

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting
July 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, July 27, 2023.

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

Gail Carr Williams, Board Chair	Andy Burke, COO
Janet Miller, Vice Chair	Vince Malone, COSA
Jessica Dauphin, Member	Nick Oldham, CSSO
Kathryn Hays Sasser, Member	Renuka Christoph, CCO
Margaret Behm, Board Secretary	Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning & Grants
Stephen Bland, CEO	
Monica Howse, Sr. Exec. Asst. & Board Liaison	

A quorum was established, and Board Chair Carr Williams called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

Board Chair Carr Williams acknowledged and welcomed Kathryn Hays Sasser as the newest Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority Board member.

III. **Approval of Minutes:** Jessica Dauphin moved to approve the May 25 and June 22 Nashville MTA Board minutes. Vice Chair Miller seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the minutes.

IV. **Public Comments:** Board Chair 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 gave public comments:

- Anne Pope
- Darius Knight
- Jeremiah Wooten

V. **Informational Items:** The following items were presented for the board members' review. If members had questions, they were asked to ask the staff about the specific item.

- Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget – No questions
- Debt Obligation Notification for Line of Credit Extension – No questions
- Monthly Operating Statistics – No questions
- Upcoming Procurement Projects List – No questions

VI. **Consent Agenda Items:**

There were no consent agenda items this month.

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

a. **Auto Damage/Catastrophic Insurance Renewal (M-A-23-018):**

The Committee recommended the Board approve WeGo's auto damage and catastrophic insurance coverage as presented for a premium cost of \$1,011,256 from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

Vice Chair Janet Miller asked how the general liability could increase so significantly. CFO Ed Oliphant reported that our previous carrier had been willing to grandfather coverage under an inland marine type of policy for auto damage and catastrophic coverage, which typically has much lower rates than traditional auto damage coverage. However, with rising industry exposure worldwide through numerous large scale natural disasters over the past few years, the industry could no longer offer the same type of coverage for our application. As a result, WeGo had to switch to a more traditional auto damage and catastrophic type policy that carries much higher premiums. Mr. Oliphant reported that, when combined with the substantial reduction in premium on liability coverage that the Board approved in June, the overall impact to our casualty and line item liability line was close to a net zero.

Janet Miller moved to approve the Auto Damage/Catastrophic Insurance Renewal; Kathryn Sasser seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved this action item.

b. Metropolitan Nashville Police Department Memorandum of Understanding (M-A-23-019): Chief Safety & Security Officer Nick Oldham presented the following report:

Staff requested the Board give the Chief Executive Officer the authority to enter into an MOU with the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department's Secondary Employment Unit to provide enhanced security focused primarily at the Elizabeth Duff Transit Center at WeGo Central, but also available for deployment at other system locations as necessary. Mr. Oldham reported that the change in approach was necessary to attract sufficient officers for our assignments, and that the increase in rates had been anticipated in the operating budget under consideration by the Board.

Committee Chair Dauphin moved to approve the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department Memorandum of Understanding; Kathryn Sasser seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved this action item.

VIII. New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report: Committee Chair Miller introduced the following items for discussion and action:

a. FY2024 Proposed Operating Budget (M-A-23-020): Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant presented the following report:

Typically, this action item is brought to the Board in the month of June, but budget deliberations at Metro Council subsequent to the production deadline for June Board materials made it advantageous to wait for the Metro Budget to be finalized. Final Metro budget adoption has now taken place, and this proposed budget reflects that action.

The initial budget submission to Metro in February included an increase in the baseline budget from 2023 and an additional \$5.4 million investment request for a partial Better Bus service expansion based on the Mayor's Transportation plan approved in 2020. Mayor Cooper's Budget Proposal provided full funding for our baseline request, and just under half of the requested funding for Better Bus enhancements.

Through its appropriations process, The Metro Council approved a substitute budget that fully reinstated the Better Bus investment request and an additional \$380,000 for extended service to the new James Lawson High School in Bellevue that opens next month. These amounts are fully reflected in the proposed Operating Budget under both the revenue and expenditure side.

The proposed budget being considered has a 12.6% increase over FY2023 to a budget of \$120.6 million compared to \$107 million last year; it also includes the following:

- A metro subsidy increase to WeGo from \$61.6 million to \$74.7 million

- Funding of the baseline budget that allows WeGo not only to keep its existing service in place but also to maintain its current fare structure,
- Funds the balance of a partial year of service expansion implemented during the current year during FY2023.
- It accounts for inflationary increases in normal operating expenses, as well as collectively bargained employee wage increases.
- Partial year funding for the operation of the Dr. Ernest Rip Patton Jr. North Nashville Transit Center scheduled to open in the Spring of 2024.
- Expanded maintenance capacity for growing shelter and bus stop programs.
- Partial year funding for the next phase of Better Bus service expansion, including those elements that will be considered by the Board later in this meeting, and another round of expansion scheduled to be implemented in April 2024.

Mr. Oliphant also repeated that we will fully deplete the pandemic relief funding received from the Federal Government, and will revert to our prior practice of utilizing Federal formula funds for preventive maintenance and Americans with Disabilities Act service obligations. This will reduce available Federal funds for future capital projects.

Jessica Dauphin thanked Ed Oliphant for a job well done and for keeping WeGo budgeted the right way because there have been a lot of additions and upgrades over the past two years, and it's been clever and forward-thinking about how WeGo moves forward on the Better Bus Network and implementation.

Board Chair Carr Williams thanked Mr. Bland and Mr. Oliphant for being ready for that Council process, and that getting all of those changes approved on our riders' behalf was incredible, and she expressed her appreciation to Mayor Cooper, who has been very supportive of transit.

The NICE Committee recommended that the Board approve the FY2024 Proposed Operating Budget; Jessica Dauphin seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved this action item.

b. Fall 2023 Service Changes & Title VI Analysis (M-A-23-021): Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad presented the following report:

Staff requested the Board approve the proposed Fall 2023 service changes, as documented at the meeting, for implementation to take effect on October 1, 2023.

There was a general discussion of the service changes.

Board Chair Carr Williams asked Mr. Castrodad what route changes were requested but were not able to be created. Mr. Castrodad said that most people want to see better frequency and span on more routes.

Chair Miller thanked the staff for their hard work and said adding service is so much better than cutting service.

The NICE Committee recommended the Board approve the Fall 2023 Service Changes & Title VI Analysis; Jessica Dauphin seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved this action item.

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

1. WeGo essentially wrapped up the public engagement process for the Access Improvement Study and anticipate bringing the findings of that process and recommended policy changes in the program to you for your August meeting.

2. Work is well underway to prepare for the service changes you just approved. He particularly acknowledged Katie Freudberg and the Operations team for the expedited implementation of Connector Route 70 – Bellevue Connector. Felix did not report on this new route in his report because we learned of the funding too late for it to be included in the public hearing and Title VI process, and it needs to be in place for the start of the School Year. WeGo is implementing it as a pilot service, as allowed by FTA rules, and will incorporate it into the public comment process and Title VI Analysis associated with our permanent spring 2024 changes.
3. Work also continues at a good pace at the Ernest Rip Patton Jr. North Nashville Transit Center, with much activity visible. Steel has been erected, most masonry walls are up, and construction has started on the individual bus bays. Earlier this week, WeGo hosted a well-attended community meeting across the street from the Center to preview the project and provide updates. He thanked Chair Carr-Williams, and Members Searcy and Dauphin for their attendance.
4. Mr. Bland attended the Summer Planning Workshop for the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Public Transportation Association, on which he serves as Vice President and Chair of the Legislative Committee. The workshop is always an excellent opportunity to connect on what's happening in the rest of the State and to plan for the upcoming Legislative Session.
5. Several staff members attended a forum held by the Greater Nashville Chamber of Commerce, releasing their "Point of Departure" Report, highlighting the commuting challenges for many Nashville area high school students seeking higher education opportunities. Along with a presentation by the report author, the forum hosted a panel discussion, including Jessica Dauphin, to discuss the issues identified in the report. The report acknowledged that almost all college campuses in Davidson County, but that many in the outlying regional counties do not and that limited bus service still makes commutes by transit challenging. Among the report's recommendations was that the region should commit to finding a dedicated source of funding for transit.
6. Mr. Bland has attended several meetings with Metro Planning, the Mayor's Office, and others regarding the Global Mall redevelopment process, including the role and location of our planned transit center there.
7. After the candidate briefings for Mayoral and Council Candidates in June, there have been several follow-up conversations with candidates for both offices with questions about public transportation services and operations.
8. Lastly, Mr. Bland attended the Metro Council Rules and Nominations Committee and full Council meeting this month, where they took up the Mayor's Nomination of Kathryn Hays Sasser to the Nashville MTA Board. He said meeting Kathryn was a pleasure, and looked forward to working with her.
9. On the RTA side:
 - a. Hatch Consulting continued its work on the Star Future Vision Study. Several public engagement meetings were held along the corridor this week, which were generally well attended.
 - b. WeGo continues to advance work on negotiations for a joint development project at the RTA's Donelson Station site with an HG Hill and Southeast Ventures development team. We are working with our attorneys at Bradley and our Real Estate Advisors at Jones Long LaSalle to develop negotiation term sheets. At the same time, the developer advances other property acquisitions adjacent to the site.
 - c. WeGo is advancing land acquisition toward a permanent park-and-ride location in Murfreesboro, and this month our development team met with Federal Transit

Administration staff to discuss environmental review requirements associated with this project.

- d. WeGo is working with Nashville Soccer Club to plan a regional bus service connecting Murfreesboro and Antioch to several late-season soccer games. The team distributed survey data to their fan base. This corridor appears to be the most promising, hoping to use the late-season pilot as a learning experience for a broader approach to the entire season next year.

- X. **Chair's Report:** Board Chair Carr Williams welcomed Kathryn Hays Sasser to the Board. She also thanked Mr. Bland for shepherding everything through Metro Council to support our outstanding budget result. It will make a difference in our ridership, particularly for our students and especially those attending the James Lawson High School.

She said that she had recently attended the Community meeting at the Dr. Ernest Rip Patton North Nashville Transit Center, and it was a joy to see the progress and the steel going up on the building. It was so exciting to see the community so engaged.

Board Chair Carr Williams said that she appreciates Mr. Bland speaking on transit and that Board Members are also advocating transit. She recently had the opportunity to sit on a panel with Board Member Jessica Dauphin, which was great.

Lastly, she thanked CFO Ed Oliphant, Director of Planning Felix Castrodad, and staff for their hard work and the excellent budget and service changes presentations. It will make a difference in the community and give the community a better understanding of transit. We must ensure that our transit continues expanding and being accessible for all.

XI. **Other Business:**

- a. **2023-24 Election of Nashville MTA Board Officers (M-A-23-022):** Board Secretary & General Counsel Margaret Behm conducted the election:

Board Secretary Margaret Behm said it was her role to conduct the 2023-24 Election of Nashville MTA Board Officers. Currently, Gail Carr Williams and Janet Miller serve as the Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, for the Board.

Ms. Behm opened the floor for nominations; Jessica Dauphin placed the following slate of officers into nomination: Gail Carr-Williams for Chair and Janet Miller for Vice Chair. Kathryn Hays Sasser seconded the motion, and all board members unanimously approved it.

- b. **Annual Review of Board Ethics & Conflicts of Interest (M-I-23-024):** Board Secretary & General Counsel Margaret Behm reviewed the Code of Ethics and applicable procurement policies and procedures with the Board. The most recent code was adopted by the Board on June 19, 2007. The Code of Ethics is reviewed with all new Board members as they are appointed and regularly reviewed with the full Board annually.

- XII. **Adjournment:** With no further business, Board Chair Carr Williams moved to adjourn the meeting, which adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary