Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

December 18, 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, December 18, 2025.

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

Gail Carr Williams, Chair
Aron Thompson, Vice Chair
Kathryn Hays, Member
Jessica Dauphin, 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.
Nick Oldham, Chief Safety & Security Officer
Vince Malone, COSA
Andy Burke, COO
Rob McElhaney, Director of IT
Patrick Hester, DCOO of Assets & Infrastructure

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

III. **Approval of Minutes:** Ms. Hays made a motion to approve the minutes of the Nashville MTA Board meeting held on November 20, 2025. Mr. Thompson 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:

- Matthew Studer
- John Bull
- Phillip Many – St. Luke Community House
- C.J. Sentella – Nashville Food Project

V. **Informational Items:** The following items were presented for the board members' review:

a. Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget – No questions
b. Monthly Operating Statistics – No questions
c. Upcoming Procurements – No questions

VI. **Consent Agenda Items:**

a. **Adoption of Free Fare Services for New Year's Eve 2025 (M-A-25-054):** - The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Nashville and Davidson County has a history of offering free-fare days for major community events, including mayoral inaugurations, civic dedications, Election Day, and New Year's Eve. For New Year's Eve, free fares and added service support community celebrations, providing a safe alternative to driving.

On New Year's Eve, MTA will operate regular and supplemental bus service on major routes, WeGo Access after midnight, and special shuttles connecting key locations to the "Nashville's Big Bash" celebration. Additional buses will be available to address overcrowding or service disruptions. The RTA will operate the WeGo Star rail service to downtown for a fare.

Staff recommended eliminating all fares on MTA services from 6:00 p.m. through the end of service on Tuesday, December 31. Capacity is expected to be sufficient, and the impact on fare revenue is anticipated to be negligible. It is recommended that Tuesday, December 31, 2025, be designated as a "free fare New Year's Eve" in Davidson County on all services operated by the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Nashville and Davidson County after 6:00 pm, including both fixed route and WeGo Access paratransit service. Free fare is not extended to either service of the Regional Transportation Authority or to the WeGo Link first-mile/last-mile connector program; regular fares will remain in effect.

Ms. Hays made a motion to approve the Adoption of Free Fare Services for New Year's Eve 2025 action item. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thompson and unanimously approved by the board.

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

a. **Ground Maintenance Contract Extension (M-A-25-055):** DCOO of Assets & Infrastructure Patrick Hester presented the following item for action:

The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority contracted with Five Star Lawn Management in July 2022 for grounds maintenance services, with an initial three-year contract capped at $275,000 and renewal options. A 2025 amendment increased the contract limit to $300,000. The contract will not be extended beyond the current one-year extension.

Starting in January 2026, grounds maintenance will transition to a newly approved On-Call Maintenance Contract that consolidates multiple facility maintenance services, improving efficiency, oversight, response times, cost control, and DBE participation.

Due to increased maintenance demands across WeGo facilities, service costs exceeded the $300,000 limit. Approval is requested to add $35,000 to cover remaining invoices and close out the contract, bringing the total not-to-exceed amount to $335,000.

Staff recommended that the Board authorize a $35,000 increase to the purchase order, bringing the total not-to-exceed amount to $335,000. Funding for this contract is provided through the Operating and Capital Maintenance Program, supported by local and federal formula funds.

The Operations & Finance Committee made a motion to approve the Ground Maintenance Contract Extension action item. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thompson and unanimously approved by the board.

b. **Vontas Trapeze Contract Sole Source Procurement Change Order Supporting Acquisition of Small Buses: (M-A-25-056):** Director of IT, Rob McElhaney, presented the following item for action:

In October 2025, the Board approved the purchase of 19 body-on-chassis buses for a total cost not to exceed $4,540,525, which includes the base vehicle price, aftermarket equipment (such as AVL and fare collection systems), and related tools, training, and spare parts.

To ensure proper installation of Vontas Automatic Vehicle Location (CAD-AVL) equipment—due to its technical complexity—WeGo staff require Vontas/Trapeze support during installation. This approach will accelerate the delivery schedule and improve post-delivery troubleshooting and commissioning, enhancing on-bus CAD-AVL reliability.

As a result, a sole-source change order to the Vontas/Trapeze contract is needed to cover hardware, installation services, and a 10% contingency, adding $529,865.60 to the contract.

Staff requested the Board's authorization to add funds to the Vontas\Trapeze Sole Source purchase order for $529,865.60 for hardware and installation of after-market CAD-AVL equipment onto (19) Body on Chassis buses.

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

Ms. Dauphin asked a question regarding whether the installation constituted a redundant effort and whether the equipment had already been paid for and installed by the manufacturer. Mr. McElhaney clarified that the installation is not redundant. The complete hardware installation will be performed by staff, with some electrical components installed at Turtletop. Staff will supplement and verify all work during the installation and commissioning process.

When asked if this approach is consistent with past practice, Mr. McElhaney confirmed that similar installations have been completed on larger buses such as Gillig and New Flyer. However, paratransit vehicles present a different scenario. Turtletop produces approximately 300 buses annually, with only 19 designated for WeGo, making it difficult for the manufacturer to maintain specialized knowledge for these installations. He also noted that previous attempts to have the manufacturer complete the work proved challenging.

Mr. Thompson asked for clarification regarding whether the hardware installation discussed was related to fare collection; Mr. McElhaney said the hardware installation discussed is related to fare collection; however, fare collection systems are handled as separate installations. This includes the GenFare fare box for cash collection and the onboard validator (Quick Ticket), which is installed by IT staff and aligns with prior ITS approvals.

The Operations & Finance Committee made a motion to approve the Vontas Trapeze Contract Sole Source Procurement Change Order Supporting Acquisition of Small Buses action item. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hays and unanimously approved by the board.

c. **<u>Purchase Card Policy (M-A-25-057):</u>** DCEO of Finance & Administration, Amanda Vandegrift, presented the following item for action:

MTA currently lacks an efficient process for small-dollar business purchases and relies on a single corporate credit card, causing delays, higher costs, and late fees. To address this, staff recommends establishing a Purchasing Card (P-Card) program through an existing State of Tennessee contract with US Bank.

During fall 2025, staff worked with WeGo departments, US Bank, and national peers to design a controlled, low-risk program. The proposed pilot would start with three P-Cards, each managed by an Executive Team member and a designated Administrative Assistant, targeting departments with the highest current card usage.

Cardholders and authorized users must complete annual training, sign agreements, comply with the formal P-Card Policy, and operate under strict transaction limits and automated merchant category controls. The staff is seeking Board approval of the P-Card Policy, with plans to finalize procedures, conduct training, and issue cards in January or February 2026.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the attached purchase card policy.

The Operations and Finance Committee made a motion to approve the Purchase Card Policy action item. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hays and unanimously approved by the board.

VIII. **<u>New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report:</u>** There were no New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee discussion or action items this month. However, Committee Chair Aron Thompson provided the following update:

Mr. Thompson thanked everyone for attending the Transit-Oriented Development Summit on December 10th. He reported that the Urban Land Institute (ULI), in partnership with several city organizations, including the Civic Design Center, Think Tennessee, and the Art League of Middle Tennessee, hosted a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Summit. The event was well attended, including participation from several individuals present at today's meeting.

The summit featured several subject matter experts, including the CEO of the Kansas City Transit Authority, the Vice President of Housing, Policy, and Zoning at Smart Growth America, and Jill Sherman, a developer specializing in TOD projects. The session was well-received, and attendees gained valuable insights from the presentations and discussions.

Mr. Thompson noted that feedback from the event was positive and expressed optimism about hosting a follow-up session, potentially a second TOD summit, in the near future.

IX. **<u>CEO's Report</u>**: CEO Bland provided the following report:

1. Staff have participated in several meetings with the East Bank Development Team to discuss the future configuration of East Bank Boulevard and James Robertson Parkway to accommodate rapid transit. While the project remains several years away, the East Bank Development Authority is working to identify conceptual configurations to allow for appropriate advance work.

2. Staff also participated in several meetings with representatives from the Mayor's Office and Nashville International Airport to discuss near- and long-term future service improvements at the Airport. Several improvements are anticipated to begin in 2026.

3. CEO Bland shared that he participated in a panel discussion on regional mobility at Middle Tennessee State University, organized and moderated by Jessica Dauphin. Other panelists included Franklin Mayor Ken Moore and Michael Skipper of the Greater Nashville Regional Council. The session was extremely well attended and generated strong engagement and discussion.

4. Billy Higgins has been leading the development of the updated Capital Improvement Plan, which is anticipated to be brought to the Board in January for consideration and discussion. In related news, the Metro Council adopted two resolutions earlier this week that positively affect the capital plan. First, the Council approved the mayor's proposal to reallocate $8 million in Metro capital funds from the Murfreesboro Pike BRT project to the agency's general capital program. With the Choose How You Move program now prioritizing the Nolensville Pike corridor for capital improvements, there is no immediate need for these funds on Murfreesboro Pike, making reallocation to the state-of-good-repair capital program appropriate. Council also approved Metro's General Capital Spending Plan allocation for the year. Overall, CSP includes $11.77 million for MTA and RTA for grant matches and bus replacements, bringing the total Metro capital allocation for the year to just under $20 million, excluding expansion funding provided through the Choose How You Move program. Both resolutions passed by a vote of 33–0, with two members abstaining.

5. CEO Bland reported additional positive news on the Capital Program, noting that the agency was successful in receiving a $10 million Federal Transit Administration Discretionary Bus and Bus Facilities Grant to support an upcoming bus replacement purchase. These funds are highly competitive, and he congratulated Billy Higgins for her outstanding work in securing the grant.

6. Based on the Board's vote earlier in the meeting, CEO Bland confirmed that fare-free service will once again be provided on New Year's Eve after 6:00 p.m. to support downtown festivities. He added that service will receive an additional boost this year, as NDOT will be operating the 4th Avenue dedicated bus lane pilot after 8:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve.

7. Turning to the new year, CEO Bland announced that Winter Service Changes will begin on January 4, 2026. These changes, approved by the Board in October, include expanded Sunday service hours on the busiest routes and on Access, to align with Monday through Saturday service hours; improved off-peak frequency on Routes 3, 7, 34, and 52; and the creation of a new East Thompson WeGo Link zone. The additional costs for these services are funded through Mayor O'Connell's Choose How You Move program. Customers can visit the agency's website for route-specific details.

8. He reported that the agency met with the new leadership team from the Memphis Area Transit Authority two weeks ago. MATA leadership expressed particular interest in learning more about the Journey Pass Program and the agency's fleet replacement and acquisition strategy.

9. CEO Bland noted that several members participated in a workshop co-hosted with the Urban Land Institute focused on Transit-Oriented Development and opportunities to advance TOD in Nashville following the passage of Choose How You Move. He praised the quality of the speakers and breakout sessions and recognized Aron Thompson and Debbie Frank for leading the event's development with ULI and other partners. He added that this topic will continue to be discussed in 2026.

10. CEO Bland reported that Debbie Frank, Amanda Vandegrift, Jubal Parris, and he participated in an all-day workshop with Choose How You Move program staff, NDOT, TDOT, and Metro Planning staff to discuss collaboration opportunities and processes for advancing all-access corridor projects in the coming months and years.

11. On the RTA side:

    a. CEO Bland reported that work continues on the City of Murfreesboro Park-and-Ride facility. The Murfreesboro City Council approved zoning and site plan proposals earlier in the month, allowing staff to complete design and bidding documents for contractor solicitation in early 2026.

12. CEO Bland wished everyone a happy and safe holiday season and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to continue working together in 2026. He also encouraged participation in the "Stuff the Bus" food drive at the Germantown Kroger, located at 801 Monroe Street, where non-perishable food items are being accepted until 5:00 p.m. for donation to Second Harvest Food Bank.

13. CEO Bland concluded by noting that many staff attended the Greater Nashville Regional Council's Annual Partnership Celebration. At the event, MTA Board Member Jessica Dauphin was recognized with the Marshall S. Stuart Collaboration Award for her years of tireless transit advocacy through the Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee. He congratulated Ms. Dauphin on a well-deserved recognition.

X. **Chair's Report:** Chair Carr Williams extended special thanks and recognition to Billy Higgins for her hard work and dedication. She noted that the WeGo Roadeo team once again delivered outstanding performance at this year's roadeo and expressed her pride in their advancement to the national level. Chair Williams also highlighted the excellent condition of the buses and shared her enthusiasm for the effective use of CHYM funds.

Additionally, she congratulated WeGo's Social Media Coordinator, Ms. Taylor Hampton, for producing engaging and creative content that continues to connect with the community. Chair Carr Williams remarked positively on continued ridership growth and expressed excitement for the "Stuff the Bus" event taking place later that evening.

She concluded by thanking members of the public for their comments and ongoing support throughout the year and wished everyone a happy holiday season.

XI. **<u>Other Business</u>:**

XII. **<u>Adjournment</u>**: With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams **Chair**	**Margaret L. Behm** **Board Secretary**