

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting
April 27, 2023

- I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at the Tennessee State Library & Archives, located at 1001 Rep. John Lewis Way N., Nashville, TN 37219, on Thursday, April 27, 2023.

- II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Janet Miller, Vice-Chair; Walter Searcy, Member; Jessica Dauphin, Member; Mary Griffin, Member; Margaret Behm, Board Secretary; Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Bland; Chief Financial Officer, Ed Oliphant; Chief Operating Officer, Andy Burke; Chief Safety & Security Officer, Nick Oldham; Chief of Staff & Administration, Vince Malone, Director of Planning & Grants, Felix Castrodad; Director of Maintenance, Carl Rokos; Transit Stop Manager, D'Nese Nicolosi; Transit Business Intelligence Analyst, Hannah Schaefer; and Sr. Executive Assistant & Board Liaison, Monica Howse.

A quorum was established, and Vice-Chair Janet Miller called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

- III. **Approval of Minutes:** Walter Searcy motioned to approve the March 23, 2023, MTA Board minutes; Jessica Dauphin seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the minutes.

- IV. **Public Comments:** Vice-Chair Janet Miller opened the floor for public comments. The public was reminded that comments were limited to three minutes. The following members of the public gave public comments:
 - Darius knight
 - Ann Pope

- V. **Informational Items:** The following items were presented for the board members' review. If members had questions, they were asked to ask the staff for the specific item. No questions or observations were raised by Members at this time.
 - Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget
 - Monthly Operating Statistics
 - Upcoming Procurement Projects List

- VI. **Consent Agenda Items:** There were no items for action this month.

- VII. **Operations & Finance Committee Report:** There were no items for discussion or action this month.

- VIII. **New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report:** Vice-Chair Janet Miller introduced the following item for discussion:
 - a. **Access Improvement Study Update (NICE-D-23-002):** Deputy COO-Operations Systems Dan Freudberg and Ken Hosen with KFH a project update and facilitated a discussion of potential Access and Access on Demand policy changes. These considerations are the result of an ongoing "Access Improvement Study" being undertaken by KFH, a consulting firm with expertise in this area:

In May of 2021, the MTA Board of Directors approved the award for the Access Improvement Study to KFH Group, Inc. This study is a comprehensive review of the WeGo Access Paratransit program, with a focus on improving both service reliability and operational efficiency. The project also includes a review of opportunities for greater coordination with fixed route services, including strategies to encourage fixed route use among current paratransit customers. A summary of the core goals established at the outset of the project as well as the remaining project tasks and milestones, was provided at the meeting.

The study is now at a point where there can be a holistic discussion of key observations and potential changes, including potentially significant policy considerations. A summary of significant observations, actions in progress, and potential changes for both the Access paratransit program as well as the Access on Demand customer choice program were included in the discussion.

After the Committee discussion and incorporation of Board feedback, MTA Staff, as well as members of the KFH project team, conducted an additional round of customer and stakeholder engagement to ensure that everyone could comment on potential changes to policy, with a focus on reaching out to current riders. These comments will be used to develop a final set of recommendations and associated Implementation plans.

Board Member Walter Searcy said he knows at least 3 or 4 vendors have been trying to become WeGo Access subcontract service providers but have yet to get engaged, so how do we reach that?

Dan Freudberg replied that we are in the process of developing a request for proposals that we would put out to new providers to let them know that our contracts are up with our existing providers for Access on Demand this fall. What we're looking at, especially for the Access on Demand program, is to create more of an open solicitation process where essentially, you post the requirements for participating in the program as a provider rather than doing this extensive procurement every five years. The next enrollment period begins when our current contracts are up, which is at the end of September, but we'll get an RFP out before then. We'll ensure it is widely distributed and contact vendors who have contacted us recently to confirm their awareness.

CEO Bland said he thinks the other issue buried in what Ken Hosen and Dan Freudberg have been discussing is that it also raises policy-level matters. A lot of the feedback we get, particularly from smaller vendors, is the insurance requirements, the liability expectations, and the federal regulatory issues that Ken talked about are all onerous. Again, this rises to the policy of balancing the openness of the process to smaller providers against the protections from liability we've historically had.

Vice-Chair Janet Miller and the other board members expressed that they wanted to hear more from the customers and what they had to say before rendering any opinions on the alternatives presented. Vice-Chair Janet Miller said it's hard as a board member to gauge which ones to select, not understanding what's a priority to the customer, so coming back with that information would give better context. Several Members also expressed the opinion that (while both are important) any decisions we make that pit service quality against operational efficiency should lead toward service quality.

b. WeGo Link Program Status Update (NICE-D-23-002): Transit Business Intelligence Analyst Hannah Schafer presented the following item:

The nMotion Strategic Plan recommended exploring first/last mile "Mobility on Demand" zones to service lower-demand areas to improve access to transit services in a cost-effective way. The development of these zones allows for improved connections to fixed-route transit service, especially in areas where access is limited due to walking distances to bus stops and where the lack of proper pedestrian infrastructure makes walking conditions difficult and unsafe.

The WeGo Link program was launched in the Fall of 2021 with a pilot zone in Antioch to improve access to transit in an area difficult to serve but with known transit needs. Since the pilot period, three additional zones were added in Fall 2022: South Nashville, Hermitage, and Goodlettsville increasing the percentage of the population with access to this service from 8% to 25% of Nashville residents. Effective this month, three more zones (Sylvan Park, Cockrill Bend, and Bellevue) were added, expanding WeGo Link service to 32% of residents.

As a new service to connect WeGo riders for the first and last leg of their trip, the program started off slow and steady. In the first year of the program, just over 400 trips were taken with an average fare of \$8.50 per trip.

Over the last six months, the total number of trips has grown rapidly to just under 190 trips per month, averaging just over \$2 per trip for customers with \$7 per trip in WeGo subsidies.

Antioch continues to be the most used zone, with $\frac{3}{4}$ of trips starting or ending at Nashboro Village.

The Goodlettsville zone has become the second most used zone with 267 total trips, the majority of which connect to route 56 at Madison Station. The average fare for Goodlettsville is trending the highest at just slightly over \$10 per trip, or an \$8 per trip subsidy for WeGo.

Other zones have more limited ridership currently. However, our Marketing and Communications Department is planning targeted engagement and outreach strategies for all WeGo Link service areas over the next few months.

Overall, the program is showing great benefits and is growing at a steady rate that will continue to be monitored. Future analysis could include more qualitative measures, including passenger satisfaction and overall trip savings from traditional modes of travel, to allow staff to continue to improve the performance and success of the program.

Vice-Chair Miller said she continues to say that she doesn't have a measure for what success is. She doesn't know if 400 is good or bad or if 50 is good or bad, so she is again interested in what success looks like. CEO Bland replied that even the most mature and robust transit agencies with mobility-on-demand programs are seeing very small usage as a percentage of overall ridership. However, at under \$10 per trip, the cost per passenger is well below $\frac{1}{4}$ of the previous fixed route connector service.

Board Member Walter Searcy asked for a copy of the customer qualitative data to be sent to the Board members. Mr. Bland indicated that it is difficult to connect directly with customers on this service, as Uber does not release this level of data, but that we could incorporate qualitative questions about the program in future customer surveys.

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

1. Mr. Bland said that he was honored to attend the 60th State of Metro Address by Mayor Cooper. While his speech touched on dozens of critical topics to the city, our work featured prominently as he specifically called out our installation of 76 new sheltered bus stops during his term, the enhanced mobility that residents of North Nashville will enjoy next spring when the Ernest Rip Patton Jr. North Nashville Transit Center opens, and the opportunity associated with transit enhancements envisioned in the Imagine East Bank Plan including a new East Bank Transit Center and Dedicated Lane Bus Rapid Transit along the East Bank Boulevard.
2. With the filing deadline rapidly approaching for Mayoral and Council candidates, Vince Malone, Eric Beyer, and Mr. Bland are developing an open candidate briefing to provide interested candidates the opportunity to hear about the work we're doing and to ask broader questions about our system and the role of public transportation in the city. We've done this historically whenever we have Council elections, and they are typically very well attended.
3. With Trey Walker's departure, we are actively recruiting for a new Chief Development Officer. Mr. Bland encouraged the members to get that word out to candidates who might be qualified and interested. In the meantime, CEO Bland is having bi-weekly meetings with the Development team, and he's very excited about their competence and enthusiasm.
4. This past month, we had the opportunity to host the Annual "Think Transit" conference here in Nashville. The conference brought over 500 transit professionals from around the country to

examine various technology and policy issues over three days. No one here would be surprised to hear that our Chair, Gail Carr Williams got the conference off to a rousing start with her inspirational welcome, and we also had Burke Nihill, CEO of the Tennessee Titans, deliver a keynote address on their vision for making transit a more integral part of the game day experience.

5. Metro Planning is moving well along on its Global Mall visioning process to engage the community on how that site might best evolve. Early iterations of their planning process establish our Hickory Hollow Transit Center as a prominent element of future site planning, and we look forward to working with Planning to advance that vision.
6. Tomorrow, Mr. Bland will join NDOT and other city leaders in celebrating the completion of the 12th Avenue South Complete and Green Streets project. NDOT's overall rehabilitation of this corridor included improvements to the 14 bus stops we have on our Route 17 12th Avenue South bus and incorporating concepts from our transit design guidelines like boarding islands and raised cycle tracks to integrate pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit use of the street along more safely with general traffic.
7. NDOT continues to advance the Connect Downtown Mobility planning process. They are in the process of publishing a variety of possible scenarios for various aspects of Downtown circulation, including potential transit priority corridors. As this work evolves, they will return to this Board to discuss possible implications for our transit network.
8. On the RTA side:
 - a. Hatch Consulting continued its work on the Star Future Vision Study, and we are now planning for an initial public engagement phase of this project.
 - b. We continue to advance work on negotiations for a joint development project at the RTA's Donelson Station site with a development team composed of HG Hill and Southeast Ventures.
 - c. We are advancing land acquisition toward a permanent park-and-ride location in Murfreesboro.
 - d. We completed RTA Board orientations for the new Mayors of Rutherford County, Montgomery County, and Sumner County.

X. Chair's Report: In the absence of Board Chair Gail Carr Williams, Vice-Chair Janet Miller provided the following Chair's report:

Vice-Chair Janet Miller said that it is with bittersweet emotions that she announces that Mary Griffin will be departing the WeGo Board of Directors after this meeting. Mary has served on the Board for two and a half years, and she has shown an extraordinary amount of leadership, particularly around the Elizabeth Duff Transit Center, which was something Mary was so passionate about. She put so much energy around that she was always showing up at bus rodeos and all kinds of events. She just loved doing that kind of work, and she would also chair the New Initiative and Community Engagement Committee whenever I was out on the road. She was really interested in equity in ridership, which is something I think that we all care a lot about, but Mary carried that flag. We've established that she is an attorney and that she has been an immense benefit to this Board. She has been an absolute joy and so much fun to have around, but she is going to be moving to a position, and I will let her share kind of a little bit more, but we are so sad to see her go, and we are so grateful for her service, and she has been an extraordinary board member.

Board Member Mary Griffin said that it had been a great pleasure to serve on this Board with Nashville icons. She said in the beginning, she was petrified about joining this Board because she had great admiration for every single person seated at this table. The things that I've learned from

each of you have changed me in a way that I'm being offered to pursue my dream, and you all helped me to get there, so that's amazing.

All of you together choose teamwork and choose people over politics, and you celebrate the worker. That's extraordinary!

In closing, Mary thanked CEO Bland, the Board, and staff for the opportunity to serve on this Board and said that she is leaving knowing that all will be in good hands.

XI. Other Business: There was no other business to come before this Board.

XII. Adjournment: With no further business, Vice-Chair Janet Miller moved to adjourn the meeting, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:42 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary