

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

January 27, 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 372228 on Thursday, January 27, 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 Steve Bland; Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner; Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant; 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 System Safety & Risk Management Nicholas Oldham; Sr. Transit Planner Justin Cole; 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 2:48 p.m.

- III. **Approval of Minutes:** Mary Griffin made a motion to approve the December 16, 2021 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 were as follows:

- Mr. Knight suggested that the North Nashville Transit Center be named after former employee Elizabeth Duff or Senator Thelma Harper; or name it after both of them.
- Mr. Knight said bus operators are frustrated and still having issues with passengers not wearing masks, but when bus operators are caught without their mask, passengers are reporting them for non-compliance.
- Mr. Knight said that the WeGo Central escalator doesn't feel safe going up, its jerking and you can hear a sound from it while going up the stairs.
- Mr. Knight said there were many issues with the virtual meetings regarding the bi-annual changes. Many people had issues logging on and felt that this was a deliberate effort to keep customers from expressing their wants and opinions.
- Mr. Knight asked if WeGo would be making an effort to add the Trinity Lane connector since the Juvenile Justice Center will be moving to Trinity Lane.
- Mr. Knight said buses aren't being cleaned well enough to keep the transmission of omicron cases down.

- V. **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-22-001):** Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant reported and reflected on the statement of operations for November 2021 compared to the budget and a balance sheet as of November 30, 2021. There was no further discussion at this time.

- b. **Conflict of Interest (OF-D-22-002)**: Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant reviewed the Annual Conflict of Interest report with the Board. The Conflict-of-Interest report is designed to highlight incidents or circumstances that have the appearance of conflict and how potential conflicts are mitigated. Currently, there are no conflicts at this time.

CFO Ed Oliphant availed himself for questions and there were no additional questions at this time.

- c. **WeGo Ride Pilot True Up (OF-D-22-003)**: Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant reported the following:

The WeGo Ride Program is an employer-paid transit pass program to provide employee commuter benefits on Nashville MTA and RTA services in Middle Tennessee under the name WeGo Public Transit. In June 2020, the Board approved for the first time, an WeGo Ride Program Revenue Sharing Agreement with Nashville MTA for the period of July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. To remind the Board, the following are the objectives of the program:

- All: Simplify program transportation benefits
- All: Simplify program administration
- All: Simplify program fee structure to better predict costs and revenues for annual budgeting
- MTA/RTA: Protect existing program revenue
- MTA/RTA: Grow program participation to increase overall ridership and operating revenue
- MTA/RTA: Increase transparency between the two agencies on program revenue and ridership
- Business Partners: Manage and reduce both direct and indirect transportation costs
- Business Partners: Provide sustainable and competitive employee benefits.

Vanderbilt University was the only employer to participate in the pilot during FY2021. One of the stipulations of the pilot program was for staff to review the results of the pilot with both MTA and RTA boards and committees to determine the viability of the pilot. Vanderbilt University agreed to join the pilot program in April 2020, but due to the pandemic, it was decided to wait until June 2021 to perform the first true-up of revenue sharing between MTA and RTA. Consequently, the true-up period covered 15 months from April 2020 through June 30, 2021. While the pandemic resulted in far fewer rides being provided during the pilot, Vanderbilt continued to pay full monthly fees as if conditions were normal. This resulted in a skewed result in terms of cost per ride from Vanderbilt's perspective which will be addressed with Vanderbilt during the current contract year which Vanderbilt did renew effective July 1, 2021. The terms of the contract were based upon the following:

Vanderbilt Faculty, Staff & Student Count	20,000
Annual Cost per Employee/Student	\$20.50
Total Annual Contract	\$410,000
Total 15-Months Timeframe	\$512,500
Monthly payment	\$34,166.67

Based upon the Revenue Sharing Agreement between Nashville MTA and RTA, revenues were allocated using the weighted average percentage of all modes based upon the total rides provided during the 15 months using full fare for each mode. The allocation was calculated as follows:

Transportation Mode	Rides Provided 15-Months	Full Fare	Total Based Upon Fare	Weighted Average Percentage	Contract Revenue Allocation	Vanderbilt Cost Per Ride
MTA Bus	72,107	\$2.00	\$144,214	71.6%	\$366,714	\$5.09
MTA Access	3,008	\$3.70	\$11,130	5.5%	\$28,301	\$9.41
RTA Bus	6,568	\$4.25	\$27,914	13.8%	\$70,981	\$10.81
RTA Train *	4,572	\$4.00	\$18,288	9.1%	\$46,504	\$10.17
Total	86,255		\$201,546	100%	\$512,500	\$5.94

* The fare used for train is based upon average fares for all stations.

As previously mentioned, the cost per ride was skewed due to the reduced ridership that was impacted by the pandemic. The cost per ride in all modes should be at least less than the cost of a full fare to make the program viable for Vanderbilt University. The per swipe program that Vanderbilt Medical Center is still utilizing is for \$1.15 per ride. There are not any comparable statistics for pre-pandemic rides since the program prior to this pilot was a combined per swipe for the Medical Center and University and the University did not promote the program to students. As for RTA rides pre-pandemic, Vanderbilt just sporadically purchased both regional bus and Star fare media that they then resold to faculty, staff and students. Consequently, there is not a good apple to apple comparison or analysis to see how this program would have looked with pre-pandemic ridership. However, the per swipe program pre-pandemic did average approximately 35,000 rides per month for the combined programs.

While we believe the revenue-sharing allocation methodology is reasonable between the two agencies, we will continue to work with Vanderbilt on the terms of the contract to make it more reasonable as to the cost per ride. We will also have additional, albeit, smaller businesses to review at the end of this coming fiscal year as we continue to promote and add businesses to this pilot program.

CEO Bland concluded that we have some additional 15 companies or so that have signed up and we will do another true-up of revenue sharing between MTA and RTA at the end of June.

- c. **Armored Car Contract Extension (M-A-22-001)**: Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant reviewed Armored Car Contract Extension report with the Board.

MTA contracts with Loomis Armored Services for armored car pick up and cash processing services for all cash collected through our fare boxes. They pick up our portable vaults every weekday at our Nestor property and twice weekly at our Myatt property. They are responsible for counting the cash and delivery to US Bank for deposit into MTA's operating account.

In December 2020, the Board approved a one-year extension to our expiring 5-year contract to allow more time to complete the RFP process that had been delayed due to COVID. In October 2021, we went back out for requests for proposal (RFP) that included a modified process in that we were requesting just transportation services to transport our vaults to US Bank who indicated they would be responsible for the cash processing services. In November, we received responses from Brinks Armored Services and Loomis. Both companies indicated that they were not bidding on the services. Brinks indicated it did not have the capacity to transport our vaults and Loomis was not interested in just transporting vaults but would consider it only if it included the cash processing services that are in the current contract. Procurement has been working diligently to amend the RFP to include cash processing as in previous years but was unable to get it complete before the end of the year. In order to complete the RFP process, it will be necessary to ask for up to a one-year extension on our current Loomis contract, which is the minimum Loomis would allow. The contract does have a termination at will clause for both parties. Once the RFP process is complete, we will be bringing back a request to the Board for approval of a new multi-year contract to the winning bidder.

Staff requested the Board approve a one-year contract extension with Loomis Armored Services at an amount not to exceed \$137,750 which is a 4% increase over the current contract that expired December 31, 2021.

CFO Ed Oliphant availed himself for questions and there were no questions at this time.

Committee Chair Walter Searcy made a recommendation to approve the Armored Car Contract Extension and it was unanimously approved by the Board.

- d. **Monthly Operating Statistics (OF-D-22-004)**: Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through November 2021. There was no further discussion at this time.

COO Andy Burke availed himself for questions and there were no questions at this time.

- e. **SMS Update (OF-D-22-005)**: Director of System Safety & Risk Management Nick Oldham provided an update on the Safety Management System (SMS).

In July 2018, the Federal Transit Administration published the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Final Rule, which requires certain operators of public transportation systems that receive federal funds under FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grants to develop safety plans that include the processes and procedures to implement Safety Management Systems (SMS) by July 20, 2021. We complied with that date and have since begun implementing the SMS.

SMS is a top-down, data-driven, comprehensive, and collaborative management system which involves the continuous collection and analysis of information that helps a transit agency become proactive about how it addresses safety risks. It brings management and labor together to control risk better, detect and correct safety problems earlier, share and analyze safety data more effectively, and measure safety performance more precisely. SMS also supports management decisions to prioritize actions and allocate resources to resolve identified safety concerns or reduce safety risk to an acceptable level through:

- Increasing the focus of hazard identification across the organization;
- Broadening the scope of safety data collection;
- Emphasizing the importance of managing safety risks across all areas of operations;
- Integrating data from other organizational processes into safety data analysis;
- Promoting participation and contribution of frontline personnel in the management of safety; and
- Fostering an organizational culture that encourages proactive safety reporting and safety risk management

As the agency continues with its efforts to build and maintain an effective Safety Management System, we will provide periodic updates about our progress to ensure a continued push to proactively reduce identified safety risks to an acceptable level.

Director of Safety Management Systems & Risk Management Nick Oldham availed himself for questions and there were no questions at this time.

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

- a. **Spring 2022 Service Changes Update (NICE-D-22-001)**: Director of Planning and Grants Felix Castrodad presented an update of the proposed changes for Spring 2022 including additional public outreach on the new Skyline Connector route.

At the July 22, 2021, MTA Board meeting, the Board approved a phased approach for implementation of service changes to take place in the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022. Two phases of service changes included not only service restoration to pre-pandemic levels, but also

service expansion consistent with the Better Bus plan recommendations. The overall service expansion with these changes represents approximately 35,500 additional annual service hours or a 7% increase in service.

Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad availed himself for questions and there were no questions at this time.

There was a question and general discussion regarding the reason for route renumbering. Director of Planning & Grant Felix Castrodad explained that we have more than one route that operates on the same corridor, such as the 3A & 3B, so it makes it easier for the public to understand and use.

- b. **Better Bus Service Expansion, Improvement Update and Direction for Next Phase Expansion (NICE-D-22-002)**: Sr. Transit Planner Justin Cole presented an overview of the Better Bus improvements implemented to date and those planned for FY2023 and beyond.

In 2020, as part of the nMotion Strategic Plan, WeGo developed the Better Bus plan to improve existing bus service in Nashville over a 5-year implementation timeline. This plan was adopted by Metro Council as part of the City Transportation Plan and included the following:

- Longer Hours of Service
- More Frequent Service
- New and Improved Connections
- New Transit Centers and Upgraded Stops
- Access Improvements

With full implementation, service would begin to approach peer city per capita service levels. These improvements require an increase of \$29.5 million in the annual operating budget, in addition to capital costs for fleet expansion, transit centers, and bus stop upgrades. In FY2021, WeGo began implementing Better Bus service enhancements by reallocating existing service resources in response to pandemic-related ridership shifts. In FY2022, additional Better Bus improvements are being implemented by leveraging American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding

Sr. Transit Planner Justin Cole availed himself for questions and there were no questions at this time.

- c. **WeGo Link Program Expansion (NICE-D-22-003)**: Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Dan Freudberg and Director of Planning, Felix Castrodad, provided an update on the WeGo Link program and discussed a potential approach for expanding the program.

The nMotion Strategic Plan recommended exploring first/last mile “Mobility on Demand” zones to service lower-demand areas to improve access to transit services more cost-effectively. The development of these zones allows for improved connections to fixed-route transit service, especially in areas where access is limited due to the amount of distance to the main road and where the lack of proper pedestrian infrastructure makes walking conditions difficult and unsafe.

As the agency begins preparations for the FY2023 operating budget, conversations about the potential future of the WeGo Link program will be timely including considerations for expanding coverage and span of service to increase access to frequent transit service for riders.

Deputy COO for Systems Dan Freudberg and Director of Planning Felix Castrodad availed themselves for questions, and there was one question from Board Member Jessica Dauphin, she asked how the program going in terms of users and utilization. Deputy COO of Systems Dan Freudberg said that the utilization is fairly limited, and we haven’t done a lot of aggressive marketing because we wanted to first make sure that the program was up and running, but we are looking at more marketing efforts in the future.

- VII. **CEO’s Report**: CEO Steve Bland reported the following:

1. We continue to ride the COVID wave, and the radical increase in cases brought on by the Omicron variant has certainly impacted our workforce. As recently as November, we only had in the range of 5 – 7 employees off for COVID-related leave at a given time. In recent weeks, that figure has been in the 25 – 30 range, which represents approximately 3-1/2% of our workforce. We hope that early indications that the impact of this variant is starting to run its course in Davidson County are correct and that we've peaked. We have been much more fortunate than most transit agencies, which have typically had much higher rates of infection in other parts of the country and have significant disruptions in service as a result. Much to the credit of our Operations, Safety, Human Resources, and Training Departments – and some luck – we have been able to sustain full-service levels through a combination of limited staff absences and aggressive hiring of new Operators.
2. Unfortunately, we've had less luck with some of our winter weather, as two of our recent snow and ice events necessitated us to move into our adverse weather plans, moving us to snow routes on a number of routes and having to suspend some services due to treacherous roads and a number of our employees being unable to get into work from their homes. I do want to thank our Operations and Facilities Staff, in particular, for sustaining the overwhelming majority of our service during this period and doing so safely.
3. You heard a good bit about the North Nashville Transit Center today, so I won't add to that terrific discussion. However, I will say we're pleased to report that we have begun planning for the grand opening of the Hillsboro Transit Center. With construction progressing well on that project, we are lining up dignitaries to help us "cut the ribbon" during the week of March 28, immediately preceding our spring service changes. We anticipate that the boarding platform will be in service well before that date, and there will likely still be some punch list items to complete after that date, but the project will be substantially complete.
4. You may have read in the newspaper that Mayor Cooper initiated a participatory budgeting process in the North Nashville community to program \$2 million of Metro Capital funds to projects deemed a priority by residents of those neighborhoods through a facilitated public engagement process. We are pleased to report that the neighbors allocated \$300,000 for additional shelters and bus stop improvements. This will be on top of the overall allocation of \$3 million in this year's Capital Spending Plan that we reported earlier. I want to thank Trey Walker, who served as MTA's liaison to this process.
5. Last month CFO Ed Oliphant and CEO Bland were unable to engage in the usual January Operating Budget Workshop with the Board. However, supporting materials were sent out for the Board members to review and input. With submissions due in early February to Metro Finance, we will approach our submission in the same manner as prior years, with a baseline funding request that will include full funding for all current services, including the Better Bus Improvements scheduled to begin in April; as well as a supplemental investment request to support the next phases of Better Bus service expansion in FY2022-23.
6. We were pleased to be notified by TDOT of 2 capital grant awards this past month under the IMPROVE Act competitive grant program. We have been allocated \$900,000 toward our Stop Improvement Program and \$375,000 toward improvements at WeGo Central. This latter project will focus on improving the shelters at our outdoor stops at Central.
7. Planning for a potential Regional Transit Center at the Global Mall in Antioch has continued this past month, including a meeting with Council Member Joy Styles who represents that area. Metro Planning is also initiating a planning study to help guide the redevelopment of the neighborhood around that site.
8. CEO Bland and the Planning and Development staff participated in a number of meetings over the past month with respect to potential development on the East Bank, including the specific inclusion of transit facilities within the overall infrastructure. This effort will likely be highly public in the upcoming year.

9. CEO Bland thanked Renuka Christoph, Rick Rodriguez, Zeda Riggs, and the Marketing and Communications Staff for undertaking a stuff a bus event in collaboration with the Mall at Green Hills. The event collected canned goods for needy families, and we were able to contribute a significant amount of food to the Second Harvest Food Bank for that purpose. In addition to its charitable purpose, the event was very successful in generating attention on our “in progress” Hillsboro Transit Center. CEO Bland also publicly thanked Mayor Cooper for attending the event and calling attention to this project.
10. Operations and Development Staff continued to work with our consultants from HDR Engineering on an assessment of improvement options for the Nestor Bus Operating Facility. We have received some high-level programming options and will plan to develop a Board update in the coming months when we have a bit of a lull in the agenda.
11. CEO Bland said, with a month of staffing transitions in our relationships with the city, we were very sad to hear that the Mayor’s Senior Advisor for Transportation and Infrastructure, Faye DiMassimo will be leaving Nashville for a position as CEO for the transit agency in Savannah, Georgia, but said that he was happy for Faye as Savannah is her home. We also learned that two key contacts at the Nashville Department of Transportation – Jeff Hammond and Rochelle Carpenter – will be leaving for positions in the private sector. On a brighter note, CEO Bland said that he had the opportunity to meet with the new and permanent NDOT Director, Diana Alorcan, to get acquainted and provide some background on a number of issues of mutual interest.
12. Although the process is moving more slowly than we might have liked due to COVID and scheduling conflicts, Chair Williams, Vice-Chair Janet Miller, Board Secretary Margaret Behm and CEO Bland are continuing to work towards a Board/ Senior Staff workshop in the Spring. The Workshop Steering Committee will be meeting as soon as possible to find a convenient date for everyone, and we’ll be targeting a date sometime in late March or early April.
13. CEO Bland thanked Board Member Jessica Dauphin for the opportunity to participate in a virtual presentation to the Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee with respect to potential funding opportunities under the new Federal Infrastructure Bill, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. He said that he was able to provide an overview of the transit provisions of the Bill, and Michael Skipper of GNRC presented on the broader implications of the legislation. There was an excellent attendance and a number of good questions.
14. We continued to receive customer feedback and obtain information relative to our bus stop sign replacement project that we briefed the Board on several months ago. We expect to schedule another update with you in February and to begin deploying our new signage in the Spring.
15. On the RTA side:
 - a. The RTA received even better news than the MTA with respect to TDOT's competitive funding for capital projects. TDOT announced an award of \$3 million to RTA in IMPROVE Act funds and an additional \$3.4 million in Federal Congestion Mitigation funds to develop park and ride capacity in the RTA Commuter Bus corridors.
 - b. I continued to participate in meetings of the Nashville Area MPO Project Delivery Task Force. The Task Force is made up of TDOT, a number of regional mayors, and GNRC staff examining ways to expedite project delivery in the region with Federal funds.
 - c. Unfortunately, the Titans will not be playing this weekend, but they had an overall strong season, and one indicator of that success was ridership on the WeGo Star Titans Express. In total, we carried about 6,000 customers to the 10 games, including 644 total trips to last weekend’s game against Cincinnati.
 - d. The RTA began receiving the order of new over-the-road buses that will be deployed in Rutherford County corridor service by the MTA. We currently have 4 of the 10 buses on

the property and they are being prepared for service. We expect to have the remaining 6 by the end of March.

- e. The RTA Board also conducted its annual Election of Offices this month, with Mayor Hutto of Wilson County being re-elected Chairman; Mayor Brown of the City of Gallatin to Vice-Chair; and Davidson County Governors Appointee Ed Cole to the position of Secretary-Treasurer.

16. CEO Bland concluded his report by announcing the retirement of Dispatch Managers Bobby Green, who began his career back in 2002. CEO Bland said, through all the years of staffing shortages, service changes, weather issues, tornadoes, pandemics, floods, and bombings; Bobby was the steady hand in charge of making sure we had as close to the number of bus operators to the number of open driver seats as was possible. He did so in a calm and dignified manner, and in a manner that always put our customers and employees first. His calmness and resilience were probably born from his years as a tour bus driver in the music industry. CEO Bland said that he was sure that the Board joined WeGo staff in congratulating and thanking Bobby for his many years of service and in wishing him the best success in his retirement.

CEO Bland also announced the promotion of Karl Dean as the new Dispatch Manager. For clarification, not Karl Dean, as former Mayor Karl Dean. WeGo employee, Karl Dean recently earned his degree after years of work, and he has been a steady hand in our Operations Department in a variety of roles: from dispatch to radio control to street supervision. You will always find him with a smile, a positive attitude, and a customer-first approach. Karl Dean will assume his new position effective this coming Monday, January 31st.

VIII. **Chair's Report:** Chair Gail Carr Williams thanked Board Member Mary Griffin for chairing the NICE-New Initiatives & Community Engagement Committee in the absence of Vice-Chair Janet Miller. She also expressed her condolences to Mary in the loss of her father. Chair Williams concluded her remarks by thanking all of the board members and staff for their hard work.

IX. **Other Business:** There was no other business to come before the Board at this time.

X. **Adjournment:** With no further business, Chair Gail Carr Williams called for a motion to adjourn the meeting, a proper motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary