

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting
February 23, 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, February 23, 2023.
- II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Janet Miller, Vice-Chair; Walter Searcy, Member; Jessica Dauphin, Margaret Behm, Board Secretary; Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Bland; Chief Financial Officer, Ed Oliphant; Chief Operating Officer, Andy Burke; Chief Development Officer, Trey Walker; Chief Safety & Security Officer, Nick Oldham; Chief Communications Officer, Renuka Christoph; Chief of Staff & Administration, Vince Malone; Director of Planning & Grants, Felix Castrodad; Deputy COO – Op Systems, Dan Freudberg; Scheduling & Service Planning Manager, Katie Freudberg; Facilities Manager, Patrick Hester; 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:** Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the December 15, 2022, MTA Board minutes, the motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the Board.
- IX. **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 gave public comments:

- Darius knight

- V. **Informational Items:** The following items were presented for the board members' review. If any members had questions, they were asked to reach out to the staff for the specific item. No questions or observations were raised by Members at this time.
- Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget
 - FY2024 Budget Submission to Metro
 - Monthly Operating Statistics
 - Upcoming Procurement Projects List

- VI. **Consent Agenda Items:** Janet Miller made a motion to approve the following consent agenda items, Walter Searcy seconded the motion, and the items were unanimously approved by the board:
- IT Software Maintenance and Related Services Contract increase (M-A-23-001)
 - MTA Agency Safety Plan Amendment Approval (M-A-23-002)
 - American Paper & Twine Contract Value Increase (M-A-23-003)

- VII. **Operations & Finance Committee Report:** Chair Walter Searcy presented the following items for discussion or action items:

- a. **Quarterly Route Performance Report (OF-D-23-001):** Scheduling & Service Planning Manager Katie Freudberg provided the following update:

The Quarterly Route Performance Report for the months of October, November, and December was included in the published Board packet.

As expected, due to the holidays and some winter weather, ridership this quarter dropped slightly (around 4%) from the previous quarter. Because this is within the range of seasonal

variation that we would have expected pre-Covid, it appears that our ridership growth may be starting to level off.

We have added the WeGo Link service to the Quarterly Performance Report as part of the Connector Network. While the overall ridership numbers for WeGo Link remain low, we saw a substantial increase in usage this quarter thanks to the addition of three new zones in October, serving Hermitage, Goodlettsville, and additional parts of Antioch / Southeast Nashville. We will continue to monitor the use of the WeGo Link service to understand how people are using it and how it will fit into our network in the future.

On-time performance system-wide has dropped to around pre-pandemic performance levels. We will be adding service hours to several routes in order to maintain current service levels in Spring 2023. We continue to see large variations in travel times on our major corridors, reducing the predictability and reliability of some of our busiest services.

CEO Bland said the bottom line is, until we have dedicated lanes, we're fighting a losing battle. We will continue to have to throw additional service resources at the problem, as we are with the service change to keep delivering the same service. One of the reasons that we can't expand more of the Better Bus service is that Katie will have to deploy more buses on existing routes and schedules to address reliability issues. These are resources that could otherwise be utilized to expand service.

Janet Miller asked what percentage of the routes are impacted. Katie said primarily corridors (Charlotte, West End, Murfreesboro, Nolensville, and Gallatin Rd). We're not seeing these kinds of impacts in the neighborhood routes. There was no further discussion.

- b. **Enterprise Asset Management Assessment Consulting Contract Award (M-A-23-004):** Deputy COO-Op Systems Dan Freudberg presented the following item for discussion and action:

Staff requested that the Board provide Chief Executive Officer with the authority to enter into a contract with Evision Partners to conduct the needs assessment and provide necessary requested services to enhance and improve the agency's Enterprise Asset Management system in the amount of \$708,392.78, plus a 20% owner-controlled contingency, for a total project value of \$850,000. The initial term of this contract is one year with three additional one-year options to be exercised at the Agency's sole discretion. This project will be funded with FTA funds matched with TDOT and local funds, and the project is included in the current MTA Capital Spending Plan.

Vice-Chair Janet Miller asked if there's industry-standard software available. Dan said that there are several systems common in the transit industry, and some excel more than others. There are non-industry asset management programs that perform these types of tasks, but transit is a bit different in that the asset management software will need to support operational needs in terms of vehicle assignment and there are only a handful of platforms that incorporate the unique needs of transit while also providing a solid asset management tool. There was no further discussion.

Chair Walter Searcy made a recommendation to approve the Enterprise Asset Management Assessment Consulting Contract Award action item and it was unanimously approved by the Board.

- c. **Escalator Modernization Contract & Vertical Circulation Maintenance Services (M-A-23-005):** Chief Development Officer Trey Walker and Facilities Manager Patrick Hester provided an overview of the scope of the escalator modernization project.

Staff requested the Board provide the Chief Executive Officer the authority to enter a contract with Kone for escalator modernization on ongoing vertical circulation equipment maintenance. Staff requests advancing the modernization for a base cost of \$1,495,800 and a contingency amount of \$375,000 to be used at the Agency's discretion to address unforeseen conditions or needed equipment repairs that would not be covered as regular maintenance. The proposed schedule for the modernization is approximately 20 months. Ongoing scheduled and preventative maintenance of all vertical circulation equipment is anticipated to cost \$111,678.80 over the life of the five-year contract. To address major repairs beyond those scheduled by preventative maintenance, Staff requests an additional \$250,000 over the life of the contract. The total not-to-exceed budget for the five-year contract is \$2,231,678.80. The modernization project budget is funded with a combination of federal, state, and local funding sources. The ongoing maintenance budget is addressed in the Agency's operating budget for contracted maintenance.

Board Chair Gail Carr Williams asked when will the project begin for the escalators. Patrick said immediately upon approval, we would like to begin surveys as early as next week but there would be no impact on customers until the end of the calendar year.

Walter Searcy asked what percentage of the contractor is for elevators and what percentage is for escalators. Patrick said that \$250,000 is for elevator repairs and the \$111,678.80 is for escalator and elevator preventative maintenance. The remainder of the contract value is for the escalator modernization program at WeGo Central. Walter also asked if we had any DBE participation for this project, and if not, can we at this late date require them to report to us what their apprenticeship programs look like regarding women and minority businesses, which will make them know that we're looking at this. CEO Bland said that we only had one contractor and it was a non-DBE contractor. Denise Richardson said that we didn't put a DBE goal on this project because there are no certified DBEs in TN and that we could inquire about their training and apprenticeship programs as we obtain initial project documentation.

Chair Walter Searcy made a recommendation to approve the Escalator Modernization Contract & Vertical Circulation Maintenance Services action item and it was unanimously approved by the Board.

VIII. New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report: Vice-Chair Janet Miller presented the following item for discussion and action:

a. Spring '23 Service Changes & Title VI Analysis (M-A-23-006) Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad presented the following item for discussion and action:

The Director of Planning and Grants provided an overview of the proposed service changes for Spring 2023, as well as the accompanying public engagement process and Title VI social equity analysis. Mr. Castrodad reported that overall the changes were well received, and that several suggestions for modification were accommodated in the final recommendations. He also indicated that the Title VI analysis determined that the proposed changes would have no disparate impact on disadvantaged neighborhoods or neighborhoods of color. Staff requested the Board approve the proposed Spring 2023 service changes as presented for implementation to take effect on April 2, 2023.

CEO Bland said in addition to Felix's presentation in making everyone aware of the challenges associated with service expansion due to operator and vehicle shortages, he also wanted to highlight some of the accomplishments and the strides that we are being made in onboarding new operators. We are expanding service, adding service resources to current service to try and enhance reliability, and we're adding more operators to our directly operated Access van service to relieve the pressure on our third-party providers. On the fleet side, we anticipate the delivery of (14) articulated buses in March and later this year another (20) 40 ft. buses will be

delivered; so, we're looking pretty good for further implementation of the Better Bus service enhancement in the fall.

Committee Chair Janet Miller reiterated the public comments made by Mr. Darius Knight about how important it is for us to communicate any changes.

Board Chair Gail Carr Williams asked that we spend more time with the employers in the Cockrill Bend area to encourage them to share with their employees the services available and to promote WeGo Ride.

Committee Chair Janet Miller made a recommendation to approve the Spring '23 Service Changes & Title VI Analysis action item and it was unanimously approved by the Board.

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

- a. Earlier this month, we submitted our FY2023-24 Operating Budget request to Metro Finance. The full submission, including the budget equity tool, was included in the printed materials we forwarded to you. The request includes just under \$68.9 million (an increase of about \$7.2 million) in baseline funding to fund continued operations and committed operations expansion for Better Bus service expansion that was partially funded this year; partial year operation of the Ernest Rip Patton, Jr. North Nashville Transit Center; and additional operating costs associated with the stop improvement and shelter expansion program funded with Metro Capital funds. In addition, we have filed an investment request of \$5.4 million to initiate the next phase of Better Bus service expansion over the next fiscal year. Among the improvements planned in the next phase would be continued extension of service hours on high ridership routes, improved mid-day, evening, and weekend frequency on higher ridership routes, additional WeGo Link mobility on demand zones, extensions on the routes 9 and 14 to serve the Ernest Rip Patton Jr. North Nashville Transit Center, and creation of a new crosstown route along Trinity Lane connecting that center to East Nashville and the Gallatin Pike corridor. Staff will be meeting with Metro Finance staff to review the request on March 22. Our Budget hearing before the Metro Council is currently scheduled for Tuesday, May 23 at 4:00 pm in Council Chambers and we would welcome Board participation in that hearing.
- b. Earlier this week, the Metro Council approved the city's capital spending plan for this year. Overall, the plan includes \$24.93 million for WeGo Public Transit, including full funding for our requests for matching funds for State and Federal grants, Neighborhood Transit Center expansion, and expansion buses for future phases of the Better Bus service expansion plan. We also received partial funding for our request for additional stop and shelter improvements. Two projects that were not funded included funding for replacement buses and Access vans. However, this will not impact project delivery schedules as, first, for Access vans, we have a backlog of van orders already in the pipeline. Second, for our bus replacements, we will have the availability of State and Federal funding to stay on our replacement schedule as a result of pandemic relief funds relieving pressure on our formula Federal funds for preventive maintenance expenses. It will, however, be important to get back into a cycle of funding bus replacements through the CSP again next year as pandemic relief funds will be exhausted.
- c. More good news with respect to the advancement of our capital improvement plan. Earlier this month, we were notified by TDOT of 3 competitive capital grant awards under their IMPROVE Transit Investment Grant Program. \$1.8 million was awarded toward the upgrade of real-time signage and related infrastructure at the Elizabeth Duff Transit Center at WeGo Central; the second was \$1.2 million for additional stop and shelter improvements throughout the system; and the 3rd was for \$5 million toward the Hickory Hall transit center project in Antioch.
- d. Working with our State Transit Association, we've been following Governor Lee's proposed Transportation Modernization Act Legislation. We've been involved in several meetings with Deputy Governor and TDOT Commissioner Eley to discuss possible public transportation implications of the Act. CEO Bland said that he also attended a meeting with the Davidson County legislative delegation to discuss possible impacts of the Act for the County. Broadly,

the Act would authorize TDOT to solicit proposals from the private sector for public-private partnerships to undertake choice lanes where appropriate as both a means of managing congestion and generating long-term revenue for the transportation program. Commissioner Eley has graciously agreed to attend your March meeting to discuss possible implications for public transportation.

- e. NDOT continues to advance the Connect Downtown Mobility planning process. They are in the process of publishing a variety of possible scenarios for various aspects of Downtown circulation, including potential transit priority corridors. As this work becomes more evolved, they will return to this Board to discuss possible implications for our transit network.
- f. CEO Bland thanked Capital Grants Administrator Billy Higgins, as well as dozens of other staff who have been supporting her in our ongoing Federal Transit Administration Triennial Review process. Although this year's triennial review was delayed for one year by the pandemic, it is an opportunity for FTA to examine all aspects of our operation with respect to Federal requirements for funding. It involves the compilation and review of thousands of pages of documents, so it is a significant undertaking for the agency. We anticipate their final review report to be issued in 2 – 3 months.
- g. Additional thanks to Director of Administration, Kym Tucker; and the Training and Maintenance Departments for continuing to evolve our Maintenance Apprenticeship program. We will be celebrating "Apprenticeship Signing Day" for 6 new candidates (4 internal and 2 external) into the program on March 16. As we continue to make strong progress in attracting new Bus Operators and Facilities Maintenance positions, our weak spot is for Vehicle Technicians so the apprenticeship program will be a crucial element in filling these gaps long-term.
- h. On the RTA side:
 - Hatch Consulting began the Star Future Vision study and is working at full speed now. To date, their work has included various program management activities, meetings with key stakeholder groups, work on the benchmarking portion of the program, and a meeting with RJ Corman – the freight CEO Bland availed himself of questions and there were none at this time.

X. Chair's Report: Chair Carr Williams provided the following report:

Chair Carr Williams said she appreciated all of the good reports and presentations and all of the action items that were approved today. Specifically, she welcomed and acknowledged Patrick Hester on his presentation of the Escalator Modernization Contract & Vertical Circulation Maintenance Services action item.

She said as the city progresses, it really presents opportunities and challenges for our service, but she believes that everyone has their eye on everything to help explain when we're on time and when we're not, and everyone continues to find new ways to try to work it out.

In conclusion, she thanked and appreciated fellow board members and staff for all of their hard work.

XI. Other Business: There was no other business to come before this board.

XII. Adjournment: With no further business, Chair Carr Williams called for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Janet Miller made a motion, Jessica Dauphin seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary