



MINUTES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

September 18, 2024

- I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (RTA) Executive Committee was held at the Greater Nashville Regional Council located at 44 Vantage Way., Nashville, TN 37228 on Wednesday, September 18, 2024. A quorum of the RTA Executive Committee was established, and the meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Board Chair Mayor Randall Hutto.

Executive Committee Members in Attendance:

Mayor Randall Hutto – Wilson County, Chair
Mayor Paige Brown – City of Gallatin, Vice Chair
Mayor Freddie O'Connell – Davidson County
Mayor Ken Moore – City of Franklin
Mayor Billy Vogle – Robertson County
Nicole Rowan – Sumner County (Gov. Appt.)
Ken Davis – Wilson County (Gov. Appt.)
Kelly Dannenfelser – Williamson County (Gov. Appt.)

Others Present:

Matthew White – City of Mt. Juliet (Alt.)
Jim Kerr – City of Murfreesboro (Alt.)
Mayor Mike Callis – City of Portland
Gerald Herman – City of White House (Alt.)
Mayor Jim Hagaman – City of Spring Hill
Ray Render – Congressman John Rose Office

Mayor Hutto introduced WeGo's new leadership team, featuring Debbie Frank as Deputy CEO of Growth & Development and Amanda Vandegrift as Deputy CEO of Finance and Administration. Both leaders shared their backgrounds and expressed enthusiasm for contributing to WeGo Public Transit.

Additionally, Mayor Hutto welcomed Mayor Hagaman of the City of Spring Hill, who shared his excitement about joining the RTA Board and advancing transportation initiatives in the south corridor of Williamson and Maury counties.

- II. **Approval of Minutes:** Mayor Bell motioned to approve the June 26, 2024, meeting minutes; Mayor Moore seconded the motion, and the Executive Committee unanimously approved it.
- III. **Public Comments:** The following members of the public left public comments:
- Lorie Adams

IV. Finance Committee Report: Mayor Moore presented the following for discussion and action:

- a. **Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget (R-D-24-016):** Deputy CEO of Finance & Administration Vandegrift presented the Monthly Financials for the month of July 2024, compared to the budget and a balance sheet as of July 31, 2024, with the Executive Committee and was available for questions and there were no questions or further discussions.
- b. **Resolution of FY2025 Annual Grant Application (R-A-24-015):** Grants Administrator Billy Higgins presented the Resolution of FY2025 Annual Grant Application action item at the meeting.

Mayor Moore motioned to approve the Resolution of the FY2025 Annual Grant Application; Ed Cole seconded the motion, and the Executive Committee unanimously approved it.

V. Operations Committee Report: Committee Chair Mayor Rick Bell presented the following items for discussion and action:

- a. **Monthly Operating Statistics (R-D-24-017):** Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke reviewed the RTA Monthly Dashboard Report through the month of July 2024 with the Executive Committee and was available for questions.

Mr. Cole inquired about tracking work return rates, to which Mr. Burke responded and emphasized the need for a deeper analysis. He noted that hybrid and remote work models are likely to remain, making it essential to understand how employees want to utilize these options. Mr. Burke highlighted the importance of exploring new partnerships and how people plan to use the train, both during the week and on weekends. He pointed out that there are opportunities to adapt the business model to current demands, focusing on how services can benefit not only commuters but also others.

CEO Bland added that they receive data from Nashville Downtown Partnerships, which helps track ridership trends in relation to office attendance. He noted a significant drop in ridership on Mondays and Fridays compared to the middle of the week, reflecting the impact of work patterns on transit usage.

Ms. Rowan inquired about potential community impact partnerships. Mr. Burke mentioned that while discussions are still in the development stages, they currently have a partnership with the Nashville Soccer Club (NSC) and the Tennessee Titans, and the sales team is exploring additional opportunities. He encouraged anyone with suggestions to share their ideas. CEO Bland added that WeGo is also collaborating with the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) on their choice lane initiatives, highlighting ongoing efforts to enhance community partnerships.

