

Study underway to determine best transit option along West End

An alternatives analysis study is underway for Nashville's Broadway/West End corridor.

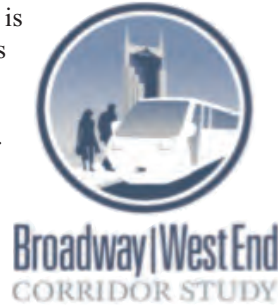
It will identify the transit needs and preferred transportation investment for the corridor by examining all feasible high capacity transit options such as Urban Street Car, Light Rail Transit (LRT) or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

The study also has been structured to meet existing Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements, as well as policy initiatives for Livable and Sustainable Communities. This will position Nashville favorably to compete for federal funds to help design and build one of the three modes.

"Our strategic master plan identified this corridor as one with tremendous opportunity for growth and transit capacity. From the riverfront, down the heart of Broadway, through major academic, hospitality and healthcare corridors, we expect the opportunities for transit-oriented development and ridership to be exceptional. So we're delighted to be embarking on this study," MTA Board Chair Thomas F. "Freddie" O'Connell said.

In January, the MTA Board voted to award the transportation alternatives analysis study to Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB), which competed with three other top firms for the job.

"I am pleased the MTA Board took this action, which is the very first step in making the investments that need to be made in improving the way our citizens and visitors travel along this extremely busy and vital corridor," Metro Nashville Davidson



County Mayor Karl Dean said. Drivers travel in bumper-to-bumper traffic on West End daily. A special study is underway to examine feasible high-capacity transit options such as Light Rail, BRT or Urban Street Car to improve travel on the Broadway/West End corridor.

County Mayor Karl Dean said.

The PB project team will do significant data collection and analysis, and seek the involvement of those who work, live, or frequently travel along the Broadway/West End corridor through focus groups, interactive web-based programs, social media, neighborhood group meetings, transit surveys, and meetings with area businesses. There also will be extensive coordination with other stakeholders through two key committees:

continued on page 6

From the CEO



Paul J. Ballard

A tremendous amount of work is taking place throughout our organizations and within our community on behalf of public transit. We had one of our busiest, challenging and most successful years to date in 2010, and each day we continue to see the rewards of our efforts. Not only have we worked hard to grow transit in the region, we have also overcome many unexpected obstacles such as the historic Nashville Flood.

continued on page 3

New BusLink service begins in Antioch

On March 28, a new BusLink on-demand shuttle service began in the Antioch community.

Passengers needing a ride in the Antioch zone simply call 862-LINK (5465) and give the scheduler their pick-up and drop-off locations. The scheduler provides a pick-up window. Passengers then walk to their stop and wait for the BusLink van. For the return trip, passengers repeat the previous three steps.

For those needing to travel outside of the zone, they can transfer to a Route 15 Murfreesboro Road bus. Once each hour, BusLink has a scheduled connection with Route 15 at Murfreesboro Road and Bell Road at Stop 55. Customers may also schedule a pick-up time at this stop.

Service is available from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and costs the same as a regular bus fare (\$1.60 for adults, 80 cents for seniors or people with disabilities, and \$1.05 for youth, ages 19 and younger). All MTA ticket media are honored on BusLink, including multi-ride tickets and passes.



Mayor Dean on board promoting transit and receiving customer feedback

Nashville Mayor Karl Dean continues his series of early morning bus rides throughout Metro Nashville Davidson County in 2011.

The “Mayor On Board” bus rides take place on a regular basis each month to provide an opportunity for the mayor to experience all of the major Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) bus routes and promote the many benefits of public transit.

“Our mayor is committed to working with us to improve the public transit options for our citizens,” said MTA/RTA CEO Paul J. Ballard, who has accompanied Mayor Dean on his bus rides. “Every opportunity he has to promote public transportation, he does.”

Mayor Dean, who is a regular bus rider,



CEO Paul J. Ballard (left) joins Nashville Mayor Karl Dean on one of the Mayor on Board bus rides. Mayor Dean, a regular bus rider, has ridden on six of MTA's busiest routes during his monthly bus rides.

has joined riders on several of MTA's busiest routes: 3 West End, 4 Shelby, 10 Charlotte, 15 Murfreesboro Road, 22 Bordeaux and 56 Gallatin Road BRT. Last October, he joined the three Wilson County mayors and Mt. Juliet city manager as well as Ballard on the Music City Star regional train.

“Riding public transit is a great way to talk with people about how we can make it even better,” said Dean, who rides the bus to work at least one day a week. “We need to do all we can to encourage more people to ride the bus. We need to invest in mass transit.”



From the CEO

continued from page 1

We should all be very proud of the great progress we are making and the accomplishments we have achieved along the way. For example, we:

- Planned and implemented a new, free downtown circulator service in spring 2010, then expanded the popular service, which had monthly ridership as high as 20,000 during the summer;
- Launched a new Madison Connector route to replace the highly successful BusLink on-demand service in the Madison area;
- Purchased and placed 14 new 60-foot hybrid buses and 35 new paratransit vans into the fleet;
- Overcame the historic Nashville flood, which devastated MTA's main facility, damaged one-third of the fleet, and caused an extremely rare suspension in service;
- Ordered 25 new 40 foot Gillig buses that were delivered in the first quarter of 2011 to replace flood-damaged vehicles;

- Successfully negotiated and purchased the former Peterbilt truck plant for MTA's new headquarters and heavy maintenance operations facility; partnered with Metro Nashville Davidson County government, which will build a police precinct and DNA crime lab within the complex;
- Received a \$1.2 million federal grant to fully fund a West End transit study;
- Completed another successful year of managing the Music City Star and other Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) services, with both regional bus and train ridership increasing significantly;
- Increased ridership on two of RTA's newest regional bus routes: 91X Franklin/Brentwood Express and 95X Spring Hill Express;
- Became the first transit system in the nation to install “phone blox,” a new device that provides a physical barrier between a cell phone or other electronic device and bus operator during the operation of a vehicle.
- Won a distinguished Gold Award for

Safety from the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) for piloting the “phone blox” equipment on our bus fleet.

- Took home a “Big Wheel Award” in the 40-foot bus division at the annual Tennessee Public Transportation Association Roadeo;
- Won several other awards including a Green Service of the Year Award, Fexy Award, Music City Brand Champion recognition, and was voted by the *Nashville Scene* as “Best New Mass Transit” for the implementation of the Music City Circuit.

Several new projects are underway for 2011, which are part of our Strategic Transit Master Plan. These include:

- Establishing a new BusLink service in Antioch, and
- Completing a West End transit study,

I want to thank each of you for your commitment to our customers and our company.



Passenger trades in car for bus *Blogs about being carless in Nashville*

Kenya Stevens didn't plan to become a bus rider and avid transit supporter. Fate, however, had other ideas.

It started two years ago when Stevens began riding the bus because her family shared one car. As a full-time employee at the University School of Nashville and a student at Belmont University, there were times when the car simply wasn't available. If she needed to go to school but her husband and 11-year-old son needed to go home, she would just take the bus and let them take the car.

A year ago, the Stevens' only car broke down. The family opted not to spend more money to fix it or make a car payment to replace it. Instead, they opted to use public transportation to get around Nashville.

"We had to make a choice to either take our child out of the private school where he is thriving and have a car payment or find alternative transportation. The choice was obvious," she said.

Today, public transit is her family's only means of transportation. It's cost effective and convenient.

Living in East Nashville, the family rides Route 4 Shelby regularly. Stevens and her son work and attend school in the Vanderbilt University area, so they take Route 7 Hillsboro each weekday. Their church is in the Inglewood area, so they ride a Route 26 Gallatin Road or Route 56 Gallatin Road BRT bus to attend.

"The bus stop is literally less than 100 feet from our front door. It doesn't get any more convenient than that," Stevens said. "The bus lets us off at the corner intersection where we work and attend school. We walk less than half a block to get from the bus stop to worship, so we rarely have to go out of our way to the stop or our destination."

In addition to the financial savings, the family has benefited from the time together by walking, talking and sharing as a family. It also has curbed some bad habits.

"We were not usually communicating or enjoying each other's company fully, and I was stressed and hurried, and usually running behind schedule," Stevens said. "We have learned so much and

grown closer as a family from this experience. It has taught us that there are things in life you can do without."

Now, the family takes time to plan their outings around the bus schedule.

"So far, there have not been any places we wanted or needed to go that we couldn't reach by bus," Stevens said. "Sometimes it takes a little investigation to find out which bus goes to a certain destination, but we find it fun to plan our route."

Shopping for groceries is another challenge but not one the Stevens' family couldn't overcome. They purchased a small portable cart for \$25 and make sure they only purchase what they can carry.

"It has worked out quite well," Stevens said. "It takes planning and forethought, but shopping in this way helps us stick to our list and stay within the budget."

Nowadays, when the Stevens' family rides the bus, they are relaxed, sometimes reading a book or just catching up with each other on the day's activities.

"Sometimes, when people see us they recognize us as the 'bus family' or the 'backpack family' because we often all have our backpacks on," Stevens said. "Our (11-year-old) son enjoys being responsible for keeping up with his bus pass and has run ahead to flag down the bus at times when we are lagging behind."

Riding the bus has become a way of life for the Stevens' family. It gives them the "freedom of being able to get wherever I want or need to go without having to ask for a ride or depend on others," even if it means being dependent on the schedule of public transportation.

"Learning the routes and time schedules has become like a game, and once you learn how to master it, it can be quite liberating," Stevens said. "Of course, there are times when we've missed the bus or our connection, but we have learned to be flexible and work around any inconveniences. The benefits far outweigh the difficulties."

Stevens has become such a fan of public transportation that she constantly recounts her positive experiences with her co-workers. She

has had so many great ones that her co-workers encouraged her to share her stories. Thus, she has created her own blog to talk with others about her experiences aboard the city buses.

"They were as amazed as I was that we could navigate so easily on the bus and that we were having so many interesting experiences," Stevens said of her co-workers support for her blog, carlessinnashville.blogspot.com. "They encouraged me to chronicle our experiences so more people in Nashville could know how far local public transportation has come. We all thought it would be a great journey, and so far it has."



Kenya Stevens and her son Miles wait for the bus at 21st and Edgehill. The Stevens family relies solely on public transit to get around Nashville.

MTA installs Phone Blox on all vehicles

Innovative device earns APTA Gold Award for Safety

The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) has installed new equipment that provides additional safety and security for MTA passengers and bus operators.

A design patented by RedLine Electronics, the Phone Blox provides a physical barrier between a cell phone and bus operator during the operation of a vehicle. MTA received a Gold Award for Safety from the American Public



The Phone Blox, a new device that provides additional safety and security for MTA passengers and bus operators, has been installed on all MTA vehicles.



MTA Safety Manager Earl Rhodes and MTA GM of Administration Bob Baulsir display the Gold Award for Safety received from the American Public Transportation Association for the installation of the Phone Blox on all MTA vehicles.

Transportation Association (APTA) for implementing the Phone Blox. MTA is the first transit system in the nation to use this technology.

“With passengers on board and busy streets to navigate, transit operators need to focus 100 percent on driving,” MTA General Manager of Administration Bob Baulsir said. “Phone Blox ensures a high level of focus from operators, thus lowering the risk and likelihood of accidents.”

This device has been installed in the

transit vehicle cab near the operator of all MTA fixed-route buses and also has been installed on all AccessRide vans. Prior to turning on the vehicle, bus operators place personal cell phones and all electronic devices in the padded holding area of the Phone Blox. Upon ignition, the Phone Blox locks and remains locked until the vehicle is turned off.

The pre-trip checklist for all operators has been updated to include this new step of placing all personal phones and electronic devices in the Phone Blox.

Area residents turning to public transportation as gasoline prices soar

Ridership up significantly on buses and train

As gasoline prices soar nationwide, area residents are turning increasingly more to public transportation as their primary means of getting around.

In March, ridership on the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority’s (MTA) bus routes increased nearly 13 percent compared to March a year ago.

The Regional Transportation Authority’s (RTA) services also have seen significant ridership increases. Ridership on all RTA services increased 39 percent in March 2011 compared to March 2010.

“With the recent rise in gas prices, more people are seeking other alternatives to driving their cars, and they are quickly realizing how affordable and convenient public transit can be,”

MTA and RTA Chief Executive Officer Paul J. Ballard said.

The Music City Star in March was up 30 percent compared to last March, and RTA’s regional bus routes experienced an even bigger ridership gain of 48 percent in March 2011 compared to ridership on the same routes a year ago.

Train ridership had increased significantly prior to the recent spike in gas prices. 2010 was a record year for ridership on the Star with 210,196 passenger trips taken compared to 180,673 passenger trips in 2009, a 16 percent increase.

On April 19, 2011, the Star also broke a single-day ridership record with 1,374 passenger trips taken. A record 25,321 passenger trips were taken in March, eclipsing the previous record of 20,465 set the previous month.

Fuel-hedging program provides huge cost savings for Metro, partners \$2 million saved since program began 20 months ago

Thanks to a fuel-hedging program implemented 20 months ago, Metro and area agency partners have saved more than \$2 million in fuel purchases.

After having to reduce some bus service in July 2008 because of fuel price hikes and volatility on the spot market, the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) sought a way to create budget certainty with regard to fuel prices through the use of commodity hedging.

That's when the MTA approached Metro, which agreed to work to create a partnership to facilitate a fuel-hedging program.

"With fuel costs spiraling out of control and the economy in a downturn, it was becoming increasingly difficult for government and agencies to get control of our operating budgets," Metro Finance Director Rich Riebeling said. "MTA's request for assistance gave us the impetus to try to do something about it."

Under the leadership of Riebeling, who was instrumental in creating the partnership and City of Franklin Assistant City Administrator for Finance and Administration Russ Truell, who spearheaded the development of state hedging legislation, an interagency agreement between Metro Fleet, Metro Schools, MTA, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), and the City of Franklin was created to begin the fuel-hedging program.

The partnership currently includes three fuel-hedging contracts for gasoline and seven for diesel fuel, with Metro Schools, Metro Fleet, MTA, RTA and the City of Franklin sharing in the

diesel contracts.

"It had always disturbed me that other than personnel costs, our single biggest budget item was fuel purchases, and it was uncontrollable," Truell said. "Still, we were managing our fuel purchases and overall operating budget pretty well, and then we had Katrina."

"This is a great success story and an example of government working effectively on behalf of taxpayers to save money and operate more efficiently."

— Paul J. Ballard
Nashville MTA/RTA CEO

After Hurricane Katrina, Truell pointed out that fuel costs skyrocketed. Gasoline prices eventually came down, but diesel fuel costs remained high, he said.

"After three years of budget reductions, most government agencies no longer have budgets with any fat in them. And we do not want to be in a position to layoff police or fire department personnel just to purchase fuel as costs continue to rise," Truell said.

Under state fuel-hedging legislation that passed in spring 2009, prices could be locked in for 24 months forward. In

May 2009, Metro and its partners locked in diesel prices for two years at \$1.88 per gallon and proceeded to save a combined total of \$632,811 in fiscal year 2009-10.

During the current 2010-11 fiscal year that began July 1, Metro and its partners already have saved more than \$1.4 million. As fuel prices continue to increase, the partners project to save even more in the second half of the fiscal year.

Truell said he credits local state representatives, the Tennessee Municipal League and the General Assembly for getting the bill passed.

"I give our state legislature a lot of credit for listening to us, for understanding the problem and for doing something about it," he said.

Because of the overwhelming success of the program, the partners have signed a new fuel-hedging contract, effective July 1, 2011, that locks in prices at \$2.32 per gallon through June 30, 2012.

"This is a great success story and an example of government working effectively on behalf of taxpayers to save money and operate more efficiently," Nashville MTA/RTA CEO Paul J. Ballard said. "We see the hedging program as insurance for the unexpected. It mitigates the necessity to reduce services when fuel prices rise dramatically on the spot market and budgets are tight."

"Bottom line, the fuel-hedging program gave us price stabilization for what had become one of our biggest budget line items," Truell said. "We are no longer at the mercy of one single commodity."

Fiscal Year Fuel Savings Summary By Agency

Agency	FY 2009-10	FY 2010-11 YTD (Feb.)	Total
Metro Fleet	\$337,374	\$ 600,680	\$ 938,054
Metro Schools	\$112,661	\$ 319,801	\$ 432,462
City of Franklin	\$ 43,100	\$ 83,542	\$ 126,642
MTA	\$125,589	\$ 392,040	\$ 517,629
RTA	\$ 14,087	\$ 43,961	\$ 58,048
Total	\$632,811	\$1,440,024	\$2,072,835



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MTA begins move into former Peterbilt plant Four bus routes now dispatched from Myatt Drive facility

Renovations continue on the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority's (MTA) new headquarters in Madison after the historic Nashville Flood in May 2010 consumed the MTA facility on Nestor Street.

In late March, some maintenance personnel moved into the facility and four bus routes (26 Gallatin Road, 35X Rivergate Express, 56 Gallatin Road BRT and 76 Madison Connector) began dispatching from the Myatt Drive facility. Administrative staff is expected to move into offices later this summer. Currently, staff is working out of temporary Metro offices on Murfreesboro Road, at the downtown transit station Music City Central, and at the Nestor Street property.

The sale of the former Peterbilt manufacturing facility to MTA and Metro closed in mid-December and work began in January to make the property "move-in ready."

Once complete, it will become the main headquarters for the MTA and Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) administrative offices and heavy maintenance operations. Metro will use the property to house a new police precinct and DNA crime lab.

"This is a huge win for our public transit system, the Madison community, and our city," Nashville MTA CEO Paul J. Ballard said. "The

Nashville MTA Board of Directors and I are pleased we were able to purchase this fantastic facility by partnering with Metro."



The new MTA administrative offices and heavy maintenance operations will be located at the former Peterbilt plant on Myatt Drive in Madison.



MTA's Nestor Street property will continue to be used for dispatching and staging the majority of MTA's fleet as well as light duty maintenance work. Most bus operators will continue to report to Nestor Street to begin their shifts as well as some maintenance personnel who will remain to perform light duty mechanical work.

Maintenance staff work on one of the fleet's articulated buses inside the new garage.

West End study

continued from page 1

- A Technical Advisory Committee includes staff representatives from the MTA, Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Metro Planning, Metro Public Works, Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), and FTA. This technical committee is involved in the development and evaluation of transportation and land use alternatives as well as other study aspects.
- A Corridor Steering Committee includes representatives of local businesses and organizations, and other affected stakeholders to provide additional input. Representatives from the Mayor's Caucus, Transit Alliance of

Middle Tennessee, and Transit Now Nashville also are active partners through the process.

"This is such an exciting time for transit in Middle Tennessee," PB Nashville Area Manager Michelle Kendall said. "We are honored to have been selected for this project that will be such a tremendous benefit to the community."

To pay for this first phase of the study, MTA will use a \$1.2 million federal grant awarded by the FTA.

"We are excited about working with Broadway/West End residents, employees and visitors during the study to discover ways to better link economic development, land use, urban design and the transportation system," PB Project Manager Lynn Purnell said.