

Community input needed for future plan

Nashville MTA launched the first phase of a year-long strategic planning process in April with a round of community meetings that are the first in a series of several community meetings to be held during the year. MTA officials' goal is to engage a minimum of 10,000 residents in the nMotion planning process, which also will include work sessions with neighborhood and civic groups.

Approximately 225 people attended the first two meetings which featured an overview of the process by consultants from Nelson-Nygaard, an international firm that works with municipalities to develop full-service transit systems. The meetings also included an interactive session that allowed participants to define their values and principles surrounding transit.

As of June 1, more than 2,000 people from about 100



"nMotion 2015" 40-foot, tour bus for neighborhood meetings.

zip codes throughout Middle Tennessee have taken the survey. The results show convenience, dependability, frequency, and safety as the top four values. Now that the key community values have been defined, a second

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One hundred new bus shelters being installed throughout Metro Nashville

In a move to make Nashville even more livable and transportation friendly, Nashville Mayor Karl Dean, Nashville MTA Board Chair Marian Ott and other transit officials, bus riders, and community leaders unveiled the first of 100 new bus shelters in the mayor's initiative to place 100 additional

bus shelters around the city.

The project was recommended by Mayor Dean and approved by the Metro Council in Metro's Fiscal Year 2014-15 capital spending plan.

"Once all 100 shelters are installed, we'll have more than doubled the number of traditional



MTA board chair Marian Ott, Mayor Karl Dean, and Councilwoman Edith Taylor Langster, MTA bus rider Edward Perkins Jr., and MTA CEO Steve Bland cut the ribbon on the first of 100 new bus shelters.

bus shelters in Nashville, and two-thirds of MTA bus riders will be protected from the weather while they're waiting for their bus," Mayor Dean said. "Their experience riding

transit will be safer, more comfortable and more pleasant. And I believe that people who have never taken the bus before—attracted by the opportunity to board from a new shelter—will become regular riders."

Edward Perkins, Jr., an MTA transit rider invested in his community, attended the ribbon-cutting event in North Nashville.

"I have lived in this neighborhood for a number of years and have been riding MTA buses just as long," Perkins said. "This is fantastic news that we are getting these shelters at our neighborhood bus stops. People waiting for the buses at the stops will be more comfortable and not have to worry

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StrIDe program ridership up 11 percent

When city leaders decided to provide public high school students with public transportation at no cost, MTA transit personnel were slightly concerned. With no frame of reference, they had no verifiable way of knowing how it would play out or how many students would actually take advantage of the program.

Fast forward nine months. Not only has the program called StrIDe been implemented seamlessly, but riding the bus also has become very popular for more students. About 18 percent of high school students currently use StrIDe, and by the second half of the school year, ridership numbers jumped 11 percent.

StrIDe is a joint partnership between the Mayor's Office, Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), Nashville MTA, and Metro Council. The program launched in August 2014.

"This program allows students to access more of the educational opportunities that we've worked so hard to provide for them," Nashville Mayor Karl Dean said. "I'm not surprised that it's been a success. With a bus pass, students have the freedom to connect to internships with local businesses, dual enrollment at our community colleges and extracurricular activities.

That's a good thing, not just for our students but for our city as a whole."

Between 4,200 and 4,600 StrIDe cards are used each month by Nashville students in both public and charter schools. Each month more than 18 percent of MNPS high school students use their ID on an MTA bus.

Since its implementation last fall, StrIDe has received national attention from other cities that are considering implementing similar programs.

"We've gotten queries from around the country about how it's going," Nashville MTA CEO Steve Bland said. "StrIDe has helped high school students in Nashville become more mobile and independent, and we expect the experience will win over a whole new younger demographic to the benefits of public transportation."

One of the biggest challenges of the program was that it was new and



Metro Nashville Public School students catch a ride to school on an MTA bus.

the school district had some difficulty gauging beforehand what the response would be. Based on current ridership and population trends, MTA estimates 65,000 students could take advantage of the proposed free fare program potentially more than tripling current youth ridership.

"Going in, we just couldn't know," said MNPS Chief Operating Officer Fred Carr, who helps oversee the program. "We thought about doing surveys, but we finally just decided to put it in motion. It just worked. It's been a complete success. We haven't received a negative comment from parents or students."

Shelters

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about the weather."

The 100 bus shelters will provide a burgeoning Nashville ridership with added comfort.

"We truly appreciate Mayor Dean's support over the past several years," MTA Board Chair Marian Ott said. "Because of his leadership and the support of the Metro Council, we have expanded services, increased ridership and are well on

our way to breaking another ridership record with an anticipated 11 million passenger trips this year."

Currently, there are nearly 90 traditional bus shelters in the entire Nashville MTA system, and more than 500 benches along 46 bus routes. There are approximately 57 BRT lite shelters located on Gallatin and Murfreesboro Pikes. An additional 26 BRT lite shelters are being added along Charlotte Pike during the next few months.



CAD/AVL management system moving forward Customers will have access to real-time bus info

Later this year, MTA's customers will be able to view on their computers and mobile devices "real-time" up-to-date bus arrival times based on vehicle locations. This will enable them to not only better manage their trips but also their time.

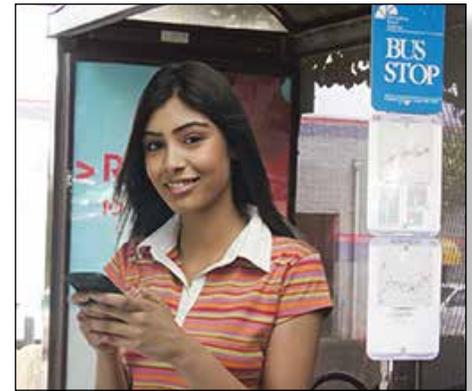
Computer Aided Dispatch/Automatic Vehicle Location (CAD/AVL) will be the basis on which third parties will build apps to show where buses are "moving" along a route on their phones or computers. AVL schedule information also will be available on digital readouts at Music City Central and eventually at BRT lite stations on

Gallatin Pike, Murfreesboro Pike and Charlotte Pike.

Customers who do not have access to a computer or a Smartphone can still find out where their buses are in real time by calling customer care or using a new automated voice feature.

In addition, customers will get notices on "short-term modifications" such as route detours or service additions and cancellations on their mobile devices, and there also will be a link to the information on MTA's website.

For AccessRide customers, the system will generate automatic calls



to users to remind them of their pick-up times, dates and locations.

CAD/AVL is part of a comprehensive transportation management system that will help managers make more informed decisions, manage the fleet more efficiently, streamline scheduling, and better meet the demands of MTA riders.

Neighborhood "mini-hubs" in the works

MTA's Planning and Development Department is working on preliminary plans to add two neighborhood transit "mini-hubs" to provide better pedestrian connectivity through cross-town bus connections, more transfer points, and a safe and secure waiting area for riders.

Transit users have indicated they want transfer points throughout the MTA system instead of having to travel Downtown for a connecting bus. This development is part of the agency's strategic plan.

Currently, MTA is researching

sites in North Nashville and near the Harding/Nolensville Pike intersection in southeast Nashville.

Each facility will be designed to connect users to neighborhoods, commercial areas, parks, greenways and other recreational facilities, and will include a litany of pedestrian-friendly amenities.

The design includes upgraded crosswalks and sidewalks. Lighting and pedestrian signals will help ensure the safety of those who are walking to and from the mini-hub. The well-lit and secure shelters will give

riders cover from the elements while they wait. Secure bike racks will also give cyclists the option to store their bicycles while riding transit.

Nashville's first mini-hub will include bike racks; real-time bus arrival information; secure ticket vending machines, upgraded pedestrian infrastructure; further construction services to ensure ADA accessibility; security cameras; paved bus bay pull-off area large enough to accommodate three 60-foot buses; fully enclosed and climate-controlled shelter/waiting area with seating and solar-powered security lighting.

nMotion

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phase survey has been created and all employees are encouraged to take it. MTA consultants are translating the collected information into a workable plan for the future of the region.

These surveys are one aspect of the strategic plan, which aims at developing a sophisticated platform of transit services for area

residents and visitors.

Another resource of the strategic plan is the customized, nMotion tour bus.

On the bus, people are able to take surveys and discuss with staff what they want in public transportation in Metro Davidson County and Middle Tennessee.

MTA conducts a strategic plan every five years.



Nashvillians provide input to staff on the nMotion bus at Earth Day.

Local teenager helps build new bus shelter for Eagle Scout project

When Michael Williams was de-liberating on a service project on his journey to becoming an Eagle Scout, he simply had to just look at his ride home from school each day.

With one project, he solved both dilemmas. Williams came up with the idea to build a bus shelter and had a hand in facilitating the building of it at the corner of Dr. D.B. Todd Jr. Boulevard and Jo Johnston Avenue across from Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet School which he attended.

"I am extremely pleased with the result and especially so with the skills I've developed in the process," Williams said. "Now that the project is finished, I only need to complete the Board of Review, which is basically an interview with the advancement committee, a requirement for attaining each rank in Boy Scouts. Regardless of the outcome of this Board of Review, I will still be immensely

proud of the result and am thankful to all the help and support from MTA."

A member of Troop 17, which operates out of Blakemore United Methodist church on West End Avenue, Williams got the idea for his project about two years ago. Through a series of phone calls, he contacted MTA Scheduling Manager Dan Freudberg, who supported the project.

The idea stemmed from his daily trip on Route 25 Midtown. He would board the bus at school, get off at the Peabody Building on 21st Avenue, study, and then walk home to the Hillsboro/West End area where he lived. At the bus stop, Williams and his classmates had no shelter to get away from the elements.

The Eagle Scout Service Proj-



Michael Williams assists in building bus shelter.

ect is the opportunity for a Boy Scout to demonstrate leadership of others while performing a project for the benefit of his community. For Williams, now 18, the Service Project was also the end of his journey through the Boy Scouts, culminating in the designation of Eagle Scout.

Poetry in Motion celebrates young poets on city buses

Nashville youth displayed their wordsmith talents by writing poems placed on city buses as part of their participation in Poetry in Motion.

The MTA Youth Action Team, an Oasis Center-led group of high school students who work to increase ridership on public transit, partnered with the Metro Nashville Arts Commission in a contest for youth poets ages 13-17. During April, which was also National Poetry Month, the poetry of the program's winners turned the vehicles into "mobile galleries."

The following students were selected to participate and receive a cash award: Eboni Croney, 17, Nashville School of the Arts; Quin-

cy Harris, 14, Hunters Lane High School; Andrew Pelham, 13, Meigs Academic Magnet School; Aidan Sullivan, 17, Hume-Fogg High



The MTA Youth Action Team, partnered with the Metro Nashville Arts Commission on Poetry in Motion.

School; and Taleya Turner, 15, Hillwood High School.

Also displayed on buses during April were original works by Nash-

ville's first Youth Poet Laureate Lagnajita Mukhopadhyay and finalists Cassidy Martin and Lemuel Robertson.

Poetry in Motion dovetails with MTA's mission of engaging more young people in public transportation, as well as advocating for public art while enhancing the experience for Nashville's general ridership. The national program was created in 1992 by the Poetry Association of America to pave a way for young voices to be heard across the county. In more than 30 cities, including Chicago, Los Angeles and New York, Poetry in Motion

has captured the words of young, and many times underserved, talent. This was MTA's fourth year participating in the program.

Paint booth makes painting a breeze

Thanks to an 80-foot paint booth, painting MTA buses has never been easier.

Just ask 19-year transit veteran Mike Davenport.

Instead of having to use ladders, two lifts allow him to reach any surface on the bus. Davenport also has the ability to paint a 60-foot bus entirely inside in a booth that filters air around him as he works and wears a white suit that has its own fresh-air system. There is also a cooling vest that can be used with the suit to keep him cool when the temperature rises.

Doors are located on either end, allowing buses to ease in and out of the booth. And once painting is complete, the air can be heated to 130 degrees in a

matter of minutes to help cure the paint.

“It makes the process much more efficient,” Davenport said of the new paint booth. “The shadow-free lighting system has 48 lights which provide better visibility. The buses come out looking like new when complete.”

The booth is also loaded with safety features. As part of the safety system, if the door to the paint booth opens, the system shuts down. This allows the air inside the paint booth to stay inside.

Director of Maintenance Bruce Buck brought Davenport in during the early stages of the procurement process to make sure the agency purchased something that would best suit MTA’s needs. He says the chosen product is working well.



Mike Davenport applies a coat of primer.

“It takes a good painter and allows him to be an excellent painter,” Buck said. “It was needed for a long time, and allows Mike to shine as a painter.”

Since the booth was installed, various properties throughout Tennessee have come to see the paint booth and its capabilities.

News & Notes

APTA Rodeo

Nashville MTA bus operator Chris Vick placed fifth out of 19 participants in the 35-foot bus competition at the American Public Transportation Association’s (APTA) International Bus Rodeo in Fort Worth, Texas in May.

MTA’s Bobby Kerce, Kyle Kruk and Troy Willis were one of 35 teams participating in a maintenance competition.



Troy Willis, Bobby Kerce, Chris Vick, and Kyle Kruk represented MTA at the 40th Annual APTA International Bus Rodeo.

Open Streets Festival

The Nashville MTA will offer free bus rides on all bus routes from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on June 27 for individuals attending the first-ever Open Streets Nashville. To receive a free ride, customer should tell the bus operator that they are attending the Mayor’s Open Streets

Festival when boarding an MTA bus during this time.

The free event, which will take place in the Gulch, opens stretches of city streets to people and closes them to cars to encourage participation in physical activity and healthy recreation. More information about the event can be found at OpenStreetsNashville.org.

Earth Day Festival

The Nashville MTA and Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (RTA) joined Nashvillians celebrating the environment at Nashville Earth Day Festival activities on April 18 in Centennial Park.

Transit enthusiasts climbed aboard MTA’s “nMotion 2015” 40-foot tour bus that was on display. Festival attendees took surveys and discussed with staff what they wanted in public transportation in Metro Nashville.



Alvin Barcou and Dennis Allen assist festival attendees with transit information.



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



BRT lite service now available on Charlotte Pike

The Nashville MTA implemented its third Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lite route providing riders who travel via bus on Charlotte Pike a faster way to get back and forth between Music City Central and the Charlotte Pike Walmart.

BRT lite offers customers an opportunity to ride on buses that make fewer stops and operate more frequently. Passengers have shorter wait times and a greener transit experience

Route 50 Charlotte Pike BRT lite provides daily service between West Nashville and Downtown. Uniquely designed BRT lite stations are being built at 11th Avenue/North Gulch; 17th Avenue; 23rd Avenue/Centennial; 28th/31st Ave-



Passengers board a BRT lite bus on Gallatin Pike.

nue Connector; 37th Avenue/Sylvan Heights; 42nd Avenue/Sylvan Park; 46th Avenue/Richland Park; 53rd Avenue; White Bridge; American; Annex; Nashville West; Davidson and Walmart.

As with MTA's other implemented BRT lite corridors — Gallatin Pike and Murfreesboro Pike — electronic signs at all stops provide next bus information on digital signs. The signs will display "real-time" information once the AVL project is complete. No schedule is needed for this service because buses arrive at regular interval throughout the day.

Plans are underway for a similar line on Nolensville Pike.

Free Music City Circuit service expands to Sunday

Nashville Sounds' fans attending games at First Tennessee Park can ride the free Music City Circuit and be dropped off close to the stadium.

Blue Circuit buses depart from stops at Riverfront Station and near Music City Central (MCC), Nashville MTA's downtown transit center located on Charlotte Avenue between 4th and 5th Avenues next to Municipal Auditorium. Green Circuit buses depart from the Gulch. Buses for both routes operate every 15 minutes.

Blue and Green Circuit buses travel down 5th Avenue, turn left on James Robertson Parkway, right on 7th Avenue, and right on Harrison Street. Passengers will be dropped off at the stop at 5th and Harrison. The stadium entrance is a short walk away.

For the return trip, the Blue and Green Circuit buses will stop to pick up passengers at the 5th Avenue and Harri-



son stop with a bus leaving every 15 minutes. The buses travel down 4th Avenue by MCC. The Blue Circuit will return to Riverfront Station and the Green Circuit will return to the Gulch. Buses will operate approximately one hour after the games end.

MTA recently added Sunday service on both the Blue and Green routes. The Sunday service operates from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. and matches the Saturday service on both routes.