- b. **Request to extend the Period of Exclusive Negotiations for Joint Development of Donelson Station (R-A-24-016):** Deputy CEO of Growth & Development Frank presented the following:

On June 13, 2022, RTA received an unsolicited proposal from H.G. Hill and Southeast Venture (HGH/SV) to lease land near the Donelson Station for a mixed-use development, including housing and retail, aimed at enhancing the station and generating long-term revenue. The project also includes a transit center for bus services to the airport. After following the necessary procedures, the RTA Board approved a 24-month exclusive negotiation period to develop a formal agreement with HGH/SV. Significant progress has been made, including securing nearly \$23 million in funding for infrastructure improvements. However, more time is needed to finalize designs and agreements.

Mayor Hagaman asked what Fifty Forward was. CEO Bland explained that it was a senior services-type facility for senior citizens. He said one of the issues that the developer is facing is, the land that Fifty Forward is on is donated land with a deed restriction that says that it be used for those type of services. Separate from RTA, our project can move independent of that. Discussions are underway in regard to demolishing Fifty Forward's current facility and temporarily relocating them to an adjacent

property owned by the developer, and then have Fifty Forward function on the new ground floor with senior housing up above.

Mayor O'Connell welcomed Ms. Frank to the team and highlighted her expertise in Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), which is crucial for creating vibrant, accessible spaces that promote public transit use. Secondly, he acknowledged the contributions of Mayor Hutto and the board in advancing the Hamilton Springs project, emphasizing the positive impact of the new Donelson Library for RTA passengers and the overall enhancement of local transit services. His mention of Congressman Rose and federal support underscores the importance of collaboration for funding these initiatives.

Mayor Moore asked for clarification on the financial aspects of the project, and Ms. Frank confirmed that the total financial package amounts to \$38 million, with \$15 million still pending approval or allocation.

The RTA staff recommended extending the exclusive negotiation period by an additional 12 months to ensure all aspects are properly addressed before presenting final terms to the Board for approval. An update will be provided at the October 7th meeting, with further discussions planned for October.

Mr. Cole motioned to approve the Request to Extend the Period of Exclusive Negotiations for Joint Development of Donelson Station; Mayor O'Connell seconded the motion, and the Executive Committee unanimously approved it.

- c. **WeGo Star Future Direction Study Recommendations Update (R-D-24-018)**: Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad provided an update on the Star preferred option.

The Star Future Direction Study kicked off in 2023 to evaluate the most effective use of the line to meet current needs while building a consensus as to how to best position the Star to offer future enhanced service. The project was intended to evaluate options for the short, medium, and long-term investments predicated on a business case approach that considers funding availability and regional demand.

At the RTA Board's meeting in February 2024, Dave Genova, Hatch's Project Manager for the study, presented on the Star's strengths, the ridership trends over time, overall Star's performance on the corridor, and the challenges to make the Star more effective. A summary of the short- and long-term alternatives for the corridor was discussed and the Executive Committee was in favor of advancing the short-term alternatives for more detailed analysis and presented those to conduct public outreach.

During the month of July, RTA staff held public meetings in Davidson and Wilson counties to present the alternatives and gather feedback from the public on a Transit Plan preferred option for future implementation. The preferred short-term option includes service improvements like weekday evening service, weekend service, a mid-day bus option, mobility on demand around Wilson County stations, and additional capital enhancements to support the service. All of these improvements are within the Federal Railroad Administration's Positive Train Control implementation exemption.

The RTA East Corridor Committee is expected to meet on October 7th to discuss funding viability and next steps, and the plan will be presented to the RTA Board of Directors for adoption at its October 2024 meeting.

There was general discussion.

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

CEO Bland announced a Joint Committee meeting involving the Finance, Operations, and East Corridor committees would take place on October 7, 2024, at the Elizabeth Duff Transit Center at WeGo Central.

He encouraged all interested parties to attend to learn more about the Star Future Vision Study and Donelson Station Joint Development projects and engage with the ongoing initiatives in the area.

- VII. Chair's Report:** Mayor Hutto echoed Mayor O'Connell's sentiments, recognizing Mayor Bell's family as a significant contributor to the success of Hamilton Springs. He expressed his appreciation for their involvement and impact on the community.
- VIII. Other Business:** There was no other business.
- IX. Adjournment:** With no further business, Mayor Hutto motioned to adjourn the meeting, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Ed Cole, RTA Secretary & Davidson County
Governor Appointee