. It also contemplates a broad-reaching stakeholder and public engagement process to balance and prioritize many competing priorities for the scarce Downtown right of way. Under the direction of the Nashville Department of Transportation (NDOT), the Metropolitan Transit Authority is a full project partner, contributing \$350,000 in Federal Transit funding toward the study (as memorialized in the Authority’s most recent Board-adopted Capital Improvement Budget). Other funding partners for the estimated \$1 million effort are Metro Nashville, the Tennessee Department of Transportation, and the Nashville Downtown Partnership.

The project is expected to gear up shortly after the first of the year, with most work activities taking place through 2022. MTA is currently administering the procurement process for professional services supporting the project.

Given the MTA’s partnership role and strong funding commitment, NDOT approached MTA about taking on the role of administrative lead for the project. While NDOT will retain overall project management and leadership responsibility due to its role in managing and regulating the right of way in the Downtown core, it also recognizes the MTA’s capabilities and history in terms of managing similar types of planning efforts with a variety of public funding sources, including funding from the Federal Transit Administration and TDOT. MTA will assume a full “project partner role,” along with NDOT, TDOT, and the Nashville Downtown Partnership; but will also assume an expanded administrative role for the project. This role (as well as NDOT’s role as overall project lead) is delineated in the attached Memorandum of Understanding between the Nashville Department of Transportation and the MTA.

Staff recommended that the Board authorize the Chief Executive Officer to execute the attached Memorandum of Understanding with the Nashville Department of Transportation describing the responsibilities of the two parties with respect to carrying out the work activities of the Downtown Nashville Neighborhood Traffic Project. This document has been reviewed and approved by the General Counsel of the Nashville MTA.

Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the Downtown Traffic Study MOU Approval action item. Ms. Jessica Dauphin seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the board.

- b. **Bus Stop Signage Redesign Update (NICE-S-21-011)**: Mr. Justin Cole presented the following project update including details about the proposed sign features and the rollout process at the Board Meeting:

The nMotion Strategic Plan identified several key strategies for improving transit in Nashville over the next 25-years. One of the strategic recommendations with short-term improvement potential was to make the service easier to use including a rebranding of the system and other initiatives to provide better information for riders. In 2018, the Nashville MTA rebranded to WeGo Public Transit beginning a process to implement the new brand in several areas of the system.

One of the next steps in the process involves a systemwide redesign of bus stop signs that will update the signs to be consistent with the WeGo brand and will allow for the inclusion of useful route information for an improved rider experience and customer communication. WeGo staff is getting ready to start the implementation of the new bus stop signs in the upcoming weeks. With over 1,500 bus stops across the system, this labor-intensive process will span over a period of 2 years requiring coordination among different WeGo departments.

c. QuickTicket – Next Generation Fare Collection System Update (NICE-D-21-012):

Performance Oversight Manager Bryan Williams presented an overall project update at the Board Meeting:

WeGo Public Transit is currently in the final project phase of the QuickTicket – Next Generation Fare Collection System project. Over the past two years, we have installed new fareboxes and smart media validators on all WeGo revenue vehicles dispersed smart cards, deployed the QuickTicket by WeGo mobile app, and initiated use of the software solutions to power the system. QuickTicket allows customers to pay using a self-managed mobile application or reloadable smart card, which can be managed on the QuickTicket website. Payment across WeGo Local, Regional, and Train services are completed using a single phone or card scan.

QuickTicket is an account-based system that allows for a simple and seamless experience for customers as they board WeGo services. Part of the QuickTicket implementation required WeGo to make decisions on our fare structure, existing practices, and policies to fully realize the benefits of the elevated system. These choices have allowed WeGo to meet the following project goals:

- **Accessible** for customers with disabilities, without bank accounts, credit cards, or smartphones
- **Equitable** fare payment structure for all customers
- **Revenue-neutral** fare structure to every degree possible
- **Seamless** payment between WeGo Local, Regional, and Train services
- **Simple** fare payment process for customers and Bus Operators

Recent Activities:

- Comprehensive testing of back-office software and field equipment
- Retail network onboarding
- Ticket Vending Machine focus group
- Development of Access-QuickTicket integration

Since beta testing began in late November 2020, adoption has increased steadily and now represents 14% of WeGo Local ridership. Many of the core systems are functioning well and riders have accessed the benefits associated with an account-based system. While we move toward system launch, partnering with technology consultants nMomentum and Clevor Group has proven to be invaluable in validating the functionality of key components of the system, ticket vending machines, retail network, and technology infrastructure. This has positively positioned WeGo to develop a list of final tasks to be completed for full launch.

