

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

March April 28, 2022

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, Ste. 100, Nashville, TN 37228 on Thursday, April 28, 2022.

II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Walter Searcy, Member; Mary Griffin, Member; Jessica Dauphin, Member; Margaret Behm, Board Secretary; Chief Executive Officer Stephen Bland; Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant; Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner; Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke; Chief Development Officer Trey Walker; Deputy Chief Operating Officer-Operations Systems Dan Freudberg; Director of Marketing & Communications Renuka Christoph; Director of Maintenance Carl Rokos; Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad; and Sr. Executive Assistant & Board Liaison Monica Howse.

A quorum was established, and Chair Gail Carr Williams called the meeting to order at 2:41 p.m.

III. **Approval of Minutes:** Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the March 24, 2022, MTA Board minutes; the motion was seconded by Jessica Dauphin, and unanimously approved by the Board.

IV. **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 had these comments:

Darius Knight

- Mr. Darius Knight's comments reflected several ongoing concerns over the condition of many of the older buses and he provided the Board members with documentation of some of his concerns.

V. **New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report:** In the absence of Vice-Chair Janet Miller, Board Member Mary Griffin presented the following items for discussion and action:

a. **Honorary Naming of WeGo Central and the North Nashville Transit Center (M-A-22-008):** Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner presented the following:

The NICE Committee recommended the Board adopt the resolution recommending that the Metropolitan Council authorize the naming of WeGo Central after Elizabeth Duff and the naming of the upcoming North Nashville Transit Center after Ernest "Rip" Patton.

Chair Carr Williams opened the floor for discussion and comments. She first recognized the presence of a number of members of both the Patton and Duff families who made the effort to attend today's meeting. She and members of the Board expressed what an honor and privilege it was to be able to vote for something this great and transformative for the city of Nashville and to be able to recommend to Council to rename WeGo Facilities in honor of Ms. Elizabeth Duff and Mr. Ernest "Rip" Patton. Chair Carr Williams said she shares in their grief and knows how hard it is to come to things like this, but she appreciates the way that both families showed up to represent their family legacy and celebrate all the contributions that they both made to the community and for the city of Nashville.

There was no further discussion, and the vote of approval was unanimously approved by the Board.

There was a brief break taken so that members of the Board could greet and take photos with the Duff and Patton families, and the meeting was called back to order by Chair Carr Williams.

b. **WeGo Youth Action Team Year-End Report (NICE-D-22-015):** Director of Marketing, Communications & Sales Renuka Christoph introduced the Oasis Center Youth Action Team, who in turn presented the following 2021-2022 school year progress report:

WeGo Public Transit has partnered with the Oasis Center since 2013 to engage high school students in representing student riders and facilitating outreach with schools. Students are led under the supervision of Adrianna Carter, the Oasis Center Youth Action Team (YAT) Program Coordinator. WeGo's Community Outreach and Engagement Specialist has facilitated program activities between the Oasis Center and WeGo since 2017.

This year, YAT is a group of eight high school students who meet weekly to participate in leadership development, team-building skills, and:

- Meet with WeGo staff and tour transit facilities,
- Develop travel training for youth audiences,
- Experience WeGo through monthly excursions,
- Advocate for increased ridership and Metro funding,
- Assist with community outreach events, and
- Create social media posts for youth audiences

Current YAT members represent Hume-Fogg Academic High School, Cane Ridge High School, University School of Nashville, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Magnet High School.

Chair Williams and members of the Board expressed their appreciation for the Youth Action Team being present and for an outstanding presentation given at the meeting. She thanked them for all their support for WeGo and the city of Nashville.

There was no further discussion at this time.

VI. Operations & Finance Committee Report: Committee Chair Walter Searcy introduced the following items for discussion and action:

a. Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget (OF-D-22-011): Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant reported and reflected on the statement of operations for February 2022 compared to the budget and a balance sheet as of February 28, 2022

Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant availed himself of questions and there were none at this time.

b. 5-Yr. Acquisition Contract & Initial Purchase of 60-Foot Articulated Buses (M-A-22-006): Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke & Director of Maintenance Carl Rokos reported the following:

The staff recommended that the Board of Directors provide the Chief Executive Officer authority to execute a purchase contract for the initial fourteen (14) replacement 60' Articulated buses from New Flyer of America Inc. and up to fifty (50) Articulated buses total over the next five (5) years. The staff also recommended that any subsequent purchases for the duration of the contract be accompanied by a similar analysis of the status of the company's diversity, equity, and inclusion program prior to award.

The total sum for the initial purchase of fourteen (14) 60' Articulated Clean Diesel Buses is \$11,587,500 (\$827,678.56 per bus). This cost includes necessary tools and training. Funding for this project is currently available through grants made for this purpose by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under the Section 5307 urbanized area formula program, Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) matching funds, and previously approved Capital Spending Plans of the Government of Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County.

There was a general discussion on the delivery schedule for these buses, and the acquisition of these buses was unanimously approved by the Board.

c. Acquisition of Small Buses Using Emergency Procurement Procedures (M-A-22-007): Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke presented the following report:

The staff recommended that the Board provide the Chief Executive Officer authority to approve a purchase order for the purchase of six (6) replacement Body on Chassis Cutaway Buses from Southern Bus and Mobility for the attainment of replacement vehicles used in WeGo

Access Service. Staff is requesting that the Board approve this purchase as a sole source procurement under the Authority's Emergency Procurement Procedures, due to the critical shortage of chassis for this type of bus on a global basis. Further, the staff explained that the recommendation was to use 100% local capital funding for this project, as this equipment does not meet the Buy America requirement necessary to utilize Federal funds. This is due to the fact that the bus is built on a Chevrolet chassis (instead of the usual Ford chassis) and, while the Chevrolet chassis is assembled in the United States, it contains a sufficient volume of components imported from Mexico that it does not meet Federal requirements for domestic content.

The total sum for this purchase is not to exceed \$1,140,000 (\$190,000 per bus), the cost per bus includes tools and training. Purchase of the vehicles will be funded with 100% local funding provided under previous Metro Nashville Capital Spending Plans toward the replacement of Access vehicles. We anticipate delivery of these vehicles this calendar year.

There was a general discussion and a question raised from the board as to why we are only ordering six buses when there is a need for fifty buses. COO Burke explained that, while we would love to acquire more buses, there are only six available from this manufacturer at this time. This purchase will not be sufficient to resolve our concerns with the age of the small bus fleet (where over 50% of our small bus fleet has already exceeded its useful life) but six new buses is better than no new buses.

There were additional discussions regarding the preventative maintenance of Chevrolet Chassis vehicles vs. Ford E450s and if our maintenance team can work on them. COO Burke reported that we will need to develop separate inspection checklists based on the new manufacturer's recommendations, but this is typical in our transit bus fleet where we currently operate 3 different makes of vehicles. Because the bus is built on a commercial chassis common to many applications, parts are generally widely available apart from ongoing supply chain issues.

Mary Griffin applauded the operations team for their creativity in purchasing more buses. She asked if the operations team has thought about polling the bus drivers and riders on the types of ADA equipment needed for a better riding experience. COO Burke said we hired KFH to help us with the Access Improvement Study, and some of the things that we're looking at are vehicle capacity, as well as introducing fleet. The Board received an update from KFH several months ago, and we expect them to return with additional updates in the coming months.

There was no further discussion, and the vote of approval was unanimous by the Board.

- d. **Monthly Operating Statistics (OF-D-22-012)**: Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through February 2022.

In providing context on comparisons to last February's numbers, it is important to note that February 2021 saw a major winter weather event that resulted in the cancellation of nearly 10% of scheduled services for the month. Consequently, the year-over-year increases in ridership, productivity, and trip completion percentage all have significant spikes.

The Fiscal Year to Date numbers provides a less volatile picture of ongoing trends, which show a continued steady recovery in ridership and strong increases in bus trip completion rates and miles between road calls.

There was a general discussion and a question raised from board member Jessica Dauphin; she asked if the operations team had performed any polling to see why our ridership is stagnating at 75% and hasn't returned to pre-pandemic numbers. CEO Bland said that ridership is not actually stagnating. The winter weather reported for February by COO Burke depressed ridership for February, but more recent information from March and early April indicates that ridership is continuing to return, if not as quickly as we would like. He further explained that two specific markets of concern were Downtown office workers who had previously made up a significant percentage of ridership, and Metro Nashville School students,

whose ridership is significantly below pre-pandemic levels despite schools returning to in-person instruction.

There was no further discussion.

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

1. CEO Bland thanked Board Chair Gail Carr Williams and everyone who participated in last month's meeting in his absence.
2. He reported that, due to a decision by a U.S. District Court Judge in Georgia, the Centers for Disease Control and Transportation Security Administration can no longer enforce a mandatory mask requirement on public transportation. While the decision still leaves the discretion to require masking in the hands of local entities, Tennessee State Law prohibits local entities from enforcing a mask requirement without a waiver from the Officer of State Comptroller. We had received that waiver when the law was originally passed based on the Federal mandate but were required to notify the Comptroller's Office if the underlying reason for the waiver request were to change. We have done so, and masks are no longer required on our vehicles or in our facilities, although any customers or employees who choose to wear a mask are welcome to do so.
3. CEO Bland thanked everyone for attending the ribbon-cutting for the Hillsboro Transit Center on March 31st. The event was extremely well attended, but a bit chilly. So far, the Center is working quite well and is being very well received. He said that he's heard from several folks in the Green Hills area who've stopped by just to see it and have told him how impressed they were and that it takes transit up a notch in Nashville.
4. Your earlier action on naming recommendations for the North Nashville Center is very timely, as we anticipate issuing construction bid documents for this project in the coming weeks and commencing construction later this year. We have also begun advanced planning for a Regional Transit Center in Antioch. As you likely read, the Metropolitan Council voted to approve a purchase of land on the site of the former Global Mall at the Crossings. Metro Planning is initiating a "Global Mall Area Study" to identify short and long-term development opportunities for the property, and we will be actively participating in consultant selection and in the study itself to site a future center on the property. Toward that end, Hannah Schaeffer on our staff has done yeoman's work putting together the environmental documents that will allow us to advance project development with our federal funds, and Congressman Cooper's Office asked us to put together a project prospectus for his Office to help seek discretionary Federal funding. This area will be an ideal location for a regional center. In addition to its location at the end of our busiest route and existing uses such as the Southeast Community Center, Library, Ford Ice Center, and a campus of Nashville State Community College, long-term plans could include Vanderbilt University Medical Center healthcare facilities and a KIPP Academy High School.
5. Speaking of the Southeast Community Center, CEO Bland said that he was pleased to be able to attend Mayor Cooper's State of Metro address yesterday. During his remarks, he acknowledged the work we've been doing to increase the number of covered bus stops in Nashville. The mayor's proposed budget ordinance will be transmitted to Council tomorrow. As you know, we requested an increase of \$6.8 million in baseline funding to cover fully year operation with the Better Bus service expansion that we initiated this past month, and an additional \$3.9 million in investment funds to fund partial year implementation of the next phase Better Bus service improvements in FY2023. These improvements will include such enhancements as completing our span of service improvements on the frequent network and local service routes, expanding Access on Demand Service to weekends, additional off-peak and weekend frequency improvements on several routes, all day frequency improvements on our Hillsboro and 8th Avenue routes, and additional WeGo Link mobility on demand zones.
6. Our development team is continuing to make very good progress on our shelter expansion program. 19 new sites have been constructed in the past year, and 13 more are in current

