

Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority

Board of Directors Meeting

July 25, 2024

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 25, 2024.

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

Gail Carr Williams, Chair	Stephen Bland, CEO
Janet Miller, Vice Chair	Monica Howse, Sr. Exec. Asst. & Board Liaison
Jessica Dauphin, Member	Nick Oldham, CSSO
Michael Bressman, Board Secretary Designee	Andy Burke, COO
Mayor Freddie O'Connell	Vince Malone, COSA
Michael Briggs	Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning & Grants

A quorum was established, and Board Chair Carr Williams called the meeting to order at 2:45 p.m.

III. **Approval of Minutes:** Ms. Jessica Dauphin made a motion to approve the May 23, June 27, and July 1 Nashville MTA Board minutes. Vice Chair Janet Miller seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the minutes.

IV. **New Initiatives & Community Engagement Committee Report:** In light of the presence of a special guest, Chair Gail Carr-Williams exercised the privilege of the Chair and asked Vice Chair Miller to move up the report of the New Initiatives and Community Engagement Committee. Vice Chair Miller introduced the following items for discussion:

a. **Resolution of Support for the Choose How You Move Program (M-A-24.021):** Vice Chair Miller presented the following item for discussion:

On February 15, Nashville Mayor Freddie O'Connell announced his intention to pursue a transportation referendum to take place in November of this year. The effort called *Choose How You Move, An All-Access Pass to Sidewalks, Signals, Service, and Safety*, takes advantage of the 2017 Tennessee's Improving Manufacturing, Public Roads and Opportunities for a Vibrant Economy (IMPROVE Act) legislation allowing local governments in the state's largest counties and its cities to seek dedicated funding for transportation projects through a local referendum.

A Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), as required by the IMPROVE Act, has been developed, building on more than 70 community and neighborhood plans during the past ten years, including the nMotion Strategic Transit Plan. The TIP outlines a program of investments to address Nashville's transportation needs, focusing on four key areas: sidewalks, signals, service, and safety. It provides a wide range of improvements for different users regardless of the mode used for travel and places a significant emphasis on transit service and infrastructure. It also creates partnership opportunities for improving and expanding regional transit connections with surrounding counties in Middle Tennessee. The program has the potential to be transformative in responding to the transportation challenges that impact Nashvillians daily.

The Choose How You Move program details were officially launched on April 19 by Mayor O'Connell and is currently undergoing public outreach to educate residents on the specifics of the program. Approval by Metro Council for the program was received earlier this month, and

it will now move on to the Davidson County Election Commission for formal inclusion on the November ballot.

Given Nashville MTA's role in the development of the Choose How You Move program and the importance of this effort for positioning transit service and associated infrastructure in Nashville in a prominent position for the future, staff recommended the Nashville MTA Board of Directors adopt the attached Nashville MTA Resolution M-A-24-023 in support of Choose How You Move.

Committee Chair Miller then introduced Mayor Freddie O'Connell of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County and invited him to address the MTA Board.

Mayor O'Connell extended his gratitude to CEO Steve Bland and the WeGo team for their ongoing dedication. He highlighted the importance of this moment as he joined colleagues from the Metro Council, his team, members of the Mayor's Office, and others in celebrating the installation of WeGo's 300th sheltered bus stop.

Reflecting on his own experiences riding Nashville's buses from the days before the Deadrick Street Transit Center and WeGo Central, the mayor emphasized the significance of this milestone in enhancing rider dignity and safety.

The mayor acknowledged the collaborative efforts of WeGo, the board, staff, and the Nashville Department of Transportation and Intermodal Infrastructure to reach this point. He pointed out that the nMotion Strategic Planning process, which he helped launch as a board member, has been instrumental in shaping this program.

He commended Michael Briggs and the Mayor's Office team for their work in integrating over a decade's worth of transportation plans and extensive public input into the program. This effort is not a new invention but a culmination of decades of city planning and readiness.

The support from the Metro Council, which approved the program unanimously, reflects the city's readiness and commitment. The mayor also noted positive feedback from community engagement and research, including the Vanderbilt Poll, which supports the effectiveness of the program.

He quoted the proposed ballot language, emphasizing the program's benefits: "Choose How You Move" will complete the priority sidewalk network, expand 24-hour public transportation service, add more neighborhood transit centers, improve roadway safety, and modernize city signalized intersections. This will enhance service delivery, rider experience, and accessibility for all Nashvillians."

The program, named Choose How You Move, focuses on four key principles: sidewalks, signals, service, and safety. The mayor highlighted that this initiative will also enable Nashville to secure federal funding, which has been elusive in the past.

He concluded by addressing affordability, noting that living near a transit route saves residents an average of \$200 annually. The mayor encouraged everyone to learn more about the program at www.nashville.gov/transit and he said that he looks forward to the program's consideration by resolution.

Chair Miller thanked the mayor for his remarks and his commitment to improving the lives of all Nashvillians. The NICE Committee made a motion to approve the Resolution of Support for the Choose How You Move Program. Ms. Dauphin seconded the motion; the Board unanimously approved it.

V. **Public Comments:** Vice Chair Miller opened the floor for public comments. The public was reminded that comments were limited to two minutes. The following members of the public gave public remarks:

Mark Turner
Theresa Khayyam
Patricia Valladrez
Vicki Graves
Jimmy Boehm
Roger Womack

Darius Knight
Jean Johnson
Cary Johnson
Penelope Perkins
Deborah Fuller
Crystal Evans

Shjuann Vilo
Rosalyn Williamson
James Brown
Lorie Adams
Donna Dawson

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
- Upcoming Procurement Projects List – No questions

VII. **Consent Agenda Items (deferred from the July Board meeting):**

- StrIDe Memorandum of Understanding (M-A-24-014) – Ms. Dauphin thanked WeGo for providing this service to the schools.
- MTA/RTA WeGo Ride Program Revenue Sharing Agreement (M-A-24-015)
- MTA/RTA Contract Renewal for Regional Transit Services (M-A-24-016)
- MTA/RTA Management Contract Renewal (M-A-24-017)
- FY2025 Proposed Operating Budget (M-A-24-021):
- Access Improvement Study Public Feedback and Policy Recommendations (M-A-24-022):

Ms. Dauphin made a motion to approve the consent agenda items. Vice Chair Miller seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved it.

VIII. **Operations & Finance Committee Report:** There were no Operations and Finance (O & F) discussion items for this meeting.

IX. **New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report:** Vice Chair Miller introduced the following items for discussion:

b. **Authorization for Period of Exclusive Negotiation – Upper Dickerson Pike Transit Center (M-A-24.024):** Felix Castrodad and Chase Markham with Holladay Ventures presented the following item for discussion and action:

The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (dba WeGo Public Transit) is advancing its nMotion Strategic Service Plan, which includes the development of more than 12 neighborhood and regional transit centers throughout Davidson County. These centers aim to connect multiple bus routes and other mobility options such as enhanced pedestrian access, bike-share, micro-mobility, taxi service, rideshare, and park and rides. The goal is to encourage denser development around these centers, promote greater transit usage, and reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicles. They will also improve mobility for nearby residents and visitors by providing more direct connections to various city areas without needing to travel downtown.

On May 3, 2024, Nashville MTA received an unsolicited proposal from Holladay Ventures to enter into a joint development agreement for their "Artist Lofts" affordable housing project. The project site spans 38.76 acres on Upper Dickerson Pike and is expected to include up to 450 rental units, 20 townhomes for first-time homebuyers, and 65 single-family homes, developed in phases with different financing structures. Holladay Ventures proposes to include a WeGo Public Transit Center on a portion of the property fronting Dickerson Pike.

The unsolicited proposal met the requirements of the Authority's policy and expressed an intent to comply with all necessary regulatory requirements from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT). After an initial review, the proposal was deemed to have sufficient merit to proceed to the second step of the unsolicited proposals process—a period of open competition.

To ensure competitive consideration, the Procurement Department published a Request for Information (RFI) on June 12, 2024. This RFI provided other property owners with the opportunity to submit proposals for the Upper Dickerson Pike Transit Center. The solicitation was advertised on WeGo's website, TransitTalent, and emailed to known developers LDG Development and Guerrier Development. The RFI (2024158) closed on July 15, 2024, with no additional responses received.

Before proceeding with the next phase of the unsolicited proposal process, which involves requesting more details, drafting terms and conditions, and conducting a thorough evaluation, the Agency seeks board approval to enter a period of exclusive negotiation with Holladay Ventures. During this period, the Authority will engage professional support services (design, real estate advisory, appraisal, legal, etc.) to assist in discussions and negotiations and to conduct necessary due diligence. If negotiations are successful, the project will move forward only after the Board of Directors approves a joint development agreement and any required regulatory approvals.

The professional services required for this phase will be supported through the Agency's existing indefinite quantity indefinite delivery (IDIQ) contracts, using previously allocated funding for transit center projects from the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County. The format for this "period of exclusive negotiation" mirrors what was recently adopted by the Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (RTA) for a similar project at Donelson Station.

Staff recommended that the Nashville MTA Board of Directors authorize a period of exclusive negotiation with Holladay Ventures for the development of a transit center as part of their Artist Lofts project on the Upper Dickerson Pike. The period of exclusive negotiation is to extend through July 31, 2026. During this period, the Agency will neither solicit nor entertain proposals for similar projects in this general geographic area. Any final joint development agreement, long-term lease, property acquisition action, or project activity will require additional Board authorization. The Agency will expend funds previously allocated to transit center development for activities supporting this joint development negotiation, but any specific professional service that exceeds staff purchasing Authority will come back to the Board for authorization.

The NICE Committee made a motion to approve the Authorization for Period of Exclusive Negotiation – Upper Dickerson Pike Transit Center action item. Ms. Dauphin seconded the motion; the Board unanimously approved it.

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

1. WeGo was delighted to join Mayor O'Connell and Members of the Metropolitan Council last Friday to celebrate two important milestones for public transportation in Nashville. The first was the commemoration of our 300th sheltered bus stop, located in the Bordeaux neighborhood. Providing safe, dignified, protected locations for our riders to access transit is a critical part of our mission, and our 300th sheltered stop is an important milestone in this ongoing process. The Nashville MTA was formed in 1973, and it took us more than 40 years to get to our 100th sheltered stop. Over the past ten years, we've more than tripled that number and continue to add more. The particular stop we celebrated last week in Bordeaux – at Clarksville Highway and Fairview Drive – is particularly symbolic of improvements in mobility, as it provides immediately adjacent access to healthy food with a Kroger grocery store across

the street, cultural resources, and access to voting at the Bordeaux Library diagonally across the intersection, and access to healthcare at the new Nashville Healthcare Center Bordeaux – a clinical facility opened this past February by Nashville General Hospital. We were pleased to have Dr. Webb, the CEO of Nashville General Hospital, join us at the ribbon cutting. Another important element of this project was the work of our partner agencies – TDOT and the Nashville Department of Transportation and Multimodal Infrastructure (NDOT). This section of Clarksville Pike was part of a major TDOT project to improve safety and traffic flow in the area, and the project incorporated sidewalks and protected crossings at the intersection adjacent to this stop. It was an excellent event for all WeGo. CEO Bland specifically acknowledged the work of WeGo's Engineering Group, including Lydia Benda, Kia Lewis, and Brian Thompson, as well as the Facilities and Transit Stops Teams led by Patrick Hester and Dnese Nicolosi.

2. The second milestone was Mayor O'Connell's ceremonial signing of legislation to allow the Choose How You Move dedicated funding ballot initiative to be placed on the November ballot. On July 16, Mayor O'Connell signed legislation to put the "Choose How You Move" dedicated funding ballot initiative on the November ballot. The Metropolitan Council unanimously adopted Ordinance BL-2024-427 with 32 co-sponsors. The proposal will now proceed to the Elections Commission for formal inclusion in the November ballot.
3. This month, WeGo celebrates the careers of Director of Operations Carolyn Riggs-Farrar and Operations Manager Cynthia Whitehead, whose contributions have been pivotal to WeGo's service reliability and growth. Both Ms. Riggs-Farrar and Ms. Whitehead have played essential roles in enhancing operations, particularly through the pandemic, during which we maintained uninterrupted service. While their daily contributions will be deeply missed, we are pleased to announce the promotion of Anthony Jones to Operations Manager. Mr. Jones, a 10-year WeGo veteran and Army veteran, has extensive knowledge of operations and has consistently excelled in handling challenging assignments. In his new role, he will oversee the Operations Supervision team, including the Street Supervisors and Radio Control team.
4. At next month's Board meeting, CEO Bland will introduce the two newest additions to WeGo's Executive Team. Amanda Vandegrift will join us as Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Finance and Administration starting this Monday. Ms. Vandegrift comes from Infrastrategies, a consulting firm specializing in financial planning and modeling for the transportation industry. She has considerable experience with our financial planning, notably as the lead consultant for the Choose How You Move Transportation Improvement Program. Debbie Frank will begin her role as Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Growth and Development the following Monday. Ms. Frank, a native Nashvillian, returns from Atlanta, where she served as the Director of Transit Oriented Development at MARTA. Both Ms. Vandegrift and Ms. Frank will offer brief introductions to their backgrounds and their approaches at the upcoming board meeting.
5. This past Sunday, WeGo conducted a soft opening of the Dr. Ernest Rip Patton Jr. North Nashville Transit Center (NNTC). Buses and customers are now using the facility. The contractor is addressing punch list items, including the completion of the plaza and its cultural elements. A dedication ceremony will be scheduled once these elements are finalized.
6. WeGo is collaborating with the Titans, city departments, and the East Bank Development team to improve transit options for major events at Nissan Stadium. Recent adjustments have been made to dedicated lanes to enhance service reliability. WeGo is optimistic that public transportation will become a viable option due to constricted on-site parking. WeGo will continue to operate Titans Express service with the WeGo Star for all home games.
7. On the RTA side:

- a. WeGo is advancing land acquisition for a permanent park-and-ride location in Murfreesboro. The church landowner's Board has approved the sale, and we await approval from the Tennessee Secretary of State to proceed with the closing and design.
- b. Hatch Engineering is working with the railroad to model a preferred scenario. Recently, we've had public outreach sessions in Davidson and Wilson Counties to share information about potential service improvements, including later weekday trains, Saturday service, and expanded Sunday special event services. Final recommendations will be presented to the RTA Board this fall, with a subsequent presentation to the Nashville MTA Board.

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

Board Chair Carr Williams began by expressing her appreciation and congratulations to Ms. Riggs-Farrar and Ms. Whitehead on their retirement. She also thanked Ms. Lewis for her efforts on the NNTC project and for the site visit she will be conducting immediately following the meeting.

Chair Carr Williams highlighted the excitement surrounding the recent 300th shelter installation event, noting it was a significant milestone.

Chair Carr Williams then proposed that the Board consider implementing a Free Fare Day on Election Day. Vice Chair Miller made a motion to approve the initiative, which was seconded by Ms. Dauphin. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

In closing, Chair Carr Williams announced that the August 22nd board meeting will be rescheduled to August 29.

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

XIII. Adjournment: With no further business, Vice Chair Miller moved to adjourn the meeting, which adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary