

Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

May 22, 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, May 22, 2025.

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

Gail Carr Williams, Chair

Jessica Dauphin, Member

Aron Thompson, Member

Kathryn Hays, Member

Jeff Haynes, Member

Margaret Behm, Board Secretary

Stephen Bland CEO

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

Debbie Frank, DCEO of Growth & Dev

Nick Oldham, Chief Safety & Security Officer

Patrick Hester, Deputy COO-Asset & Infrastructure

Katie Freudberg, Scheduling & Svc. Manager

Zeda Riggs, Dir. Of Customer Care & Comm.

A quorum was established, and Board Chair Carr Williams called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

Chair Carr Williams took a moment to welcome and introduce MTA's newest board member, Mr. Jeff Haynes. Appointed in 2025, Mr. Haynes brings over four decades of experience in commercial real estate. He is a partner at Boyle Investment Company in Nashville, where he has overseen the development of more than 2 million square feet of office and retail space, including landmark projects such as Capitol View and Meridian Cool Springs.

Mr. Haynes has also contributed to academia as an adjunct professor at Vanderbilt's Owen Graduate School of Management and holds degrees from both Vanderbilt University and the University of Michigan. His record of public service includes time on the Nashville Planning Commission and the Parks Board. He currently serves as chair of the Salvation Army Property Committee. His appointment was unanimously recommended by the Rules Committee and confirmed by the Council.

- III. **Approval of Minutes:** Mr. Thompson made a motion to approve the April 24, 2025, minutes of the Nashville MTA Board meeting. Ms. Hays seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the minutes.

- IV. **New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report:** Chair Carr Williams exercised her discretion to revise the agenda, inviting New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Chair Aron Thompson to begin with his committee report. This adjustment was made to accommodate the WeGo Youth Action Team, allowing them to deliver their annual presentation at the beginning of the session rather than at the conclusion of the meeting.

Committee Chair Thompson presented the following items for discussion:

- a. **WeGo Youth Action Team Year-End Report (NICE-D-25-006):** Director of Customer Care & Communications Zeda Riggs formally introduced the WeGo Youth Action Team, a dynamic group of high school students dedicated to representing youth perspectives in public transit. The Youth Action Team is coordinated through a partnership between WeGo Public Transit and the Oasis Center.

As part of their ongoing commitment to leadership and civic engagement, representatives from the Youth Action Team presented their 2023–2024 School Year Progress Report to the

Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) New Initiatives and Community Engagement Committee.

This presentation highlighted the team's accomplishments over the past year, including:

- Partnering with WeGo staff and touring facilities to learn about transit operations.
- Creating youth-focused travel training programs.
- Experiencing and evaluating WeGo services during monthly ride-alongs.
- Advocating for increased ridership and sustainable transit funding.
- Supporting community outreach to raise awareness about transit benefits.
- Collaborating with community stakeholders to identify and solve transit challenges.

Student representatives came from a diverse group of schools, including Early College High School, Ensworth, Hume-Fogg Academic, Kehilla, KIPP Nashville Collegiate, and Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet.

Through their leadership, advocacy, and community engagement, the Youth Action Team continues to play a key role in shaping a more inclusive, responsive, and youth-focused public transit system. As part of the program year, the Youth Action Team had the opportunity to visit New York City and experience its comprehensive public transportation system.

Following the presentation, board members engaged in a general discussion and expressed their sincere appreciation to the Youth Action Team for their insightful report and meaningful contributions.

- V. **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:

- Ahemed Raji

- VI. **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

- VII. **Consent Agenda Items:**

- **M-A-25-020** – Trapeze Group and Vontas Enterprise Software and Hardware Products

Ms. Dauphin requested that the Trapeze Group item be removed from the Consent Agenda for further discussion. CEO Bland provided clarification, explaining that two elements of the authorization had been inadvertently omitted, although the total ceiling amounts remained accurate. The following items should be added under “Items Requiring Additional Funds”:

- Automatic Passenger Counter Project for 13 New Flyer Buses – budgeted at \$185,000
- On-Board Bus Computer Aided Dispatch/Automatic Vehicle Location (CAD/AVL) Hardware Equipment Training – \$13,526

Following the discussion, Ms. Dauphin moved to approve the Trapeze Group and Vontas Enterprise Software and Hardware Products action item. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hays and unanimously approved by the board.

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

- a. **Nestor Underground Storage Tank Closure (MA-25-021):** Deputy COO of Asset Management & Infrastructure Patrick Hester presented the following item for action:

The Nestor facility, central to the agency's operations and maintenance, is facing service expansion limitations due to parking constraints. To address this, the Nestor Storage Tank Closure Project will remove outdated fuel tanks, making way for critical site improvements such as pavement repairs, expanded parking, enhanced lighting, and safety upgrades. These efforts align with CHYM planning goals and aim to restore the site's infrastructure and increase vehicle capacity, though some parking issues will remain.

An Invitation to Bid (ITB) for the tank closure project was issued on December 5, 2024, with an 8.30% Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) participation goal. Of the two bids received by the January 7, 2025, deadline, only one—submitted by SPATCO Energy Solutions—was deemed responsive. SPATCO revised their initial \$470,290.74 bid to a Best and Final Offer of \$368,878.53, which was evaluated as fair, reasonable, and compliant with solicitation requirements.

Staff recommended that the Board authorize the Chief Executive Officer to execute a contract with SPATCO Energy Solutions for \$368,878.53 for the closure of decommissioned fuel storage tanks at the Nestor facility. Given the potential for unforeseen subsurface conditions, staff also requests approval of a 30% contingency of \$110,663.47, establishing a total project budget of \$479,542.00. This project is a component of the State of Good Repair capital plan for Nestor Improvements and will be funded through FTA 5307 funds, with accompanying state and local matching contributions.

There was a general discussion.

Ms. Dauphin motioned to approve the Nestor Underground Storage Tank Closure action item. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thompson and unanimously approved by the board.

- b. **Quarterly Route Performance Report Closure (OF-D-25-004):** Scheduling & Service Manager Katie Freudberg presented the Quarterly Route Performance Report for January, February, and March 2025.

Overall ridership on MTA services declined by approximately 2% compared to the third quarter of last year and was nearly 9% lower than the previous quarter. This decrease was partly attributed to winter weather conditions in January and February.

During this quarter, WeGo operated enhanced Saturday service on weekdays for three days—an increase from two days in the same quarter last year. As a result, most routes ran less frequently than on a typical weekday. Despite this, the Operations team maintained a high level of service reliability, even in the face of vehicle and staffing challenges during snow events.

While most frequent and local routes experienced a year-over-year decline in ridership, nearly all connector routes recorded significant increases. Notably, ridership on Route 75 Midtown more than doubled, and Route 77 Thompson–Wedgewood saw a 66% increase, reflecting a positive response to the substantial service enhancements implemented last spring. Route 71 Trinity operated only one day in the third quarter of last year; therefore, next quarter will provide the first opportunity for a meaningful year-over-year comparison.

Ridership patterns continue to evolve in response to last year's major network changes, particularly around the launch of the North Nashville Transit Center. Staff are closely analyzing ridership data to better understand how these changes are being received.

A technical issue affecting on-time performance data from last quarter persisted through most of this quarter. A solution was implemented in late March, and we expect the on-time performance data for the next quarter to be much more accurate. However, this quarter's data is not reliable enough at the route level to support a meaningful analysis of on-time performance or trends.

There was a general discussion.

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

1. On April 25, WeGo participated in the "Ticket to Ride" event in Donelson, celebrating Transit Month with partners like Nashville Connector and The Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee. Attendees rode the WeGo Star and gathered for a social hour at Party Fowl in Donelson. It was a valuable opportunity to thank transit supporters of the *Choose How You Move* initiative.
2. On May 1, WeGo staff joined Mayor Freddie O'Connell for his State of Metro address, which included highlights of WeGo improvements under *Choose How You Move*, such as expanded service, low-income free fare program, enhanced Access on Demand, and new WeGo Link Zones.
3. The Mayor's Budget was released shortly thereafter, and the proposed FY2025–26 budget supports all WeGo service expansion requests, including those approved last month by the Board under the *Choose How You Move* plan to be implemented in July.
4. Board Chair Gail Carr-Williams and Amanda Vandegrift joined the WeGo team at the May 15 Metro Council Budget and Finance Committee budget hearing. Council members engaged with thoughtful questions on *Choose How You Move*. Mr. Bland expressed his thanks to Chair Carr Williams for her impactful opening remarks.
5. This past month, WeGo met with TDOT to review a study related to Governor Lee's "Choice Lanes" initiative. The study is exploring transit integration within future choice lane infrastructure. Thanks to TDOT engaging us so early in the process, and they expect the information developed during this process to be shared with prospective concessionaires as they advance the selection process.
6. Earlier this month, WeGo launched a new program with DA Glenn Funk's Office to provide free WeGo Access rides to court for individuals facing transportation barriers. Special thanks to Access Manager Marilyn Yokely and a special shout-out to former MTA Board Member Mary Griffin, who supported its rollout for the DA's Office.
7. Work is underway to implement the low-income free fare program. In coordination with Mayor O'Connell's Office, we are engaging social service and advocacy groups, with program rollout expected by year-end.
8. This month, special recognition goes to nearly the entire organization for supporting Mark Fleming and WeGo's Human Resources Department in hosting a hiring event at the Myatt Drive facility. The event drew 228 attendees and resulted in 145 job offers—an outstanding outcome. Thank you to HR and all supporting departments for making this event such a success.

9. Several WeGo staff met with Nashville International Airport's leadership to align WeGo's airport service expansion with BNA's growth timeline. The meeting provided clarity on coordination and service phasing. The meeting was highly productive and gave us a much better sense of timing so that we can optimally sequence service improvements.

10. On the RTA side:

- a. WeGo continues to work with developers on the Donelson Station upgrade project. Design work is in progress with major improvements, including a 6-bay transit center, road relocation, and quiet zone safety features. We are currently awaiting a review appraisal for a small sliver of land we need to acquire from the Nashville and Eastern Rail Authority.
- b. Andy Burke and other staff in Operations are working with Anchor Bus as they transition into the RTA Regional bus operations contract. Anchor Bus will begin operating regional routes in July, taking over from Gray Line. We thank Gray Line for its many years of service and professionalism during the transition.

X. **Chair's Report:** Chair Carr Williams expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to join CEO Steve Bland and Deputy CEO of Finance and Administration Amanda Vandegrift at the recent budget hearing before the Council. She noted how thoughtful and supportive the questions were, reflecting an encouraging recognition of the work being done. Several questions acknowledged WeGo and MTA's partnership with Metro Council and highlighted the new funding provided through the *Choose How You Move* initiative. Overall, she described the experience as a "win-win" and was honored to deliver the opening remarks. She emphasized that this work is a shared effort, driven by both dedicated volunteers and the committed staff at WeGo.

Chair Carr Williams also thanked the WeGo Youth Action Team for their outstanding presentation. She recognized the students as future riders, leaders, and transit professionals. She shared a personal story about reconnecting with a former MTA intern who now works in transit in Pennsylvania and credits his career to that early experience. She offered special thanks to Zeda Riggs and her team for making it possible for youth to engage with and contribute to WeGo.

In closing, Chair Carr Williams extended her appreciation to the board and staff for their continued dedication and hard work.

XI. **Other Business:** There was no further business brought before this Board.

XII. **Adjournment:** With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary