

# Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority

## Board of Directors Meeting

September 26, 2024

I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at the Tennessee Bankers Association located at 211 Athens Way, Nashville, TN 37228, on Thursday, September 26, 2024.

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

Gail Carr Williams, Chair	Debbie Frank, Deputy CEO of Growth & Dev
Janet Miller, Vice Chair	Amanda Vandegrift, Deputy CEO of Finance & Admin
Jessica Dauphin, Member	Nick Oldham, CSSO
Aron Thompson, Member	Andy Burke, COO
Kathryn Sasser, Member	Vince Malone, COSA
Margaret Behm, Board Secretary	Billy Higgins, Capital Grants Administrator
Stephen Bland CEO	
Monica Howse, Sr. Exec. Asst. & Bd. Liaison	

A quorum was established, and Board Chair Carr Williams called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

III. **Approval of Minutes:** Vice Chair Miller made a motion to approve the August 29 Nashville MTA Board minutes. Kathryn Sasser seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the minutes.

IV. **Public Comments:** Chair Carr Williams 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:

- John Bull

V. **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

VI. **Consent Agenda Items:**

a. **Resolution for FY2024 Annual Grant Application (M -A-24-027):** – Ms. Dauphin inquired if the staff could provide a brief explanation of the grants WeGo is seeking. Ms. Higgins directed everyone's attention to page 17, which contained a listing of the grants and she reviewed the primary grants that WeGo relies on.

Mr. Thompson made a motion to approve the consent agenda items. Ms. Dauphin seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved it.

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

a. **Myatt CDL Construction Contract Award (M-A-24-028):** Deputy COO of Assets & Infrastructure Patrick Hester provided the following item for action:

The WeGo Public Transit Training Department plays a crucial role in developing new employees and maintaining high service and safety standards. It trains and tests operators, mechanics, supervisors, and service staff to ensure operational efficiency, competency, and compliance.

WeGo stands out among Tennessee transit agencies by having certified inspectors on staff, authorized by the State Department of Safety and Homeland Security, to administer CDL testing and issue licenses. This capability is vital for efficient training and certification of new operators, directly impacting service reliability. In order to retain this certification, WeGo must maintain facilities with road testing elements as required by Department regulations.

Currently, the Myatt Drive facility has one state-certified CDL training area, but an expansion plan aims to utilize the entire bus lot, create a second certified lot, and double annual practice and testing capacity. The project also includes enhancements for safety and customer service, such as on-street training areas, designs for level platform boarding, simulations of environments that see high accident frequency, and roadeo course training. This expansion and these enhancements will be crucial for the agency to continue to advance service expansion efforts, as well as to improve safety through the retraining of existing operators.

Staff requested the Board's approval for the CEO to enter into a fixed-price contract with BC Mason Group to expand and improve the Myatt CDL Training Lots, with a total contract budget of \$744,817.50 and an additional \$148,963.50 (20%) for unforeseen changes, bringing the total project budget to \$893,781. The contract is set for 120 calendar days, with funding from the agency's capital plan utilizing Federal 5307 funds, along with state and local matching funds. The Operations and Finance Committee recommended approving the Myatt CDL Construction Contract Award, and it was approved by the Board unanimously.

**VIII. New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report:** There were no NICE Committee items for discussion or action this month.

Although there were no items for discussion or action, Ms. Carr Williams announced that the committee would be chaired by Aron Thompson moving forward. Ms. Carr-Williams expressed her gratitude to outgoing NICE Committee Chair Janet Miller for her leadership and thanked Mr. Aron Thompson for agreeing to take on the role of chairing the committee.

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

1. CEO Bland recognized WeGo's new leadership team members: Amanda Vandegrift (Deputy CEO of Finance and Administration), who is enhancing internal controls and streamlining processes, including electronic payments; and Debbie Frank (Deputy CEO for Growth and Development), who is actively working on short-term transit projects in Antioch, Donelson, and Upper Dickerson Pike, engaging with developers and Metro Departments on design and regulatory processes. He expressed his appreciation for the way they've hit the ground running.
2. Last month, we proudly announced our community impact partnership with the Tennessee Titans, who are covering costs to make all rides on WeGo Public Transit free on home game days. This initiative is making a noticeable difference in Nashville. For the September 15 game against the Jets, around 800 people boarded and alighted buses at stops near Nissan Stadium—about double the usual number. Subsequent games saw ridership jump from 800 to 1,300, in addition to approximately 1,200 trips on the WeGo Star to and from the game. In a creative nod from Nashville's youth, the Senior Class at East Nashville Magnet High School is running a fundraiser that encourages parking at the high school on Gallatin Pike and taking the free bus to Titans games. Proceeds will directly benefit the senior class, so a big shout-out to these students: park at East, ride the bus, and support the Class of 2025! We are continuing to collaborate with the Titans, MNP, and NDOT to enhance operations on game days. CEO Bland also extended special thanks to Zeda Riggs and our Customer Care Team, as well as Andy Burke, Gabe Burgess, and the Operations Team, along with Patrick Hester, Dnese Nicolosi, and the Stop and Shelter team for their invaluable support.

3. This past month, the DTO Bargaining team completed negotiations with Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1235 on a new collective bargaining agreement. This agreement was ratified by the membership in the last two weeks. The new contract is going through a final review by both parties before being published in the coming weeks. It extends through June 30, 2027. He thanked Bill Miller, Andy Burke, Vince Malone, and Shelly McElhaney for their hard work on the bargaining team. He especially thanked ATU President Tracy Ward and her leadership team for a highly productive bargaining process. Ed Oliphant would be proud, as the final settlement stayed within the financial envelope we had projected, but Tracy's Members should also be proud because it just barely stayed in.
4. CEO Bland expressed gratitude to all members who attended the unveiling of the new mural honoring Elizabeth Duff at the Elizabeth Duff Transit Center in WeGo Central. Created by the nonprofit organization Creative Girls Rock, the mural pays tribute not only to Ms. Duff but to all public transportation employees, featuring many faces of actual WeGo staff. Creative Girls Rock is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to educating and empowering young girls and women to harness their creative talents for personal and community enhancement. On the day of the unveiling, several employees approached to point out their likenesses on the mural proudly. Special thanks were given to Kia Lewis for managing the project and to Charmin Bates, Executive Director of Creative Girls Rock, for their collaboration in bringing this beautiful tribute to life.
5. On September 14, WeGo held its Annual Bus and Maintenance Roadeo at the Myatt Drive Facility, showcasing both driving and mechanical skills. Contestants navigated an obstacle course while top technicians diagnosed faults in bus subsystems.

Winners in the 40' bus competition were:

- **1st Place:** Kevin Sentes / **2nd Place:** Jerome Horton / **3rd Place:** Eric Liggett

Winners of the van competition were:

- **1st Place:** Scott Wallace / **2nd Place:** Kevin Sentes / **3rd Place:** Joyce Banks

Winners of the Bus Maintenance Competition were:

- **1st Place:** Jeremy Hensley/**2nd Place:** Troy Willis.

In the Van Maintenance Competition:

- **1st Place:** Francis Winston.

CEO Bland expressed gratitude to all WeGo staff for their support, especially the judges, course setters, and spectators, with special recognition for Safety Manager Earl Rhodes, who led the event—the day featured family-friendly activities, including barbecue and balloon animals. Eric Liggett received special mention for his impressive performance under pressure, finishing 3rd in the 40' bus competition despite challenging conditions. The event was further highlighted by the attendance of Mayor Freddie O'Connell and his daughter, who rode on Eric's bus during his run—definitely adding to the pressure! Overall, it was a fantastic day celebrating driving and mechanical excellence.

6. WeGo recently met with representatives from the Mayor's Office, Metro Planning, and Metro Finance to present our requests for Metro's 2024 Capital Spending Plan. This annual allocation funds capital projects across all departments, and this year's requests were mainly influenced by the upcoming November 5 ballot measure.

We submitted three levels of requests:

- If the ballot measure fails: Projects necessary to maintain current service levels and support our core mission.

- If the ballot measure passes, projects already included in Metro's Capital Improvement Budget will be aimed at expanding service.
- Projects for quick advancement: Initiatives we'd like to add to the Capital Improvement Budget if the ballot measure passes.

The discussions were productive, with Finance and Planning staff asking insightful questions. While no promises were made, WeGo appreciates the opportunity to share the capital program priorities.

7. CEO Bland and Andy Burke recently met with its consultants from Stantec to discuss the upcoming Zero Emissions Fleet Transition Plan workshop. They are excited about the format and content planned for the October 18 Board and Stakeholder Workshop, which promises to be both engaging and insightful. The workshop will take place on Friday, October 18, from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the Convention and Visitors Corporation in Capitol View, located at 500 11th Avenue North, Suite 650. We'll be serving coffee and a light breakfast to kick off the event. WeGo looks forward to meaningful discussions with stakeholders!

8. On the RTA side:

a. At their meeting last week, the RTA Board extended the exclusive negotiation period with HG Hill and Southeast Venture for the joint development at Donelson Station. Progress on this project is moving smoothly; earlier this week, we met with the developer and Metro Planning to address any concerns regarding the overall project scope, and the discussion went very well. We have submitted the environmental clearance documentation to the FTA. Once we receive the record of the decision, we can begin design activities on the public infrastructure aspects of the project. This will include improvements to the quiet zone, the creation of a transit center, and various station enhancements.

The Titan's Express is back in operation this year, and it's been a hit! Trains for both regular season home games have sold out, accommodating around 1,200 riders per game. It's great to see such strong support for this service!

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

Board Chair Carr Williams thanked CEO Bland for his leadership through all of the exciting happenings in Nashville. She said the meeting covered a lot of important topics, from community engagement at the Rodeo to the unveiling of the mural. She reflected on the excitement and positive community spirit surrounding the mural's unveiling, acknowledging the artists' contributions. She said the support and collaboration between the Duff and Patton families also stood out, adding a personal touch to Nashville's legacy-building efforts in Nashville.

In closing, Chair Carr Williams echoed Ms. Miller's thoughts on the importance of ridership to Titans games, noting that it creates opportunities for broader community engagement. Both emphasized the importance of voting and encouraged everyone to participate in the upcoming referendum.

Chair Carr Williams yielded her time to Ms. Jessica Dauphin, who provided a recap of the APTA Board Members Seminar she attended.

Key Takeaways from the Seminar:

- Governance Philosophy
- Collaborative Board CEO Staff
- Proactive Strategic Planning
- Risk Management

- Engaging with the Community

Strengths of WeGo:

- Risk Assessments
- Proactive Strategic Planning
- Strong Board-Ceo-Staff Communications

Aspirational actions:

- Evaluate
- Engage
- Assess
- Support

These insights will help guide WeGo's future initiatives and enhance its governance practices.

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

**XII. Adjournment:** With no further business, Vice Chair Miller moved to adjourn the meeting, which adjourned at 3:29 p.m.

**Attested:**

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**Gail Carr Williams**  
*Chair*

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**Margaret L. Behm**  
*Secretary*