

Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

January 22, 2026

I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at the Greater Nashville Regional Council located at 44 Vantage Way, Ste. 450, Nashville, TN 37228, on Thursday, January 22, 2026.

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

Gail Carr Williams, Chair	Debbie Frank, DCEO of Growth & Development
Aron Thompson, Vice Chair	Vince Malone, COSA
Kathryn Hays, Member	Andy Burke, COO
Jessica Dauphin, Member	Lindsey Ganson, COS
Jeffery Haynes, Member	Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning
Margaret Behm, Board Secretary	DeAntwaine Moye, Bus. Div. Mgr., & DBE Liaison Officer
Steve Bland, CEO	Monica Howse, Sr. EA & Bd. Liaison

A quorum was established, and Chair Carr Williams called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

III. **Approval of Minutes:** Ms. Dauphin made a motion to approve the minutes of the Nashville MTA Board meeting held on December 18, 2025. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thompson, 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:

- Peter Robinson
- Darius Knight

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 Procurements – No questions

VI. **Consent Agenda Items:** There were no consent agenda items this month.

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

a. **Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program Update (M-A-25-055):** DeAntwaine Moye, Business Diversity Manager & DBE Liaison Officer, provided an update on the ongoing compliance efforts with the 2025 Interim Final Rule of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program.

The U.S. Department of Transportation issued a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Interim Final Rule (IFR) in October 2025 that significantly revises DBE regulations under 49 C.F.R. Part 26 to align the program with constitutional requirements. The rule took effect immediately and eliminates race- and sex-based presumptions of disadvantage, replacing them with individualized determinations for all DBE applicants and firms.

For agencies such as WeGo, the IFR requires reevaluation of all existing DBE certifications, a temporary pause on new certifications and recertifications until Unified Certification Program (UCP) processes are updated, enhanced Good Faith Effort documentation standards, and the inclusion of IFR compliance language in new solicitations and contracts. Until the UCP completes required reevaluations, DBE participation may not be counted toward DBE goals.

WeGo is actively updating contract templates, issuing internal procurement guidance, coordinating with USDOT, outside counsel, and TDOT, and developing a communication plan for contractors. The agency will continue monitoring federal guidance to support full implementation and the reopening of certification processes.

There was no further discussion.

b. Nolensville Pike All Access Corridor Memorandum of Understanding: (M-A-26-001): Vince Malone, Chief Administrative Officer, presented the following item for action:

As part of Mayor Freddie O’Connell’s *Choose How You Move* Transit Improvement Program, 54 miles of high-traffic corridors have been identified for major upgrades, known as “All Access Corridors.” These improvements may include high-level Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and potential applications for federal funding through the FTA’s Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program.

To qualify for federal funding, extensive planning is required. The planning process will be led by the Choose How You Move (CHYM) Program Office in partnership with MTA, NDOT, and the Metropolitan Planning Department. The Nolensville Pike Corridor has been selected as the first corridor to begin this process, with plans expected to start in 2026.

Given MTA’s role as the designated FTA funding recipient and prior success in multi-agency collaboration, the partners propose entering a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to clarify roles and responsibilities. Under the MOU, MTA would also serve as Administrative Lead, overseeing procurement and contract management in coordination with partners and under CHYM’s management.

MTA staff requested that the Board authorize the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to execute the attached MOU with the project partners, outlining MTA’s responsibilities related to planning activities for the Nolensville Pike All Access Corridor project.

The Operations & Finance Committee made a motion to approve the Nolensville Pike All Access Corridor Memorandum of Understanding action item. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hays and unanimously approved by the Board.

There was no further discussion.

VIII. New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report: Committee Chair Aron Thompson introduced the following items for discussion:

a. WeGo Forward Update (NICE-D-26-001): Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning, and Geoff Slater, Principal with Nelson Nygaard Consulting Associates, presented an item for discussion regarding WeGo Forward, the update to Nashville’s long-range transit strategic plan.

The nMotion transit strategic plan (2016) established a long-term framework for improving transit in Nashville and was shaped by more than 20,000 community engagements. It focused on making transit more accessible, reliable, and user-friendly, laying the foundation for service enhancements over the past decade and ultimately supporting the successful passage of the Choose How You Move (CHYM) program in November 2024.

Choose How You Move marks a new phase of transit expansion, proposing an 80% increase in service hours, 24-hour service on major routes, expanded frequent service, new routes, high-capacity transit on All Access Corridors, new transit centers, park-and-ride facilities, and a new operations and maintenance facility.

WeGo Forward builds on this progress by providing a long-term growth strategy and practical service plan for a more integrated and dependable regional network. The effort is being coordinated with NDOT's Multimodal Mobility Master Plan and Metro Planning updates.

Over the past year, consultants Kimley-Horn and Nelson Nygaard have analyzed system performance, conducted workshops with staff and stakeholders, and developed a draft service scenario aligned with CHYM improvements. The plan focuses on making service faster, more frequent, more direct, safer, more comfortable, and more accessible, especially for high-need users.

Public outreach on the draft service scenario is planned for late winter/early spring 2026 and will include community engagement and operator input. Consultants will present an update to the Board and gather feedback on next steps.

There was a general discussion.

- b. FY2027 Operating Budget Discussion Kick-off (NICE-D-26-002):** In the absence of Deputy CEO for Finance and Administration, Amanda Vandegrift, CEO Stephen Bland presented information as an overview of the FY2026-27 Operating Budget Process. The purpose of the presentation was to present key financial trends and initiatives to guide Board feedback ahead of the FY2026–27 budget submission, with further discussion planned before final budget adoption in June.

For FY2026–27, Mr. Bland reviewed the following key assumptions embedded in the MTA's planned submission to Metro Finance:

Baseline Budget Request

The budget submission is divided into two primary parts: The baseline budget request, and the investment request. The baseline request is to support ongoing activities of the Authority, and specifically current service and fare levels. For baseline service, MTA will be requesting a 4% increase to the FY2025-26 operating assistance level supporting general inflation, as well as compensation increases dictated by the collective bargaining agreement with ATU Local 1235. If approved, this would increase Metro's General Fund allocation from \$77.2 million to \$80.3 million.

Investment Request

Investment requests support planned service expansion and the operating expenses associated with the commissioning of new projects and facilities in the upcoming fiscal year. With passage of Mayor Freddie O'Connell's Choose How You Move initiative in 2024, it is anticipated that any funding for investments requests will be funded through this dedicated funding source.

In total, MTA plans to submit a request for \$59.1 million in investment funding to support the following activities:

- Continuation of prior service expansion investments initiated during FY2024-25 for a full fiscal year (with 4% inflation adjustment)
- \$8.4 million in new operating investments, including:

- Service expansion (6–7% increase in revenue hours, 19 new operators, expanded Access, new WeGo Link zones, and Journey Pass expansion)
- Service reliability improvements including continuation of the transit signal priority pilot/headway management initiative
- \$3.3 million for the MTA Reserve Fund (second annual contribution)
- \$5M to reduce reliance on federal capital funds in allowable operating budget categories, preserving federal dollars for capital/state-of-good-repair needs and reducing the reliance on Metro General Funds in the Capital Spending Plan for routine state of good repair.

There was a general discussion among the members with respect to the budget process. Mr. Bland indicated that the Board would have additional looks at the budget in the spring, following the release of Mayor O’Connell’s budget recommendation to the Metropolitan Council on or around May 1. A final recommendation for the FY2026-27 operating budget is expected to come before the MTA Board at their June meeting.

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

1. Like most of this part of the country, we are expecting treacherous weather over the coming weekend, so please stay safe. Since it is top of mind, I would like to invite our Chief Operating Officer, Andy Burke, to step up to the podium and provide the Board with a brief overview of our storm preparedness planning process.
2. Mr. Burke introduced himself and provided a general overview of WeGo Public Transit’s emergency preparedness plan in the context of the forecasted winter weather event for the upcoming weekend. In his report, Mr. Burke highlighted the following:
 - a. The forecast for this particular storm is relatively severe, with the primary impacts expected to be ice. Ice poses particularly difficult challenges with respect to the maintenance of service and operation of fleet and facilities.
 - b. Mr. Burke highlighted that all service and operating decisions are made by the Operations leadership team with the safety of customers and employees as the number one priority.
 - c. A cornerstone of WeGo’s winter preparedness planning is the identification of “snow detours” for various routes impacted by winter weather, and their publication to customer well in advance of any actual implementation of the winter weather plan. In some events, impacts are fairly localized, and snow route detours restricted to affected routes. In larger scale events, the entire system may be impacted. Generally, winter event plans are deployed in 3 phases. A first phase is a relatively minor event, where there are localized impacts on certain routes, but most of the system operates normally. A second phase has broader impacts, and would likely entail placing all or most routes on snow detour. A third phase would be a major event where both environmental conditions and lack of available operations staffing (due to inaccessibility of home locations) require that we reduce service to operate only on our frequent service network (highest ridership routes that generally run on arterials) and possibly at a lower level of frequency of service, such as a Weekend service schedule. The last phase would be storm conditions so significant that a complete suspension of service is necessary.
 - d. From prior experience, we try to notify customers as early as possible as to the implementation of various levels so they don’t become stranded. From experience, we have found that it’s easier to have riders prepare for the worst and be pleasantly surprised than to hope for the best, and leave people stranded.

