

**NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

**November 16, 2023**

I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at the Tennessee State Library & Archives, located at 1001 Rep. John Lewis Way N., Nashville, TN 37219, on Thursday, November 16, 2023.

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

Janet Miller, Vice Chair	Andy Burke, COO
Jessica Dauphin, Member	Renuka Christoph, CCO
Kathryn Hays Sasser, Member	Nick Oldham, CSSO
Aron Thompson, Member	Ed Oliphant, CFO
Margaret Behm, Board Secretary	Kia Lewis, Project Manager
Stephen Bland, CEO	Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning & Grants
Monica Howse, Sr. Exec. Asst. & Board Liaison	Patrick Hester, Facilities Manager

A quorum was established, and Vice Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

III. **Approval of Minutes:** Mr. Thompson moved the approval of the October 26, 2023, Nashville MTA Board minutes. Ms. Dauphin seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the minutes.

IV. **Public Comments:** Vice Chair Miller 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:

- John Bull

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. **Consent Agenda Items:**

- **Computer, Server Equipment, Storage, Software Related Services, and Network Equipment (M-A-23-039)** – This item was deferred to the December board meeting at the request of staff.
- **Allied Universal Service Extension (M-A-23-040)** – Mr. Thompson moved the approval of the Allied Universal Service Extension. Ms. Dauphin seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved this action item.

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

- a. **FY2023 Annual Audit Report (M-A-23-041)** CFO Ed Oliphant introduced the FY2023 Annual Report, and Erica Saeger with Crosslin, PLC presented the following:

Ms. Saeger began her presentation of the FY2023 Audit Report by first introducing a change that was made to the FY2022 Audit Report. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) randomly selects CPA firm's audit reports for review and Crosslin's MTA FY2022 audit was selected. The OIG ruled that a finding should have been issued, instead of reference to the matter in the firm management letter to the Board.

The matter regarded management's oversight in confirming whether a certain vendor was properly registered on the federal System for Award Management (SAM) database so that MTA could certify that the vendor had not had any debarment and suspensions blocking them from receiving federal funding. Ms. Saeger explained that the oversight was discovered during the audit fieldwork and discussed with management as well as the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) prior to issuing the FY2022 Audit Report on October 31, 2022. The vendor self-certified prior to issuance of the 2022 report. Crosslin, exercising its auditor's discretion, felt the matter was mitigated, thereby notifying the Board of the actions through its management letter. The OIG disagreed and required Crosslin to re-issue the audit 2022 report with a finding instead. Ms. Saeger emphasized that no other information changed in the 2022 audit report, and it still reflected a clean opinion.

There was no further discussion.

Chair Dauphin moved the approval of the FY2023 Annual Audit Report. Ms. Hays Sasser seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved this action item.

**b. Construction Administration Services for North Nashville Transit Center (M-A-23-042)**  
Project Manager Kia Lewis provided an update at the meeting.

Staff requested the Board to provide the Chief Executive Officer the authority to increase the value of ViViD1 Architecture's contract to provide Construction Administration Services for the Clarksville Pike and 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Nashville Transit Center (NNTC) by a total of \$345,775 to provide additional construction administration services. This will bring the total not-to-exceed amount to \$993,596. These funds will be drawn from available project contingency funds and will not impact the overall project budget. The contract is funded by the NNTC project budget with funds from local, state, and federal sources. Additional funds are necessary to address supplemental work required of ViViD1 and an increase in the overall project period relative to expectations when ViViD1 was originally engaged.

Mr. Thompson asked how much of the contingency remained and how this would work moving forward. Ms. Lewis said the contingency amount for this project was \$1.6 million and would stand at \$1.1 million if this request is approved, so approximately 70% of the contingency remains to proceed with the project.

Ms. Miller asked if the NNTC project was still on schedule. Lewis said the project is on target and moving as planned for a Spring 2024 opening.

Mr. Thompson asked if WeGo foresees any additional construction administrative services are not included. Ms. Lewis said not at this time. WeGo encompassed everything related to the time expended for the rest of the project related to any additional funding.

Ms. Hays Sasser asked if this is the first time WeGo has tapped into the contingency funds. Lewis responded that change orders have come up occasionally for differing site conditions, regulatory requirements, and other unforeseen circumstances. Still, to date, they have amounted to less than 15% of the overall contingency fund, with the project at over 60% completion.

Chair Dauphin moved the approval of the Construction Administration Services for the NNTC action item. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved this action item.

**c. Quarterly Route Performance Report (OF-D-23-007)** Katie Freudberg, Scheduling & Service Planning Manager, presented the following:

Ridership for July, August, and September was up approximately 2.5% from last quarter, now at 97% of pre-pandemic ridership. Ridership on the frequent network continues to grow, with more than 50% of system ridership on the four busiest routes. Eight routes had higher ridership than pre-pandemic this quarter, with routes 6 Lebanon Pike, 50 Charlotte Pike, and 77 Thompson/Wedgewood joining the list for the first time – likely helped by student ridership, which is about 10% higher than last year.

WeGo has returned to having typical morning and afternoon peak ridership periods on weekdays in a pattern very similar to pre-pandemic times. The period that looks most different comparatively is the evening period into late night, with ridership around 35% higher than pre-COVID, reflecting both changing demand and response to added evening and late-night service. While WeGo used to see consistent ridership numbers Monday through Thursday, Monday ridership is lower than midweek and now more closely mirrors Friday ridership.

WeGo saw the impacts of the full closure of the Broadway bridge during this quarter, with the most significant delays on routes 3 West End and 7 Hillsboro Pike, which declined six percentage points from last quarter.

Ms. Freudberg also highlighted data points in our vehicle location system that point to the increasing challenges we are having with Downtown congestion, leading to increasing delays in the system.

Ms. Hays Sasser asked about the reasons for the jump in student ridership. Ms. Freudberg said WeGo had little insight at the moment into this other than students had previously been the slowest to return to the markets. She said WeGo is still far below pre-COVID numbers for student ridership. CEO Bland noted that staff would present more detailed information on student ridership when the StrIDe program is reviewed with the Board once we have more data from the current school year.

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

- a. **Connect Downtown Update (NICE-D-23-008):** Jennifer Wieland, Managing Director and principal at Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, and Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning and Grants, presented the following status of the study, along with a facilitated discussion. Marty Sewell, Director of Planning for the Nashville Department of Transportation and Multimodal Infrastructure (NDOT) was also present for Board questions.

Connect Downtown is a comprehensive effort to improve overall mobility in and through Downtown Nashville's core. The project is a joint effort led by the Nashville Department of Transportation and Multimodal Infrastructure (NDOT) in partnership with WeGo Public Transit, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), and the Nashville Downtown Partnership.

The study identified and examined options for improving traffic management, transit access, curbside and parking management, and bicycle and pedestrian safety while supporting the anticipated growth in employment, residential and commercial development, and Nashville's primacy as a tourism destination. One of the study's primary areas of emphasis was transit operations, recognizing the need to improve transit reliability for the local and regional bus network to make transit more competitive. Downtown traffic is one of the most significant challenges in transit reliability, creating frequent service delays and disruptions. Reliable connectivity in and through Downtown is key for transit to provide fast and consistent access to more places around Nashville.

During the past several months, the Connect Downtown team has drafted recommendations based on detailed research, technical analysis, and public and stakeholder outreach feedback.

The draft recommendations encompass a variety of modes and solutions with a substantial transit emphasis and include a phased approach for implementation over the next ten years. The final public outreach phase to present the Draft Action Plan will launch on November 13, including public open houses, key briefings, and stakeholder meetings, followed by a Final Plan that will be completed after the final outreach phase.

Ms. Miller asked who makes the final decision on how this all gets done. Mr. Sewell said various aspects of the plan would need to be approved by multiple bodies, including the Traffic and Parking Commission, Metro Council, and MTA Board.

General Counsel Behm recalled nothing in the presentation included 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. She said it would be an excellent place to have a corridor and wondered why 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Gay Street would not be a part of the plan. She said the train is on 1st Avenue, and from WeGo Central, you can take Gay Street, which has been under construction for a while, as well as 1st Avenue. She suggested a Transit Corridor. Ms. Behm said many employees want to ride the train but can't get there.

Ms. Wieland said 1st Avenue could be essential to the transit network. Still, it's probably most appropriate for a route or two instead of the number of routes using a Transit Priority Corridor. She also thinks that 1st Avenue is essential, just as a pedestrian space or a biking connection. With the future opportunity to revitalize and redevelop the Riverfront, it felt premature to direct that change through Connect Downtown. She agreed that there could be some service on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

Ms. Dauphin thanked Ms. Wieland and all the partners for moving this project forward; she said she knows it has taken longer than initially set out but thinks that everyone has done a great job of listening to the communities and putting it together into a comprehensive and comprehensible map that everybody can understand and access. She said it could be enormously transformative for Downtown, the city, and the region, but understands that due to current limited resources, it would have to be a phased-in approach. She would love to see dedicated funding for the citizens of Nashville.

Mr. Thompson commended the four departments for working together to look at something that will impact everybody regionally. He said there are pockets outside Downtown and outside of the loop interstates, like Shelby Avenue and Dickerson Pike, where there are many people, like Lebanon Road's multi-family housing. People will be using Downtown more, so what does that look like, and how does that impact their ability to get in and around Downtown? Making sure that all of the concerns get addressed while discussing this plan is important.

Mr. Castrodad concluded that staff would return in the future with a recommended plan adoption amendment.

Ms. Miller thanked the team for a wonderful presentation and asked them to remain strong for the changes.

**IX. Approval of the 2024 Board Meeting Schedule (M-A-23-043):** Vince Malone, Chief of Staff and Administration, presented the proposed schedule for the 2024 committee and board meetings, with highlights to mid-year and holiday schedules, noted below:

- April 18 – Several Board and Staff Members will be away during the usual Board Meeting date, so the April meeting is being moved up one week.
- July 25 – Historically, the Nashville MTA Board chooses to have an abbreviated meeting either as a board or a committee in July.

- November 21 – Thanksgiving falls on the fourth Thursday, so the November meeting will be on the third Thursday.
- December 19 – In recent years, the Nashville MTA Board has met earlier in December to free up the week before Christmas for travel and family plans for Nashville MTA Board members and staff.

Mr. Thompson moved the approval of the 2024 Board Meeting Schedule as presented. Ms. Dauphin seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved this action item.

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

1. CEO Bland and Mr. Castrodad attended several meetings with NDOT to brief key stakeholders on the Connect Downtown Plan, specifically focusing on transit recommendations. These meetings have included Council Members in districts including and surrounding Downtown Nashville.
2. WeGo has had several meetings with NDOT regarding potential transit upgrades in various projects that they're undertaking, such as resurfacing projects, to consider improvements in bus stops and bus stop access. NDOT's approach to becoming a true intermodal transportation department over the past year has been fantastic. CEO Bland acknowledged and thanked Director Alarcon and her staff.
3. Also, relative to NDOT, WeGo has had discussions with NDOT about coordinating a mutual strategic service planning process into a joint effort. WeGo expects that public-facing elements like public engagement and the production of communication materials would be consolidated while each entity maintained direct control over work program elements specific to their program. As with Connect Downtown, WeGo contemplates that Nashville MTA will take on the role of contracting agency for this effort, with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with NDOT outlining responsibilities and anticipates bringing this MOU to the Board in December.
4. With respect to the Mayoral and Council transition, the Mayor's Transition Task Forces – including the mobility task force – will be presenting their reports next Tuesday.
5. Ms. Freudberg and her staff have developed draft service proposals that would be implemented with the opening of the Dr. Ernest Rip Patton Jr. North Nashville Transit Center. There has not been a fundamental examination or restructuring of services in North Nashville in decades, and the various improvement initiatives would increase overall service on the eight routes in this area by a combined 80%. WeGo will hold several public meetings over the next month to review the proposed changes and receive feedback. We anticipate bringing the service change proposal to the Board at the January meeting.
6. CEO Bland said he, Ms. Behm, Rick Rodriguez, and Renuka Christoph have been working to develop a revised Advertising Policy for the Board to consider as a step toward implementing the Community Impact Partnership model already discussed with the Board. This revision would replace WeGo's current advertising policy. WeGo anticipates bringing this back to the Board in December.
7. CEO Bland participated on a panel to discuss transportation funding and needs in the region for Leadership Tennessee this month. He also attended a Leadership Tennessee class meeting in Memphis last weekend.
8. The Transit Management Section of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) met in Nashville this month. This organization represents the State Departments of Transportation officials administering public transportation programs.

CEO Bland spoke to the group about various initiatives, and Andy Burke and several WeGo staff led a tour of the Elizabeth Duff Transit Center at WeGo Central.

9. CEO Bland and CFO Oliphant participated in WeGo's mid-year budget review with Metro Finance to review the budget status and the status of various projects and initiatives. Many finance staff are new to the organization, and WeGo is following up on the review meeting with a facility tour next month.
10. CEO Bland acknowledged and thanked Board Chair Carr Williams for her role in the ceremony, officially renaming WeGo Central to the Elizabeth Duff Transit Center at WeGo Central. It was a wonderful event with a fantastic family, made even better by her comments.
11. On the RTA side:
  - a. WeGo continues to advance land acquisition toward a permanent park-and-ride location in Murfreesboro. Several staff attended a groundbreaking on the adjacent site for the City of Murfreesboro's new transit center this past month.
  - b. With the end of Nashville SC's season, WeGo completed the pilot bus service from Murfreesboro and Antioch with four games. It was a positive learning experience, and WeGo will work with the team to make modifications toward a more permanent model for next season.
  - c. Hatch Consulting Group continues to advance the WeGo Star Future Vision Study. Earlier today, WeGo met with Hatch and our Rail Operator, RJ Corman, to examine the operational feasibility of some options.

**XI. Chair's Report:** Vice Chair Miller presented the following report on behalf of Board Chair Carr Williams:

Miller thanked everyone for their patience in allowing her to serve as Chair for a Day. She said these are exciting times for Transit and Mobility in Nashville.

She concluded by saying that as we enter the Thanksgiving season, she is thankful to the Board and staff for the work and the dedication that they put in every day. She wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

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

**XIII. Adjournment:** With no further business, Vice Chair Miller moved to adjourn the meeting, which adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

**Attested:**

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**Gail Carr Williams**  
*Chair*

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**Margaret L. Behm**  
*Secretary*