development, including 6 sites in North Nashville that were specifically identified through the Mayor's Office participatory budgeting process.

7. We continue to be heavily involved with NDOT, the Mayor's Office, and Metro Planning on advancing mobility plans associated with pending East Bank development. This process could present many generational opportunities to enhance overall mobility for the region, including the development of high-capacity transit corridors. This month, Metro Council approved NDOT's submittal of an application to USDOT for funding that would support more advanced planning, environmental review, and preliminary design for the transportation improvements associated with this project.
8. Indicative of the rapid growth we're seeing in the Downtown Core, our Planning staff has also been involved in a study of the Pie Town area of downtown for possible mobility implications. This section of downtown, essentially connecting the Gulch and SoBro, is expected to see a major uptick in a high-density development in the coming years and Metro is attempting to incorporate improvements into the transportation network before it's too late.
9. Several of us, including Jessica, participated in NDOT's kickoff meeting for the Connect Downtown mobility study late last month. This study will attempt to identify alternatives and a plan of action to improve the overall operation of downtown right of way, including the flow of transit vehicles. Findings are anticipated in 2023.
10. CEO Bland said that he participated in a panel discussion on the Nashville transportation issues with Diana Alarcon from NDOT for a group of visitors from Portland, Oregon. It was interesting to share perspectives with other cities.
11. CEO Bland thanked Zeda Riggs and the Customer Care team for putting together a Community Resource Fair on the plaza next to WeGo Central yesterday. Customers had the opportunity to visit booths hosted by several community organizations. Fortunately, the weather cooperated, and it was a beautiful day.
12. CEO Bland thanked all the Board members and staff for confirming their availability for a "most of the day" Board Governance workshop that is scheduled for May 19th. He said final meeting logistics are underway and the meeting invitation would go out sometime next week.
13. On the RTA side:
 - a. The RTA has received all 10 buses ordered for the regional commuter bus service. All 10 have been assigned to MTA-operated services in the Rutherford County corridor.
 - b. We are awaiting proposals on a future visioning study for the WeGo Star. With changing commute patterns post-pandemic, and various growth and development opportunities along the Star corridor, we thought it was time to take a step back and assess the future direction of the Star. Although the study is specifically targeted at the Star, we do expect many of its findings to be more broadly applicable to all regional markets as begin to update the nMotion Plan later this year.

CEO Bland availed himself of questions and there were none at this time.

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

Chair Carr Williams acknowledged and thanked CEO Bland for his leadership, the staff, and Board members for being good stewards and for representing WeGo so well. She expressed her excitement again about the renaming of all the WeGo facilities and thanked the Duff and Patton families for being present at the meeting and for working with us to make this day possible. Lastly, she thanked CAO Rita Roberts-Turner and Board Secretary Margaret Behm for working on the legal aspects of the New Flyer bus purchases and the renaming of WeGo Facilities.

Chair Carr Williams said that she thought the Hillsboro Ribbon Cutting Ceremony was awesome and she couldn't have asked for a better day, except for it being very cold outside. She said all the students seemed to be excited about the Transit Center and that's what it's all about; building

transit centers for generations to come. She thanked everyone for their hard work and for making that event a huge success.

Chair Williams thanked CFO Ed Oliphant and CEO Bland for the great budget report that was presented at the meeting and that she was already anticipating next month's budget report.

In conclusion, Chair Carr Williams gave kudos to Renuka Christoph and the Marketing, Sales, and Communications team; she said it's not often that she's on social media, but she recently viewed the website and it's really looking good.

- IX. Other Business:** There was no other business to come before the Board at this time.
- X. Adjournment:** With no further business, Chair Carr Williams called for a motion to adjourn the meeting, a proper motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary