

Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

October 23, 2025

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, October 23, 2025.

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

Gail Carr Williams, Chair

Aron Thompson, Vice Chair

Jessica Dauphin, Member

Kathryn Hays, Member

Jeff Haynes, Member

Margaret Behm, Board Secretary

Steve Bland, CEO

Monica Howse, Sr. Exec. Asst. & Bd. Liaison

Debbie Frank, DCEO of Growth & Development

Amanda Vandegrift, DCEO of Finance & Admin.

Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning

Patrick Hester, DCOO of Assets & Infrastructure

D'Nese Nicolosi, Director of Asset Services

A quorum was established, and Chair Carr Williams called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

III. **Approval of Minutes:** Ms. Dauphin made a motion to approve the minutes of the Nashville MTA Board meeting held on September 25, 2025. Mr. Haynes seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the minutes.

IV. **Public Comments:** Chair 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 remarks:

- Katija Raine

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 Procurements – Mr. Thompson thanked the staff for providing this six-month list. Ms. Dauphin just asked members of the board to review the list of procurements in detail

VI. **Consent Agenda Items:**

a. **Statewide Furnishings Contract (M-A-25-044)**

b. **QuickTicket Card Purchase (M-A-25-045)**

Ms. Dauphin made a motion to approve the Consent agenda action items. The motion was seconded by Mr. Haynes and unanimously approved by the board.

VII. **Operations & Finance Committee Report:** Committee Chair Dauphin introduced the following items for action:

a. **Body on Chassis Bus Purchase (M-A-25-046):** DCOO of Assets & Infrastructure Patrick Hester presented the following item for discussion:

WeGo Public Transit operates a fleet of 91 Body-on-Chassis buses built on Ford E450 chassis, primarily serving WeGo Access and lower-ridership community routes. These lighter-duty vehicles are better suited for neighborhood service due to their maneuverability and lower

profile. Unlike standard transit coaches with a 12-year lifespan, these buses have a useful life of about 5 years or 150,000 miles, requiring the replacement of 19–25 vehicles annually under the Capital Fleet Replacement Plan.

In February 2022, the MTA Board approved the purchase of up to 125 Body-on-Chassis buses over five years from Southern Bus and Mobility, Inc. The third-party inspector, AmeriTran, has completed the Pre-Award Audit confirming compliance with Buy America requirements, including 70% U.S.-built content and final assembly standards. AmeriTran will also conduct post-delivery inspections to verify ongoing compliance.

The staff requested that the Board authorize the Chief Executive Officer to execute a purchase contract for the acquisition of nineteen (19) body-on-chassis buses. These vehicles will replace similar vehicles that will have reached the end of their useful life by the time of delivery.

The total sum for this purchase is not to exceed \$4,540,525.00. This figure includes a base price of \$217,250.00 per bus, after-market equipment to be installed upon delivery (such as Automatic Vehicle Location and Fare Collection equipment); as well as costs for related tools, training, and spare parts. The vehicles will be acquired from Southern Bus and Mobility (vendor) and Turtle Top (manufacturer).

Funding for this acquisition is currently available through grants made for this purpose Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, through a previously approved Capital Spending Plan.

Ms. Dauphin asked whether the 91 body-on-chassis cutaway vehicles mentioned would increase or if the plan is solely to replace the existing fleet. Mr. Hester explained that the current focus is on replacement, though some fleet growth is anticipated due to expanded access-on-demand services and the addition of more crosstown and circulator routes. CEO Bland added that WeGo is evaluating heavier-duty vehicle options to better accommodate longer service hours and higher passenger volumes, noting that the current buses are not ideal for standing passengers, particularly on Route 77, which now experiences crowding following soccer games.

Mr. Thompson questioned the vehicle lifespan of five years or 150,000 miles, noting it seemed low. CEO Bland explained that this lifespan is typical for the current Access vehicles, which remain the most standard and suitable option for paratransit at this time. He added that the 5-year/150,000-mile threshold is established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for this type of vehicle and is commonly adopted by transit agencies.

The Operations & Finance Committee made a motion to approve the Body on Chassis Bus Purchase action items. The motion was seconded by Mr. Haynes and unanimously approved by the board.

b. On Call Maintenance Contract Awards (M-A-25-047): DCOO of Assets & Infrastructure Patrick Hester presented the following item for action:

On July 21, 2025, WeGo Public Transit's Procurement Department issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for On-Call Maintenance, Repair, and Systems Services to establish an Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract. This flexible, task-order-based procurement will support a broad range of civil, facility, and systems repair work, including paving, roofing, electrical, and communications upgrades.

To promote inclusion, WeGo established a 12% Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) participation goal, applicable to task orders with subcontracting opportunities.

By the August 29, 2025, deadline, three responsive proposals were received—from BC Mason Group, M&P Services Inc. (both DBEs), and Norwood Properties—each offering competitive rates and committing to the DBE goal.

Following evaluation based on qualifications, experience, understanding of scope, sample work plans, and cost, the Evaluation Committee recommended an award to all three firms. Business Diversity staff will monitor DBE participation throughout the term of the master agreement to ensure compliance and goal attainment.

The staff recommended that the Board authorize the Chief Executive Officer to enter contracts with BC Mason Group, Norwood Properties, and M&P Services for On-Call Maintenance, Repair & Systems services, with a total not-to-exceed authorization of \$15,000,000 over a three-year base term and two (2) one-year renewal options. Each contractor will receive a \$5,000,000 contract award. These contracts are intended to support State of Good Repair initiatives and will be limited to maintenance projects with task order budgets of \$500,000 or less.

Ms. Dauphin recused herself from voting on this particular action item. Mr. Haynes made a motion to approve the On Call Maintenance Contract Awards action item. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thompson and unanimously approved by the board.

- c. **Passenger Waiting Shelter Contract Value Increase (M-A-25-048)**: Director of Asset Services D’Nese Nicolosi, presented the following item for action:

In January 2021, WeGo Public Transit entered a \$1.5 million, three-year contract with Tolar Manufacturing to enhance Nashville’s transit stops with new shelters, benches, and custom designs. The contract was later amended by \$2.28 million, increasing the total to \$3.78 million and extending the term through January 2026.

Since 2020, sheltered stops have increased by 39%, and many outdated shelters have been replaced. To maintain programming momentum and address ongoing state-of-good-repair needs, staff recommend increasing the contract by \$3,028,493, bringing the total to \$6,812,493, to continue improvements while a new procurement is developed.

Staff requested Board approval of a \$3,028,493 increase to the existing Tolar Manufacturing contract. This adjustment will bring the not-to-exceed value to \$6,812,493, ensuring sufficient funds to complete currently planned stop improvements.

A new solicitation process for these services will coincide with the expiration of this contract. Funding for the identified projects is approved annually in the MTA Capital Improvement Program.

The Operations & Finance Committee made a motion to approve the Passenger Waiting Shelter Contract Value Increase action item. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hays and unanimously approved by the board.

- VIII. **New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report**: Committee Chair Aron Thompson introduced the following item for action:

- a. **Winter 2026 Recommended Service Changes and Equity Analysis (M-A-25-049)**: Director of Planning Felix Castrodad presented the following item for action:

The proposed Winter 2026 Service Changes represent the second phase of improvements under the Choose How You Move (CHYM) program, building on the Summer 2025 updates. These adjustments focus on improvements achievable with current resources while preparing for future service expansion as staffing and fleet capacity grow.

The proposal emphasizes off-peak enhancements—including midday, evening, and weekend frequency and service hour extensions (including Access), schedule adjustments, and a new WeGo Link zone. It also includes updates on the launch of the Journey Pass program, which provides free transit for income-eligible participants in partnership with the Mayor’s Office.

Operator & Fleet Readiness:

WeGo currently has 446 operators with 55 in training, toward a goal of 468 needed for the winter schedule. Peak service will use 149 vehicles, consistent with the current schedule. Fleet updates include 12 new 40-foot buses (in production), 25 new 60-foot articulated buses (assembly beginning late 2025), and 19 new Access cutaways pending Board approval—all supporting service reliability and future expansion.

Public Outreach:

Public engagement occurred September 15–October 10, 2025, through three public meetings (one in-person, two virtual), outreach at WeGo Central, on buses, social media, and traditional media in English and Spanish. A total of 45 public comments were received.

Key Public Feedback Themes:

- Requests for more bus stop shelters and stop improvements
- Desire for better weekend/evening service on Route 3 West End
- Positive feedback on Route 79 Skyline Sunday service and requests for extensions
- Interest in expanding QuickTicket to Access service
- Strong engagement and questions regarding the Journey Pass program (eligibility, administration, and comparisons to other cities)
- Broader service requests for earlier/later trips, WeGo Star schedule extensions, better connector routes, Robertson Road coverage, and improved bus safety and air conditioning

These service changes aim to maintain safe, reliable, and equitable transit, with an emphasis on expanding access and improving the rider experience across the WeGo network.

Winter 2026 Service Change Recommendations:

The proposed changes, guided by the Choose How You Move program, aim to improve and expand transit options across the WeGo system. Key updates include a new WeGo Link zone in the East Thompson Lane area, enhancing access to lower-density areas and employment centers near the airport. All public comments received during the outreach period were reviewed and incorporated into the final recommendations.

The staff requested by the Board of Directors of the proposed Winter 2026 service changes, as documented in the board book, for implementation. Proposed fixed-route changes will take effect on January 4, 2026.

Ms. Hays expressed her appreciation for the increased service frequency and asked how success would be measured. Mr. Castrodad explained that frequent improvements are often driven by overcrowding, requiring additional service to relieve busy routes. Success is evaluated through on-time performance, ridership growth, and rider satisfaction, and he noted that “frequency is freedom”—higher frequency reduces wait times and attracts more spontaneous riders. CEO Bland also explained that a 15-minute headway is generally the threshold where riders stop planning around schedules and simply “show up and go.” While productivity (riders per hour) may initially dip as loads are spread across more buses, ridership typically grows over time. Additionally, frequency improvements on core routes benefit the broader system, especially for riders transferring from lower-frequency routes. This

connectivity can make the entire network more reliable and appealing, as seen with the increased ridership in the North Nashville pilot.

Ms. Hays praised the WeGoLink Zone at East Thompson, noting its potential to benefit employees working in the Opry Mills and Opryland area. She also referenced the Amazon Fulfillment Center, emphasizing that the expanded service provides greater access for workers returning home safely during later hours. She asked whether the working population would be informed once the changes are implemented so they can take full advantage of the service.

Mr. Castrodad confirmed that once the board approves the changes, the communications team will share information across all its social media platforms and on buses to ensure wide availability. He added that all information is also available in Spanish, and accommodations can be made for other languages as needed.

CEO Bland highlighted how some projects are coordinated for safety and connectivity. For example, the East Thompson Zone includes a transfer point between WeGoLink and the bus at Murfreesboro and Thompson, where a recently approved \$1 million bus stop project ensures a safe location for riders to make transitions.

Mr. Thompson asked if the initiative falls under the *Choose How You Move* program, and Mr. Castrodad confirmed that it does.

The New Initiative and Community Engagement Committee recommended a motion to approve the Winter 2026 Recommended Service Changes and Equity Analysis action item. The motion was seconded by Ms. Dauphin and unanimously approved by the board.

IX. CEO's Report: CEO Bland provided the following report:

1. Since the last meeting, WeGo received its second allocation of *Choose How You Move* capital funding from Metro Nashville, totaling \$24.2 million. This funding will support fleet expansion for increased service, front-end work toward a new operations and maintenance facility, and station improvements at Nashville International Airport.
2. During the same period, WeGo submitted its annual capital spending request to Metro Finance totaling \$29.3 million for MTA and RTA State and Federal grant matches and replacement vehicles for both fixed route and Access services.
3. WeGo continues to partner with the Mayor's Office and several social service agencies on the *Journey Pass* program—a free transit pass for income-eligible riders funded through *Choose How You Move*. Over 1,000 passes are currently in circulation during the pilot phase. Once the pilot concludes, staff will review results, adjust, and present a permanent recommendation.
4. On October 11, WeGo hosted its first-ever Community Day at the Dr. Ernest Rip Patton Jr. North Nashville Transit Center. The event invited neighbors to tour the facility, learn more about transit, and meet participating artists. Special thanks were extended to Board Member Aron Thompson for representing the Board.
5. WeGo's local Bus and Maintenance Roadeo winners competed earlier today at the Tennessee Public Transportation Association State Roadeo in Knoxville. Results will be shared at the next meeting once announced.
6. Several WeGo staff members also participated in the TPTA Annual Conference, held in conjunction with the State Roadeo.

7. CEO Bland participated in a Fox 17 live panel discussion on *Mobility in Middle Tennessee* with panelists from the Mayor's Office, NDOT, and the Nashville Chamber of Commerce.
8. He also joined panel discussions with visiting delegations from Charleston, South Carolina, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and participated in the Nashville Connector TDM Summit, moderated by Ms. Dauphin, alongside NDOT and IndyGo representatives.
9. RTA Updates:
 - a. Design work continues on improvements to Donelson Station, including a new 6-bay transit center, road access relocation, utility adjustments, a new traffic signal, and quiet zone enhancements. Design is currently 60% complete and expected to finish in the first quarter of next year, with construction bidding anticipated mid-year. Debbie Frank will provide a detailed overview at the November meeting.
 - b. Work is also progressing on the Murfreesboro Park and Ride facility, which is currently in the city permitting phase. Construction bid solicitations are expected early next year, with construction anticipated later in 2025.

X. **Chair's Report:** Chair Carr Williams congratulated Ms. Dauphin on her recent projects and her upcoming breakfast event focusing on mobility. She also thanked CEO Bland for sharing his leadership and expertise beyond Nashville, and Mr. Thompson for representing the Board and speaking at WeGo's Community Day at the Dr. Ernest Rip Patton Jr. North Nashville Transit Center. In conclusion, Chair Carr Williams expressed her appreciation to WeGo's drivers for their continued service, patience, and professionalism, particularly given the challenges of traffic congestion and other operational demands.

Other Business: Mr. Haynes expressed his appreciation to CEO Bland and WeGo staff for the opportunity to tour the Myatt facility and meet with team members.

Mr. Thompson thanked WeGo for the chance to speak at Community Day and extended his gratitude to staff members Zeda Riggs and Kia Lewis, as well as the entire WeGo team, for their support.

XI. **Adjournment:** With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:26 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Board Secretary