V. CEO's Report: CEO Bland reported the following:

1. With respect to our planned Board Planning Workshop, CEO Bland mentioned to each of the Board Members that Facilitator Doug Eadie had come down with an illness that had delayed this process. He said Doug is now recovering well, and he is scheduled to meet with him virtually on October 7 to discuss the next steps. Mr. Cole reviewed stop sign design concepts including feedback received to date from Bus Operators. The Board engaged in significant discussion relative to design, including specific direction to incorporate consideration for ADA design elements. The next steps will include the development of mockups to obtain rider input.

2. We continue to plan for the Fall service changes, which will be enacted on October 3. These changes will bring us back to our full pre-pandemic service level. Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke and Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner discussed our planning efforts in this regard moving forward, and we will continue to update you on our status and progress toward the spring changes.
3. With respect to COVID status, we're all concerned by the rapidly accelerating rate of infection in the general population. Particularly concerning is the rate of infection among younger people. We have fully reinstated our bi-weekly COVID update meetings, led by Senior Safety Manager Nick Oldham. As of this week, we had 11 employees off for COVID-related illness or exposure to someone with COVID. Given the uptick in cases, DTO is also working collaboratively with ATU Local 1235 on an updated MOU with respect to employees who must be off for COVID-related reasons.
4. We discussed the MOU between MTA and NDOT with respect to the Downtown Neighborhood Traffic Study earlier in the agenda. We did receive two solid proposals for this work, and the evaluation committee is proceeding through the process of identifying the best proposal for contract negotiations.
5. Construction continues on the Hillsboro Transit Center. If you pass the site now, the Center is taking a very visual shape, with most of the steel erection complete on both the climate-controlled waiting room and the streetside bus canopies. We anticipate substantial completion by the end of the calendar year, though supply chain issues may delay final acceptance due to several long lead-time items.
6. With respect to the North Nashville Transit Center, design work continues at a good pace, and we anticipate the award of demolition and underground storage tank removal contracts in October. These will likely fall below the Board threshold for an award, but we do anticipate coming to you in October for the award of the Construction Management and Inspection contract. We've conducted several public outreach activities over the past month, and duGard Communications (our public engagement consultant) is finishing up a summary report that I'll forward to you as soon as it's complete. I'd like to thank Gail for agreeing to lead a committee of neighborhood stakeholders who will help advise the design team on various cultural, artistic, and design details of the project, based on the input we received through the public engagement process. To date, 14 of the 33 neighborhood leaders and organizations have accepted our invitation to participate, representing a broad spectrum of the community ranging from neighborhood businesses, churches, social service agencies, public agencies, and educational institutions. We are still on schedule to bid construction in the spring of 2022. We also received good news this past month from the Greater Nashville Regional Council who awarded us an \$873,800 grant under the Federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) toward the improvement of pedestrian infrastructure in the area around the transit center.
7. Beyond our two transit centers in active development, we have engaged in very early-stage discussions for potential additional centers with the developers of two other high potential locations – the redeveloped Madison Town Center in Madison, and the proposed redevelopment of the Global Crossings Mall in Antioch. As part of the Antioch discussions, we are also speaking with Metro Nashville and affordable housing development groups about a potentially larger-scale project.
8. We are collaborating with the American Muslim Advisory Council to provide bus pass access via QuickTicket to approximately 300 Afghan refugees who are resettling into the Nashville community. This effort is a multi-agency effort in Middle Tennessee to support these individuals with a broad range of services.

9. With respect to capital funding, we received in the spring from Metro for expanded bus shelters, we have identified 18 sites for the \$1.5 million allocated. To date, 2 sites have been completed, 2 are set for installation in the next few weeks, 6 are in design, and 8 are being scoped internally for contractor quotes (which will be ongoing through the end of the year).

10. On the RTA side:

- a. We are operating the Titans Express on the WeGo Star for all Tennessee Titans home games this season. Ridership tends to rise and fall with the Titans' fortunes, so I was happy with last Sunday's result in Seattle which will hopefully bode well for robust ridership! The Titans have graciously agreed to sponsor this service. We sold 332 tickets for the 1st game and so far have sold 177 tickets for this Sunday's game.
- b. We are collaborating with the City of Murfreesboro on a park-and-ride project adjacent to their new Transit Center facility. Right now, we are finalizing documents we need to submit to the Federal Transit Administration to comply with environmental planning requirements before advancing this project further.
- c. We will be resurfacing and restriping the Donelson and Hermitage Station Park and Ride Lots on the WeGo Star over the next month.

VII. **Chair's Report:** Chair Williams reported the following:

Chair Williams said that we live in interesting times, but she continues to be proud of the creativity and innovation of all of the staff. She concluded by encouraging everyone to continue to do good work.

VIII. **Other Business:**

IX. **Adjournment:** With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary: