

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting
October 26, 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, October 26, 2023.

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

Gail Carr Williams, Board Chair	Andy Burke, COO
Janet Miller, Vice-Chair	Renuka Christoph
Jessica Dauphin, Member	Nick Oldham, CSSO
Kathryn Hays Sasser	Ed Oliphant, CFO
Margaret Behm, Board Secretary	Kia Lewis Project Manager
Stephen Bland, CEO	Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning & Grants
Monica Howse, Sr. Exec. Asst. & Board Liaison	Patrick Hester, Facilities Manager

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

III. **Approval of Minutes:** Vice-Chair Janet Miller moved to approve the September 28 Nashville MTA Board minutes. Aron Thompson seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the minutes.

IV. **Special Recognition – Resolution Honoring the Contributions of Former MTA Board Member Walter Searcy III:** Board Chair Carr Williams read the Resolution Honoring the Contributions of Former MTA Board Member Walter Searcy III.

Vice-Chair Janet Miller moved to approve the resolution and the free ride privileges as a Board Member for his lifetime. Jessica Dauphin seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the resolution.

Members of the Board collectively expressed their appreciation for Walter Searcy's contribution to MTA, and presented Mr. Searcy with a personalized bus stop in his honor. Everyone gave him a standing ovation and a round of applause for a job well done.

Mr. Seacy thanked the Board and said God bless you to all.

V. **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:

- John Bull

VI. **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
 - Jessica Dauphin asked Andy Burke to expound upon the green sections of the Operations report in the board packet. Andy Burke replied by saying, where you see green, that means there's always room for opportunities. WeGo did see a hit in terms of on on-time performance in August, with schools returning and a lot of the different special events, such as the Grand Prix and some of the Broadway Bridge closures. So that did have some impacts in terms of the completed trips. He also mentioned that WeGo continues to be proactive regarding bus acquisitions. In August, he and some maintenance team visited Gillig in California for a pre-production meeting. They negotiated to help move an order of 28 Gilligs slated for Q2 of next year up to the springtime. Also, there are 40 cutaways that WeGo has been pleading and crying about over the last couple of months, and now have 40 slated for production. WeGo will start to see those being delivered around the end of

Q2. This will be a big help on the access side of the business. Besides, this is only the second month of the fiscal year, and everything is status quo.

- Upcoming Procurement Projects List – No questions

VII. Consent Agenda Items:

- Industrial Parts Washer & Waste Disposal
- Industrial Janitorial Supplies
- Trapeze Additional Services

Jessica Dauphin made a motion to approve the consent agenda items, Janet Miller seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the consent agenda items.

VIII. Operations & Finance Committee Report: Committee Chair Jessica Dauphin presented the following items for discussion:

- a. Safety & Security Update (OF-D-23-006)** Nick Oldham, Chief Safety and Security Officer, provided a brief high-level overview of the expected updates to the Agency Safety/Security Plan.

On July 19, 2018, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 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 plans that include the processes and procedures to implement Safety Management Systems. The plan must consist of safety performance targets voluntarily shared with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the local Department of Transportation. The PTASP rule became effective on July 19, 2019. Consequently, FTA published a Dear Colleague letter on the same day to alert the transit industry of the July 20, 2020, safety compliance deadline. FTA issued a Notice of Enforcement Discretion on April 22, 2020, effectively extending the PTASP compliance deadline to December 31, 2020, due to the global Coronavirus pandemic. MTA published its initial version of the Agency Safety Plan on September 14, 2020.

The new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law amends FTA's safety program at 49 USC § 5329(d) by adding to the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) requirements. Under this new law, transit agencies that receive Section 5307 funds and serve an urbanized area with a population of 200,000 or more are required to establish a joint labor-management Safety Committee, a risk reduction program, new safety training requirements, and strategies to minimize exposure to infectious diseases consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines or a State health authority.

WeGo formed the required joint labor-management Safety Committee in December of 2022. WeGo has met quarterly to diligently assess the current safety protocols, identify vulnerabilities, and develop an updated plan to address them.

Janet asked why the report didn't seem steady from month to month. Nick said the third Party Administrator gives WeGo a number, which is 50% of WeGo's safety-sensitive employees, and then the TPA tells WeGo how many (for each month) should be tested to breach compliance by the end of the year.

There was no further discussion.

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

- a. **North Nashville Transit Center Update (M-A-23-033)**: Project Manager Kia Lewis provided an update at the meeting. The presentation included aerial photos, an overview of the construction of the transit center, as well as associated issues and challenges with the project.

Committee Chair Miller said it's exciting to see the progress that has come along since the groundbreaking.

Kathryn Hays Sasser said she thinks the standardization is a great idea as you look forward to the next project, and bringing in that level of expertise in-house will be a huge benefit to the company.

Jessica Dauphin thanked the team for their hard work on this project. She said that it's a master class in community engagement and community work and making infrastructure work in and for the community that it is serving. She would love to illustrate and highlight how well WeGo has managed this project and that it will be on time and within budget. She wants the whole city to know that WeGo can do this.

Board Chair Carr Williams applauded the Engineering team for pausing to see what was working and what was not. To be able to embark upon that now vs. later will serve WeGo exceptionally well.

There was no further discussion.

- b. **Zero Emission Fleet Transition Plan (M-A-23-038)**: Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke presented the following:

Staff requested the Board to provide the Chief Executive Officer the authority to enter a professional services contract with Stantec to develop the Zero Emission Fleet Transition Plan in the amount of \$334,702.88 with a contingency amount of \$66,940.58 for a total contract budget of \$401,643.46. The base contract term is 18 months, with a milestone for final recommendations due at 12 months and one six-month extension option for 24 months. The study will be funded using Federal 5307 funds with state and local match.

The NICE Committee motioned to approve the Zero Emission Fleet Transition Plan. Jessica Dauphin seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved it.

There was no further discussion.

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

1. The Fall service changes went into effect as planned on October 1. So far, things are going well and have been uneventful. WeGo has seen a rapid positive response to increased frequency on Route 8. It's averaging about 30 people each night on our extended service hour routes, which has increased over time, especially on Friday and Saturday nights. WeGo also completed the conversion to QuickTicket and the elimination of magnetics on October 1. Frankly, the transition has gone even more smoothly than expected. The percentage of fare transactions using QuickTicket has increased from about 50% to under 80%, and cash transactions have decreased to less than 20%. WeGo continues expanding outreach, particularly in non-English speaking communities in Southeast Nashville, where penetration rates have been lower and has extended the discounts associated with signing on to QuickTicket through December 31. WeGo expects to see a slight downturn in ridership in the short term. Operators have been asked to take a very lenient approach to people attempting to board without proper fare media, so WeGo believes that folks are riding without being recorded in the fare system.

2. On September 30, WeGo offered free rides all day and participated in the Mayor's Inauguration festivities in the Courthouse Square. WeGo received many comments from attendees who wanted to thank the Board for taking action to make fares free on that day.
3. WeGo hosted a community session at the Bordeaux Public Library earlier this week to allow our artists to discuss their concepts for artwork associated with the Ernest Rip Patton Jr. North Nashville Transit Center. The three artists undertaking our "Voices of the Past, Present, and Future" displays had the opportunity to explain their creative process and what they have in mind. Their passion and creativity are contagious, and WeGo can't wait to see the finished products!!! CEO Bland thanked Board Member Aron Thompson for attending and participating in this event.
4. CEO Bland met with Mayor O'Connell and his staff to discuss ongoing MTA and RTA projects and service initiatives and his priorities for advancing public transportation in Nashville. The good news is that he remains committed to ongoing projects and initiatives like Better Bus, the Antioch Transit Center, Murfreesboro Pike Corridor Project, East Bank Transit Improvements, more neighborhood transit centers, and the SoBro Hub, but would like for transit to move faster.
5. CEO Bland said he had the opportunity to update the Mayor's Transportation Transition Committee, Chaired by Dr. Alex Jahangir, on various WeGo Public Transit initiatives and priorities. The committee will formulate recommendations for the new Administration in the coming weeks. CEO Bland thanked Board Chair Carr Williams for her dual role in Chairing the Board and serving on this committee.
6. CEO Bland said he was delighted to participate in a panel discussion at Trevecca Nazarene University this past month about the changing nature of the Murfreesboro Pike Corridor and WeGo's role in those changes. Council Member Terry Vo was also on the panel and said he was delighted to learn in her remarks that she rides the 18 bus when she goes to the Airport. CEO Bland discussed the incredible ridership growth seen in the corridor and pending projects like the Antioch Transit Center and the upcoming Murfreesboro Pike Corridor Planning effort.
7. CEO Bland said he and some staff attended the Annual Conference and Expo of the American Public Transportation Association. In addition to offering tremendous learning opportunities, the Expo displays about every gadget a transit geek could want, and he anticipates an uptick in requests for our capital plan based on what our folks got to see. He said he was delighted to spend time with Former Congressman Bob Clement and his family. The Association recognized Congressman Clement with their Distinguished Service Award for his public transportation and passenger rail advancement while in Congress. WeGo staff joined the festivities with TPTA Executive Director and Metro Council Member Jason Spain and Mayor Freddie O'Connell. Mayor O'Connell did triple duty while there: recognizing Congressman Clement at the Awards Ceremony, participating in a panel discussion with other mayors on the role public transportation plays in the development of cities, and visiting the Expo floor.
8. WeGo continues to meet with NDOT, TDOT, the Downtown Partnership, and Consultants on the Connect Downtown Plan. NDOT anticipates releasing plan recommendations to the public sometime in November. WeGo plans to have Felix Castrodad and Marty Sewell of NDOT brief the Board on their findings at the November Board meeting.
9. Also, relative to NDOT, they have discussed coordinating mutual strategic service planning processes into a joint effort. WeGo expects public-facing elements like public engagement and the production of communication materials to be consolidated. At the same time, each entity maintained direct control over work program elements specific to their program. As with Connect Downtown, WeGo contemplates taking on the role of contracting agency for this effort, with an MOU with NDOT outlining responsibilities and anticipates bringing this MOU to the Board in November.

10. On the RTA side:

- a. WeGo continues to advance land acquisition toward a permanent park-and-ride location in Murfreesboro. Earlier this month, WeGo received final environmental clearance from FTA on the project, allowing us to enter real estate acquisition and design.

On October 27, CEO Bland will attend a groundbreaking event for Murfreesboro Transit's new Transit Operations Center in Murfreesboro. This facility is immediately adjacent to the property we've identified for the park-and-ride.

- b. WeGo started its experimental service to Nashville SC games from Murfreesboro and Antioch on September 30. The operation went smoothly, and over 30 people took advantage of the service. CEO Bland said he would expect, by word of mouth, this will grow over time. WeGo will operate this service through the remainder of the season, including any home playoff games, and will revisit with the team to discuss next year.
- c. Hatch Consulting Group continues to advance the WeGo Star Future Vision Study. This month, WeGo met with Hatch to review several potential short and long-term scenarios to release to the public, probably after the first of the year.
- d. Finally, CEO Bland joined RTA Vice Chair and Gallatin Mayor Paige Brown in appearing before the State Legislature's Commerce, Labor, Transportation, and Agriculture Joint Subcommittee of Government Operations for the RTA's reauthorization hearing. The discussion was very positive, and legislators from around the State recognized the importance of the RTA in helping to address regional mobility issues. Most importantly, the subcommittee will recommend an 8-year extension to the General Assembly when they convene in 2024.

XI. Chair's Report: Board Chair Carr Williams presented the following report:

Board Chair Carr Williams thanked the staff for their hard work and said there were so many good reports that came out of the meeting. She also congratulated Jessica Dauphin for the work that she is doing in the city and for being an advocate for transit.

Board Chair Carr Williams said it was her honor to formally recognize and honor former MTA Board Member Walter Searcy III for his contributions advocating for improving public transportation. He has always been that person who caused everybody to look at DBEs a bit closer and advocated for equity.

In conclusion, Board Chair Carr Williams reminded everyone of the renaming of the WeGo Central ceremony that would take place on Thursday, November 3 at 10 a.m. She said it was an honor to see this come to fruition and that she and the board members and staff could honor Elizabeth Duff in this way.

XII. Other Business: There was no further business to come before this Board.

XIII. 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