

## Bland begins work as new CEO of Nashville MTA, RTA

The Stephen G. Bland era is underway at the Nashville MTA and Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (RTA).

A public transit veteran, Bland has earned widespread praise from transportation professionals, business and community leaders, and transit boards for leading successful teams to overhaul and modernize transit systems. During his 28-year transit career, he has held senior management roles in several agencies of various sizes.

Bland officially began his new duties with MTA/RTA at 4 a.m. on August 25 when he arrived at the Nestor



Steve Bland

Street facility with several dozen boxes of donuts for the bus operators getting ready to begin their shifts.

Since arriving in Nashville, he has quickly immersed himself in the

community. In his first 75 days on the job, he has attended more than 200 meetings with various groups. During the first nine days, he attended 24 meetings, participated in five “Meet and Greets” or “Coffees with the CEO” for staff and met with the Old Hickory Chamber of Commerce.

From Sept. 9 to Oct. 2, Bland met with 21 of the 24 members of the Amp Citizens Advisory Council. Between Sept. 16 and Nov. 10, he met with 24 of the 28 RTA board members/elected officials, as well as with several Metro Council members, the Tennessee Department of Transportation Commis-

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## Fareless Friday scheduled for Black Friday, November 28

For the second year, the Nashville MTA and Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (RTA) are offering free rides on all MTA and RTA buses and the Music City Star the Friday after Thanksgiving, which is known as “Black Friday.” The day is traditionally the first official shopping day of the holiday season.

“We are pleased to offer this opportunity again this year,” MTA Marketing and Planning Committee Chair Freddie O’Connell said. “Not only is it a way to introduce public transit to those who may have never used our services, it’s also a way to say thank you to our loyal customers.”

Last year, Nashville MTA and RTA experienced record weekday ridership compared to past Black Fridays. The routes to and from

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MNPS’ Yasmeeen Mateen and MTA’s Erin Collier produce student ID cards for StriDe.

## StriDe program available for MNPS grades 9-12

In partnership with the Mayor’s Office and Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), Nashville MTA offers StriDe, a new and exciting program that helps students get to and from school and other extracurricular activities via an MTA bus.

Effective this school year, all MNPS students and MNPS Charter schools students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 may ride MTA buses at no cost. This transit partnership works in tandem with regular MNPS bus transportation.

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## Bus operators, mechanics earn honors at Knoxville TPTA Rodeo

Five Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) bus operators and mechanics received awards for their performance in the state championship “rodeo” competition held during the annual TPTA Conference in Knoxville in November.

Bobby Kerce, a former local rodeo winner who was competing in his first state rodeo, brought home the “Big Wrench” for his victory in the van maintenance division. In the bus maintenance division, Troy Willis, a four-time local rodeo champion, finished second, and Kyle Kruk, a three-time local rodeo champion, finished third.

State rodeo veterans Chris Vick and Adrell Stringer also represented MTA well. Vick finished third place in the 35-foot bus division, and Stringer was third in the 40-foot bus division. Vick was making his fourth appearance in the state rodeo, and Stringer was competing in his sixth TPTA rodeo.



Varick Hyde, Chris Vick, Adrell Stringer, Kyle Kruk, Bobby Kerce, and Troy Willis competed in the state rodeo.

MTA also captured the spirit stick for its great support of its MTA rodeo contestants during the state competition.

## StrIDe Program

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“We are pleased to offer this new and exciting program,” MTA/RTA CEO Steve Bland said. “As teenagers, these Metro students will be able to experience public transit, understand its many community benefits and become adults who appreciate its convenience and accessibility.”

High school students’ MNPS ID cards serve as their school ID card, library card and MTA bus pass. The cards are programmed to work on the fare boxes on all MTA buses. Students place their ID above the bulls-eye

located on the fare box and wait for the box to beep. This sound indicates the card has been recognized, and the student will be allowed to board.

“I used my student ID to ride the MTA bus home from Hume-Fogg the first day of school,” said Isabella Ryan, a Hume-Fogg junior who rides MTA buses three to five times per week during the school year. “I got on the bus, put it on the scanner and sat down. It made it easier and faster. It is great. Obviously, it will also reduce pollution if more students ride the bus, so it is a greener way to get to school.”

This youth transit program was

an idea that was championed in Metro’s 2010 child and youth master plan by Councilman Ronnie Steine. In its 2013 education report card, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce recommended expanded youth mobility to allow for more school choice. This pilot program was developed from these two initiatives.

“This program gives our students the freedom to access more of the educational opportunities that we have worked so hard to provide for them,” Nashville Mayor Karl Dean said. “With a bus pass, students can connect to meaningful opportunities that will enhance their educational lives, including student internships with local businesses, dual enrollment at our community colleges and extracurricular activities.”

Students have been issued student ID cards at their respective schools. New school ID cards are non-transferable and are only valid for bus rides on MTA buses in Davidson County. Cost to replace a lost or damaged card is \$5 and can be obtained from their school.

Students utilizing this service must follow the MTA Code of Conduct or face revocation of MTA bus transportation privileges. The Code of Conduct is posted at Music City Central and online at NashvilleMTA.org.



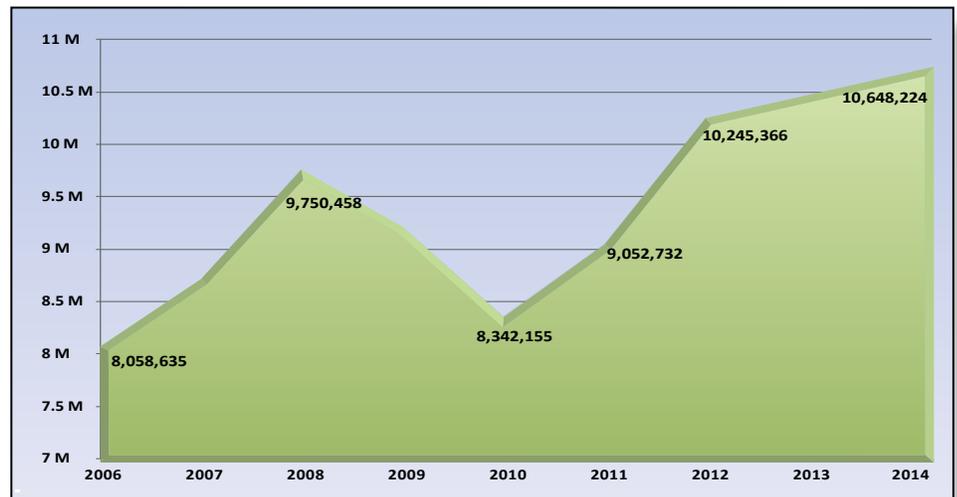
MNPS Students enrolled in grades 9-12 are able to ride MTA buses at no cost.

## MTA/RTA record more than 10 million passenger trips for third year in row

Nashville MTA and RTA jointly recorded more than 10 million passenger trips in a fiscal year for the third straight year.

In fiscal year 2014, which ended on June 30, MTA provided nearly 9.8 million passenger trips to residents, visitors, students, and tourists within Metro Nashville on its buses and vans. RTA recorded more than 850,000 passenger trips on its train, express buses, and vans. Together, they provided nearly 10.7 million passenger trips in the Middle Tennessee region, up nearly 2 percent over the previous fiscal year.

“This ridership is similar to the number of people who flew in and out of the Nashville International Airport during the same time period,” MTA/RTA Communications and Marketing



MTA/RTA ridership increased from 9 million to 10.7 million the last three years.

Director Patricia Harris-Morehead said. Average MTA ridership is approximately 33,000 passenger trips per weekday. Average regional bus

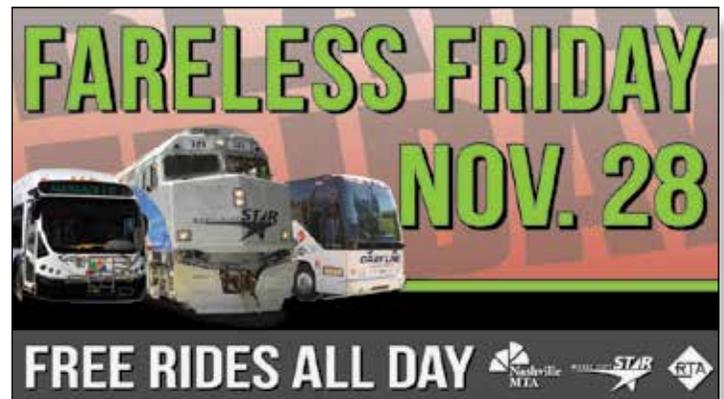
ridership is 1,675 passenger trips per weekday. Ridership on RTA's regional buses is up 13.2 percent over fiscal year 2013.

## Fareless Friday *continued from page 1*

the area shopping malls had the highest number of riders.

The free rides, which last all day and are unlimited, also include RTA express bus services which operate in Murfreesboro, Smyrna, La Vergne, Clarksville, Pleasant View, Joelton, Springfield, Franklin, Brentwood, Gallatin, Hendersonville, Thompson's Station and Spring Hill. The Music City Star operates between Lebanon and Nashville.

Service for both the MTA and RTA will begin early Friday morning on November 28 and will end when the buses and regional train complete their final runs late Friday night.



## Steve Bland *continued from page 1*

sioner, a number of TDOT managers, the local transit union president, other Amalgamated Transit Union officers, and other individuals in his quest to learn his new community.

The Nashville CEO also managed to participate in a national podcast, visit the Hamilton Springs site and future home of RTA's next train station, and participate in a lively panel discussion on using technology to attract ridership at the American Public Transportation's TransitTech workshop during APTA's Annual Meeting. And, he attended his first annual Tennessee Public Transportation Association conference in Knoxville.

“He is the CEO we need for Nashville and the region,” former MTA Board Chair Jeff Yarbrow said. “He thoroughly understands mass transit and also understands the importance of working with partners, building community consensus, and developing a vision for transit based on a genu-

ine understanding of the community. He can help us move to the next level, which is to increase ridership, provide more and better transit options for citizens and visitors, and implement new technologies that will enhance our customers' transit experience.”

Prior to coming to MTA/RTA, Bland was employed at Michael Baker International where he served as the program director of CTfastrak, a 9.5 mile advanced bus rapid transit system between New Britain and Downtown Hartford, Conn. Before the CTfastrak assignment, he was the assistant director/general superintendent of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey's PATH Rail System.

In addition to his extensive transit background, Bland has a Master of Public Affairs in Public Finance, and a Bachelor of Science in Public Affairs, with Distinction in Transportation Planning and Management from Indiana University.

## Citizens Advisory Committee holds final meeting; work will continue on Amp

Nashville Mayor Karl Dean and Nashville MTA/RTA CEO Steve Bland attended the final Amp Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) meeting in late October to thank members for their participation.

It marked the last gathering for the 20-member CAC, which was created earlier this year to serve as a vehicle for the project team to share information about the Amp design and gather feedback.

Work on Nashville's proposed bus rapid transit project will continue as outlined by state and federal agencies.

Speaking to the federal and state issues that must be tackled in the coming months, Mayor Dean said he will not seek local or state funding until those processes are completed. He asked Bland to incorporate the

committee's input into the Amp design and report back later this year.

"Throughout the Citizens Advisory Committee process, we heard from members how important a strategic plan is to the Nashville area," Bland said. "The Amp was never intended to be a plan in and of itself, but part of a regional system. MTA will begin a strategic planning process in early 2015 and will obtain a tremendous amount

of input from those in the community."

Issues that remain to be addressed in the design phase include finalization of park and rides along the route and potential station locations in West Nashville.

Next steps also include completion of the route design by project engineering firm CDM Smith. In 2015, the project team will submit environmental studies in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to the Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration, and the Tennessee Department of Transportation for review.

The NEPA process includes a public review and public comment period, and is expected to take approximately six months.



## MTA acquires new MB-2000 bus simulator for training department

Nashville MTA has a new member in its training department – an MB-2000 bus simulator.

This recently acquired training tool is an upgraded version of a previous model that was lost during the historic Nashville flood in 2010.

MTA training instructors have used driving simulation as part of their overall training program for years, and this new version has features that allow the trainers to take it a step further. The simulator is being used in new operator and maintenance training, operator refresher training, RTW (return to work) training and safety re-training.

"The new simulator allows us to introduce all standard bus controls, demonstrate safety maneuvers and proper turning procedure," MTA Training Manager Kym Tucker said. "We look forward to bringing the simulator to the classroom by pairing it with a smart board. While one person is driving, the entire class can experience the ride as well as the lesson that is taught by the instructor."

The MB-2000 features various digital displays with multiple views and includes real mirrors. The simulator closely replicates a real-life driving environment with an authentic bus

drivers get a feel for force feedback, camber recovery, tire scrub, curb strikes and road vibration and has proper braking controls.

The training department provides a



*MTA Training Instructor Dave Holloway demonstrates the new bus simulator to Frances Hunter and Sherryl Chance.*

dashboard, side instrument panel and seating configuration, floor buttons for right and left turn indicators and bright lights. The TrueFeel Steering helps

comprehensive driver training program designed to enhance driving skills and improve traffic safety while increasing the training program's efficiency.

## News & Notes

### MTA Roadeo/Family Fun Day

Nashville MTA annual Roadeo and Family Fun Day was held on Sept. 27 at the MTA facility on Myatt Drive in Madison. Immediately following the Roadeo, there were numerous activities and great food. All funds raised benefit the annual Metro Employee Consolidated Charities Campaign (MECCC).



Employees gathered for food, fun, and fellowship at Family Fun Day.

### Titans pep rally

Nashville MTA partnered with the Mayor's Office and the Tennessee Titans organization to host a "pep rally on wheels."

Titans' fans rode a Route 9 MetroCenter bus route with T-Rac and Titans cheerleaders in August to attend a training camp practice. Councilman Lonnell Matthews, Titans Executive Vice President of Administration and Facilities Don MacLachlan, Interim MTA CEO Ed Oliphant, and Titans cheerleaders joined fans for the ride. Everyone in attendance received a free Titans car flag and Titans bobblehead, as well as a free water or Gatorade.



Tennessee Titans fans arrive at the practice field to watch their favorite players in action.

### Stuff the Bus food drive

In November, Nashville MTA and the RTA collected food items to send to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee. The MTA/RTA effort was part of Metro's food drive led by Nashville Mayor Karl Dean's Office. A Metro-wide competition to see which department can collect the most non-perishable food items during the food drive also took place. Winners will be determined based on pounds donated on average per person. A "Mayor's Cup" will be given to the three winning departments.

### CMAQ Grants

In late August, the Tennessee Department of Transportation announced grants for new projects to alleviate congestion and help clear the air. Nashville MTA received a \$1.6 million grant to buy new electric buses for the Music City Circuit. RTA received two grants to help expand service from Clarksville to Nashville (\$274,758 grant) as well as start a new bus service from Dickson to Nashville (\$410,575 grant).



MTA CFO Ed Oliphant accepts a \$1.6 million CMAQ grant check from TDOT Commissioner John Schroer.

### Coffee with the CEO

A series of "Coffees with the CEO" took place in early September with CEO Steve Bland to meet employees in all departments and discuss the transit agency in an informal setting. Five different events took place at both the Myatt and Nestor facilities over the course of three days. Staff was invited to meet the CEO and share their thoughts on the company.



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If you have suggestions for future articles, please submit them to the MTA communications office.



## MTA launches mobile website, Transit Tix feature

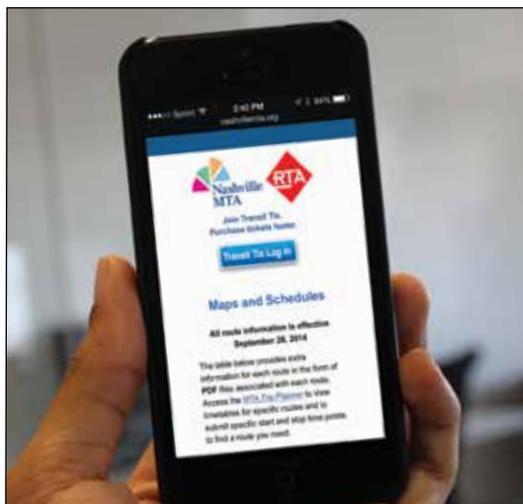
Nashville MTA customers can now get the most crucial information they need on the go via MTA's new mobile website. Launched in mid-August, customers can access schedules, purchase tickets, and plan their trip quickly and easily at [m.nashvillemta.org](http://m.nashvillemta.org).

The site is accessible from any web-enabled mobile device and connects customers to the same bus information as the main MTA website no matter where they happen to be located. Website images have been sized for small screens and text and navigation buttons have been made to work with different mobile devices.

"Our customers can now access MTA bus information faster and in a format that automatically adapts to their smartphones or tablets," MTA CEO Steve Bland said. "We want to ensure our customers have the information they need wherever they may be at the time and this mobile site does that."

Another new feature to both the regular and mobile MTA sites is Transit Tix. This feature allows customers to purchase tickets faster and easier.

By becoming a Transit Tix member, customers can store basic contact information on the site. All they need to do is supply credit card information each time they return to purchase tickets as sensitive information is not stored.



View of the maps and schedules page on a mobile device.

Here is how it works:

- Log in to make purchases on the Nashville MTA homepage
- Edit your information and/or proceed to the order page
- Make your ticket selections (your name and billing information will appear in the purchase form)
- Proceed to fill in your secure credit card information

Once completed correctly, customers will be taken to a receipt page that will show details of their order.



The red arrow indicates the "Access Mobile Version" button, and the yellow arrow shows the location of the "Transit Tix Log In" button on the Nashville MTA website.

In order to become a Transit Tix member, customers will need to supply the following information that will match the credit card they will be using:

- Email Address (this will become your username)
- Full Name
- Billing Address
- Phone Number
- Password
- Answer to a secret question

Should a customer's information change, they will be able to log in and update it at any time. MTA will never store credit card information. For security, customers will have to enter their card numbers each time they purchase using Transit Tix. If they forget their password, an email link will be sent so that they may change it.