

AccessRide Policy Advisory Committee (APAC)

Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, September 23, 2026

Time: 1:03 PM – Adjourned

Location: Elizabeth Duff Transit Center, 400 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Nashville, TN 37219 (in person and via Zoom)

Presiding: April Meredith, APAC Vice Chair & Nominations Subcommittee Chair (chairing on behalf of Chair James Brown, who was on vacation)

Recording Secretary: Christopher Flor, APAC Secretary

Procedural note on agenda order: Approval of the previous meeting's minutes and today's agenda were added to the order of business between roll call and public comments. Later, at approximately 2:30 PM, Bill Zagorski needed to leave for another commitment, so by common consent the Bylaws Subcommittee report was moved ahead of the Community Event Subcommittee and the WeGo Application and Riders' Guide Clean-Up item; the Application/Riders' Guide discussion was correspondingly pushed to the very end of the meeting. These minutes follow the printed agenda order, with each discussion recorded under its designated item regardless of the order actually heard.

Attendance & Roll Call

Committee members present (11): April Meredith, Natasha Wilkins, Christopher Flor, Patricia Valladares (Zoom), Sheila Hansen (Zoom), Roger Womack, Bill Zagorski, Pam Hollingsworth, Jordan Collins (Zoom), Kasondra (Zoom), Larry Walls (Zoom).

Absent: James Brown, Chair (on vacation).

Not present: Lorri Mabry, Arthur Humphrey, Brenda Boaz-Pond, Dr. Tanya/Tonja Dandy (spelling differs between the July agenda and this transcript), Joy Andal, Kim Ayers.

Also present (WeGo/MTA staff): Marquis McMahan, AccessRide Manager; Tanesha Durham, Eligibility Specialist, ADA Coordinator, and APAC Liaison; Adrienne Caldwell, a new Paratransit ADA Eligibility Specialist Assistant. No supplemental (third-party) providers were present.

Guests: Marlene Milton, an observer and prospective member, joined via Zoom partway through the meeting.

During roll call, Christopher Flor noted that Carol Francisco is no longer part of APAC; April Meredith confirmed the agency has been contacted about naming a replacement, which had not yet occurred. Natasha Wilkins also clarified that Arlia Haddox remains on the roster only as a retained point of contact for a veterans' group and should be skipped at roll call rather than counted present or absent, and that two other names on the older roster — Bobby Greene and Carolyn Farmer — are WeGo/MTA staff, not committee members.

Item 1 — A Warm Welcome

April Meredith called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM. She welcomed all attendees, in person and virtual, and explained that she would facilitate the agenda in the absence of Chair James Brown, who was on vacation.

Item 2 — Roll Call / Introductions

Christopher Flor conducted the roll call for committee officers, voting members, WeGo/MTA staff, and guests (detailed above under Attendance & Roll Call).

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: Motion — Roger Womack; Second — Bill Zagorski. Approved unanimously.

Approval of Today's Agenda: Motion — Bill Zagorski; Second — Natasha Wilkins. Approved unanimously. Quorum was confirmed, counting members participating by Zoom.

Members agreed that, going forward, everyone should review the minutes in advance of each meeting so that questions or concerns can be raised and discussed before the vote to approve.

Item 3 — Public Comments

Natasha Wilkins (Process Testing / Complaints): Reported that, roughly two months after the last APAC meeting, she filed a test complaint with Customer Care to see the process firsthand. The representative who took it was helpful but said policy did not allow reading the complaint back over the phone; the only way to review what was recorded is to submit a public-records request through WeGo's website. She received no follow-up call. Roger Womack said this was inconsistent with his own experience — every complaint he has filed has been read back to him — pointing to inconsistent practice among representatives.

Natasha Wilkins (Sensitivity & Navigator Presentation): Raised concerns about comments made during a recent Transit Navigator training presentation, in which AccessRide customers were described as "spoiled" and in need of being "assimilated into real life" through fixed-route service. (Discussed further under Item 4.)

Pam Hollingsworth (Commendation): On behalf of several riders — including one who calls her "the queen of AccessRide" — praised AccessRide driver Latoya Williamson and nominated her for the APAC of Praise award.

Sheila Hansen (Safety Hazard & Bus Stops): Reported an incident on September 1 involving a 100 Oaks-area fixed-route bus. She had used a stop near Walmart, at the corner of Thompson Lane, several times before; this time the driver passed her by, saying it was not an official stop, citing safety reasons. To catch the bus at its next stop — continuing toward the movie theater and on to Nolensville Road — she had to cross two busy, unlit roads in the dark with no sidewalks, waving her lit phone to be seen. She filed a complaint and received no follow-up call.

Item 4 — The Next Year of APAC

James Brown asked April Meredith to lead the committee in an open discussion of APAC's priorities for the next 12 months, covering both how the committee operates and its relationship with WeGo.

MTA Board Representation

One idea the Chair has been considering, without yet committing to it, is a subcommittee dedicated to coordinating consistent APAC attendance at monthly WeGo/MTA Board meetings. Roger Womack supported the idea: in the 8–10 Board meetings he estimates he has attended since joining the committee, he has regularly

encountered information the rest of APAC had not heard, and he felt a structured approach would help ensure consistent coverage when individual members' schedules conflict. Patricia Valladares seconded the idea, recalling an earlier, unrealized effort toward the same goal championed by a former member, Debbie. Natasha Wilkins recapped the history: she emailed WeGo CEO Steve Bland about pursuing a seat for APAC at MTA Board meetings; he forwarded her message to the Board Chair, and the two met earlier this year to discuss it. They learned that board seats are set by Metro, and that securing one — even an ex-officio seat — would likely require going through Metro Council or the Mayor's Office. Both Steve Bland and the Board Chair were reportedly fully supportive of APAC's direct involvement, but the mechanism for actually obtaining a seat remains unresolved. Natasha will forward her email correspondence on this topic to James Brown and Tanesha Durham so they can follow up with Steve Bland on next steps, which may include approaching Metro Council. The committee agreed that, at minimum, it wants a consistent APAC presence at WeGo Board meetings over the next 12 months, and would ideally like a seat at the table.

Public Visibility & Outreach

Christopher Flor asked whether APAC has a strategic plan, core values, or other guiding documents beyond its bylaws purpose statement, and suggested exploring ways to make APAC's presence visible and recognizable — for example, at Board meetings. April Meredith confirmed the bylaws contain a purpose statement but no vision statement, and reiterated an earlier, unfinished idea of posting member headshots and brief bios on the website so the public sees APAC as "an actual group of people and advocates" rather than an abstract concept — useful both for recruiting a more diverse membership and for building a stronger voice heading into Board meetings.

Committee Purpose, History, and Legal Basis

Bill Zagorski read the bylaws' purpose statement aloud: APAC "serves in an advisory capacity, in compliance with the ADA ... to facilitate a dialogue between WeGo, people with disabilities and other qualifying individuals and the community, and increase the use of WeGo services by those eligible." He noted his outstanding question is whether APAC has any founding charter or articles of incorporation, since that would inform both the bylaws rewrite and future strategic planning. Tanesha Durham asked who the longest-standing member is; Patricia Valladares, a member since at least 2007, was identified as the likely answer (Tanesha herself joined WeGo in 2008). Tanesha and Natasha also recalled a past member, Jack Jacobic, no longer on the roster, as another early figure; Bill Zagorski noted his own father served on APAC alongside Jack many years ago, though neither recalls a charter document. Bill cited a 2004 Metro Social Services performance audit that listed the committee, and a 2001 Department of Justice settlement — referenced in connection with the name Michaels Zdanowicz — that named some APAC participants as part of a DOJ review of ADA compliance; the committee's formation is believed to date to approximately 2000. Natasha Wilkins and Bill Zagorski noted that an advisory committee of this kind is typically a condition of certain federal funding (Title VI / ADA-related requirements), which may explain both the committee's origin and the homogenized language in its current purpose statement. Pam Hollingsworth recalled a related, parallel wave of ADA-driven federal enforcement from the same era, including a court settlement that pushed restaurants nationally toward compliance, which she witnessed directly in a prior career. During the meeting, Marilyn Yokley replied by email confirming that APAC was already well established when she joined WeGo in 2002. Tanesha Durham will reach out to Marilyn Yokley and check for archived board minutes; Patricia Valladares will ask a longtime contact, Debbie, for anything she may recall; Bill Zagorski will also continue searching for charter or incorporation documents as part of the Bylaws Subcommittee's work (see Item 8). Members also discussed wanting the committee's public purpose language

to better reflect the intentional, diverse, and intersectional representation achieved through its nominations process, rather than the more homogenized language currently in the bylaws.

Navigator Presentation Follow-Up

Returning to the concern Natasha Wilkins raised in public comments, Tanesha Durham confirmed she had already addressed the "spoiled" / "assimilated into real life" remarks directly with the presenter, who was apologetic and said she had been nervous and misspoke. The presenter is no longer with the organization, for reasons Tanesha said she was not certain of. April Meredith noted the remark had been repeated more than once during the presentation and felt it reflected a broader, prevalent cultural perception rather than one individual's intent.

Contractor Training & Third-Party Provider Engagement

Pam Hollingsworth raised three examples in support of more training for third-party contractors: a driver who stopped a rider in the middle of Harding Road — a busy road with no shoulder — and told her to simply get in the car; a visually impaired rider dropped off, without further assistance, somewhere on the Progress campus (a large site with four buildings), who had to call several people before getting help finding her way; and an elderly client with an intellectual/developmental disability, who speaks by repeating phrases from commercials, whom a driver refused to transport after apparently mistaking his behavior for erratic or unsafe conduct. Pam felt these incidents reflected a gap in drivers' training on recognizing and appropriately supporting riders with different kinds of disabilities, particularly among newer contracted providers. Separately, Natasha Wilkins said she would like the committee to find a sustainable way to stay connected with every part of WeGo that touches AccessRide riders directly — transit navigators, customer care, the complaint process, and driver trainers — and proposed reviving a past practice of having WeGo's supplemental (third-party) providers present to APAC periodically. Marquis McMahan confirmed this had previously happened about twice a year and said WeGo is open to whatever cadence the committee wants. Tanesha Durham noted the main hurdle is coordinating everyone's schedules, and suggested providers could meet with APAC virtually rather than in person.

Nominations

(Delivered later in the meeting, after the subcommittee reports, to close a gap in the agenda.)

April Meredith reaffirmed that she remains Nominations Subcommittee Chair. Anyone interested in joining APAC, or helping someone else apply, should contact her directly — preferably in writing by email (April.D.Meredith@VUMC.org) — to begin the nomination process; written interest helps keep an official record. She confirmed that Marlene Milton, present as a guest, has expressed informal interest but has not yet submitted a formal nomination request. Separately, in response to a Zoom chat comment from a member of the public, Liz Felton, stating she was "supposed to be voted in," April clarified that Ms. Felton has never contacted her about nomination, and Natasha Wilkins clarified for the record that Ms. Felton is a member of the public, not an APAC member.

Item 5 — WeGo Updates

Scheduling Software Procurement: Marquis McMahan gave a brief update: WeGo recently closed its proposal process for a new scheduling/reservation software vendor to replace the in-house Trapeze system used for

AccessRide trip scheduling. The vendor contract has not yet been signed; it is expected to go before the MTA Board in October. Marquis offered to return with a fuller presentation and timeline once the contract is finalized.

Item 6 — WeGo Application and Riders' Guide Clean-Up

Heard last, after both subcommittee reports and the Nominations update, due to the agenda reordering described above.

New Subcommittee Proposed: Building on the earlier navigator discussion, April Meredith relayed that James Brown is interested in forming a subcommittee focused specifically on updating the WeGo Access application and the Riders' Guide — terminology, clarity, and process on both. He has not yet named a chair, in part because he is still confirming current APAC membership; anyone interested in serving, or simply offering input, was asked to contact him directly. Tanesha Durham and Jordan Collins, who currently holds a copy of the newest Riders' Guide, are both expected to be involved; Jordan will share it once the subcommittee is formally established.

Current State of the Application and Riders' Guide: The application has been available as an online, fillable PDF since the COVID era, though it cannot yet be submitted electronically — applicants must still print, sign, and return it by mail, fax, or email. The Riders' Guide is comparatively new and is currently undergoing a third round of internal review before a wider rollout.

Medical Verification & Provider Fees: The application has two parts — a demographic/personal-information section, and a medical-verification section that must be completed by a qualifying professional (physician, nurse, occupational therapist, orientation and mobility specialist, independent living specialist, or licensed social worker). Tanesha Durham noted that some private providers have begun charging riders a fee — she cited an example of about \$100 — simply to complete this paperwork. To reduce this burden, WeGo will accept a diagnostic summary a rider already has from a qualifying provider in place of requiring a new, dedicated form each time.

Access for Riders Without a Printer: Sheila Hansen noted that not everyone has a printer, which is a real barrier to completing a paper application. Tanesha Durham confirmed WeGo can mail paper applications to anyone who needs one, and that the demographic portion can already be completed online; the medical portion still currently requires printing, signing, and returning by mail, fax, or email.

New Software & Future Electronic Submission: Marquis McMahan said the incoming scheduling software (see Item 5) is also expected to support digitizing the application, potentially allowing riders to submit their portion electronically and route the medical-verification portion directly to a qualifying provider, who could return it electronically as well. The rollout was described as targeted sometime between January and July of next year, pending the vendor contract. Adrienne Caldwell asked several follow-up questions about this timeline and about whether providers might still charge for the electronic version of the medical form; Tanesha Durham said a fee could still apply depending on the provider, and that WeGo continues to work with individual riders to minimize that burden where it can.

Accessibility of the Digital Application: Natasha Wilkins asked whether the application, once digitized, would be accessible to screen-reader users. Marquis McMahan said that stage of development has not yet been reached, but that committee members would be included in testing the digitized application for accessibility once the vendor contract moves forward.

Item 7 — Community Event Subcommittee

Heard out of its printed order, following the Bylaws Subcommittee report, so Bill Zagorski could report before leaving for another commitment.

Subcommittee Report: Community Event Subcommittee Chair Larry Walls reported contacting three area libraries — Hadley Park, the Looby Center (spelling to be confirmed), and Bordeaux — about hosting an informational table; all three were enthusiastic, partly because they already coordinate with WeGo on the Freedom Pass bus-pass program. Bordeaux was noted as being about two blocks from the North Nashville Transit Center. Separately, Christopher Flor and Bill Zagorski offered contacts at FiftyForward's Knowles Home at the fairgrounds; Christopher also checked with the Tennessee State Library and Archives, which is booked out for months and would only be workable, if at all, later in the spring or beyond. Pam Hollingsworth reported that her outreach to the agricultural building near the fairgrounds stalled after her contact's email bounced back as undeliverable; she offered to visit in person if the committee still wants to pursue that site.

Scope of the Event: The subcommittee clarified that the event will be an AccessRide-focused informational table — reviewing eligibility requirements, distributing applications and Riders' Guides, and connecting attendees with transit navigators — rather than a site for actually processing applications, since reviewing an applicant's medical information there would require a private, HIPAA-compliant space. The subcommittee agreed to invite WeGo's supplemental (third-party) providers to have an information table of their own alongside WeGo staff, for general Q&A, rather than a formal presentation.

Coordination Note: Subcommittee planning has involved several separate meetings with inconsistent attendance — at different points, Larry Walls, Natasha Wilkins, and Tanesha Durham (who was on medical leave for one session) were each unable to attend a given meeting, and one session had Zoom connectivity trouble — so some notes and decisions have not been fully shared across the full group. Members agreed to consolidate notes from these sessions at the subcommittee's next meeting.

Target Date: With planning still catching up and no venue or date secured, the subcommittee agreed to shift its target date from October to Spring, to allow adequate time for branding, provider coordination, and venue confirmation.

Related Idea Referred Elsewhere: Christopher Flor proposed that, since the committee has been discussing how to put "a face and a name" to APAC, the Community Event Subcommittee spend some of the coming months on broader culture-building and branding work — potentially including a short video featuring real AccessRide riders — before the event itself. Larry Walls noted this was close to his own original idea for the subcommittee before its scope narrowed to event planning specifically. April Meredith felt this fit better under the committee's broader public-visibility and outreach effort (see Item 4), and the idea was referred back to the Chair to determine where it best fits, so as not to overload one subcommittee with two largely separate goals.

Item 8 — Bylaws Subcommittee

Heard out of its printed order, moved ahead of Items 6 and 7 so Bill Zagorski could report before leaving at 2:30 PM for another commitment.

Subcommittee Report: Bylaws Subcommittee Chair Bill Zagorski reported the revision is roughly 90% complete. Work so far includes a new section of standing rules to formally embed the Nominations Subcommittee's

process in the bylaws; a general cleanup of outdated wording, including replacing remaining references to "MTA" with "WeGo"; and clarified membership and officer definitions, roles, responsibilities, and duties.

Future Work: The subcommittee plans to meet again in October or November, hoping by then to have located any founding charter or articles of incorporation (see Item 4) so that a purpose statement, vision statement, and founding date can be formally written into the bylaws. The subcommittee also still needs to expand the sections on amendments and signatures. Once the rewrite is complete, it will come to the full committee for review and adoption.

Item 9 — Adjourned

- April Meredith thanked everyone online and in person and adjourned the meeting.
- **Next meeting:** Not yet confirmed. Tanesha Durham noted November would be the regular next meeting, but April Meredith clarified that whether to hold a November meeting is the incoming Chair's call; absent that decision, the committee defaults to its regularly scheduled January meeting.

These minutes were reconciled against the official meeting transcript. A few details could not be confirmed against that transcript and are flagged in the text above (Dr. Dandy's first name, Kasondra's surname, and the spelling of "Looby/Lubey Center"); everything else reflects the transcript as recorded.