- e. Apart from the service deployment strategies, Operations will deploy supplemental staff on an on-call basis both to operate buses and to maintain equipment and facilities in a “service-ready” state. Advance preparations such as preparing service equipment with plows and salt spreaders, testing emergency backup generators, etc. are also conducted as fall transitions into winter.
- f. With this storm, fairly severe storm impacts are anticipated to begin late Friday evening and into early Saturday morning. Operations staff plans to determine a level course of action by mid-morning Friday based on the most current weather forecasts in order to provide advance notice to customers of preparations they should make.

There was general discussion among the Members regarding the planned activities. Chair Gail Carr-Williams asked what would happen if the major storm impacts predicted did not take place. CEO Bland reiterated Mr. Burke’s point that it is always much easier to “pre-announce” a major impact on service and then pull back than it is to announce that we plan a full service deployment and then be forced to curtail service unexpectedly.

Several Members commended Mr. Burke for his comments, and for the staff’s commitment to preparing for the upcoming storm. Mr. Bland then returned to the remainder of his CEO’s report.

- 3. Our 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 better accommodate transit. The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) is accelerating the James Robertson Parkway project, which has added urgency to this coordination work.
- 4. We also participated in several meetings with staff from the Mayor’s Office and Nashville International Airport to discuss both near- and long-term service improvements at the Airport. We anticipate that several enhancements will begin in 2026.
- 5. Billy Higgins has been leading the development of our updated Capital Improvement Plan, which we anticipate bringing to the Board in February for discussion and consideration.
- 6. On January 7, we joined Mayor Freddie O’Connell at our Myatt facility for a media event celebrating the first new buses purchased with funds generated through the Choose How You Move program. The 12 new Gillig expansion buses have now been placed into service and will support the next round of service expansion planned for July.
- 7. On the RTA side:
 - a. Work continues on the City of Murfreesboro Park and Ride facility. We have received the necessary regulatory approvals and are preparing to issue bid documents for construction. We are also working toward a long-term agreement with the City regarding operations and maintenance.
 - b. We are also nearing construction on improvements to the Donelson Station Transit Center. We anticipate conducting several public engagement activities through February and finalizing the necessary property transaction to move the project forward.
- 8. In bittersweet news, our Director of Legislative Relations, Eric Beyer, has announced that he will be retiring this month. Eric began his Middle Tennessee transit career in 1994 as Executive Director of the Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee, where he oversaw, among other initiatives, development of what we now call the WeGo Star. In 2005, he transitioned to the Metropolitan Transit Authority, assuming various roles in communications

and special projects, including leadership of the Easy Ride program. Since 2008, he has led our legislative relations efforts, along with numerous special initiatives.

- a. Eric is tremendously well respected by legislators at both the state and local levels. He has done an exceptional job addressing their concerns and keeping us informed of developments at the Metro Council and General Assembly. We will miss him greatly, but we are grateful that he has agreed to assist in transitioning a new person into the role.
9. In happier news, Lindsey Ganson has joined WeGo Public Transit as our new Chief of Staff. Lindsey most recently served at Vanderbilt University, and during her time in Nashville has also worked with Walk Bike Nashville and McNeely Pigott & Fox, where she helped lead the public engagement components of the nMotion planning process approximately ten years ago.
- a. In her new role, Lindsey will support me, Monica, and the Executive Team in coordination activities and a broad array of strategic and operational efforts. I also anticipate that she will have extensive engagement with members of both the MTA and RTA Boards.

- X. **Chair's Report:** Gail Carr Williams expressed appreciation for the productive visit and discussions about WeGo's budget, future planning, and transition forward as an organization. She highlighted the importance of preparation, proactive leadership, and celebrating staff for their readiness rather than reacting to challenges at the last minute.

She shared excitement about organizational growth, including the addition of new bus prototypes and the opportunity to connect with drivers and mechanics, emphasizing the strong sense of legacy and family within WeGo. She noted how multiple generations are connected to the organization, reinforcing that WeGo is a place where people want to work and build careers.

In conclusion, she also expressed gratitude for the team's collective effort to provide the best transit service possible and encouraged everyone to stay safe while continuing to move WeGo forward together.

- XI. **Other Business:**

- XII. **Adjournment:** With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Board Secretary