



Minutes

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

May 28, 2015

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority Board of Directors was held in the Music City Central Meeting Room, 400 Charlotte Avenue, on May 28, 2015. Present were: Marian Ott, Chair; Lewis Lavine, Vice-Chair; Janet Miller, member; Thomas F. O'Connell, member; Secretary Margaret Behm, and CEO Stephen G. Bland. A quorum was established and Chair Ott called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.
- II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Proper motion was made to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2015 Board of Directors meeting. There were no additions or corrections and the vote of approval was unanimous.
- III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Chair Ott reminded us that public comments are kept to three minutes. She then recognized the following members of the public:

John Bull of Nashville:

Mr. Bull stated he had three comments:

1. He is glad that AVL (Automated Vehicle Locator) is a priority. With the excellent skill level of the operators and that technology coming on-line, moving away from the current hub system to mini-hub and/or grid can't come soon enough, he added.
2. Mr. Bull is curious if there has been any progress on substantial compensation from the flood of 2010.
3. Mr. Bull thinks it is spectacular that the CEO has done some Twitter feed recently stating that he wants bus line frequency and convenience to be a priority and he thinks is spectacular. He would like to see that convenience include expansion into later hours.

Peter O'Connor of Nashville:

Mr. O'Connor stated that there was a new driver on the #12 Nolensville and he did not follow the route as laid out. He has reported this incident to Customer Care. Mr. O'Connor also reported that the driver on Sunday mornings on this same route is hitting the time points early. This, too, he has reported to Customer Care.

James Thomas of Nashville:

Mr. Thomas cited a number of specific incidents when the #12 Nolensville and #72 Edmondson Pike Connector arrived early or late to its time points.

There were no other public comments.

- IV. TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE:** Committee Chair O’Connell reported that the committee did not do their ordinary run through of the reports but instead used them as a form for discussion to look deeper into Customer Care and ridership.

The committee looked at the impact of on-time-performance on passengers carried per complaint. They also looked at AccessRide and the remarkable growth that has been experienced and the need to review efficiencies in terms of overflow. The committee also discussed operator shortage and how that impacts everything including on-time-performance and, in some cases, complaints.

Even with the additional winter weather in March, total passengers year-over-year was up 3%. As the committee goes forward, we will focus on the big picture process of customer care and rider experience rather than just going through and hitting the highlights of the reports.

- V. FINANCE COMMITTEE:** Committee member Janet Miller reported that CFO Ed Oliphant presented an overview of the year-to-date financial statement and that we are running positive for the year. Revenue is tracking right on target for the reforecast. We are just over \$16,000 positive variance on revenue. Expenses are tracking significantly below the reforecast with a \$467,000 variance, which reflects a timing issue. Overall, the financials are very favorable and particularly, in light of the winter weather, the committee feels like we are at a really good point year-to-date. Ms. Miller thanked Mr. Oliphant for his good work.

Ms. Miller noted that we are in the midst of Metro’s budgeting season and that Nashville MTA’s hearing will be on June 4 at 6:00 p.m. at the Metro Courthouse. The committee feels that the Mayor’s budget is supportive of transit overall and they are appreciative of that.

Ms. Miller also noted that there has been some discussion in committee about changing the budget development schedule in order to allow more time for discussion and for creative work. Next month Mr. Oliphant will bring a new schedule to the committee.

She then presented the following action item:

- a. FY 2016 State EasyRide Contract Renewal(A-15-005):** In 2006, MTA and the State of Tennessee began a relationship in which the State would pay the work commute transportation cost for all their employees who utilize public transportation. The success of the EasyRide program has been exceptional with consistent and increasing use by State employees over the past several years. The existing contract managed by the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) is scheduled to expire June 30, 2015.

We have successfully negotiated with the State to continue the contract for FY 2016 at a rate per ride of \$2.50 based upon all regional transportation services including both Nashville MTA and RTA. The contract will be between MTA and TDOT with the RTA receiving its proportional share for rides provided under the program as defined in a separate sub-agreement between MTA and RTA. The total contract amount will increase next year to \$1.75 million from \$1.5 million. The contract term is for 12 months beginning July 1, 2015 with an expiration of June 30, 2016.

The Finance Committee recommends unanimously to the Board the approval for Nashville MTA to enter into a contract with TDOT for the EasyRide program at \$2.50 per ride with a contract amount of \$1.75 million and a contract term of July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016.

Ms. Ott stated that the committee recommendation serves as a motion and does not require a second. She asked for discussion and board member O'Connell asked Board Counsel Margaret Behm if she were comfortable with the contract and she stated that she was, it is the same contract that we have had every year. There was no further discussion and the vote of approval was unanimous.

In closing, Ms. Miller noted that in March the Board had a discussion about debt obligation. It is required by the State Comptroller's office that we enter into our minutes that we have submitted the actual documentation of paperwork.

- VI. PLANNING AND MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT:** Chair Lavine reported that the committee, as with the other committees, shifted from receiving reports verbally, as well as in writing, to receiving them in writing and having a discussion. Mr. Lavine focused on CEO Steve Bland's document, "Converting Public Engagement, Data Analysis and Process into a Strategic Plan." (Included, per Chair Lavine's request below). We have an outreach program and a learning program at the same time within the community. In addition, we are looking for new bold ideas and new ways to be successful with transit. Those two things will come together later in the year. This document explains how that will work and where we are headed.

Converting Public Engagement, Data Analysis and Process Into a Strategic Plan

Underlying Backdrop:

1. Rapidly growing population and increasing density, including within areas currently served by MTA.
2. Consistent and rapidly increasing traffic congestion.
3. Sense that many in our disadvantaged neighborhoods are disconnected from Nashville's success.

4. Inter-County Regional commute markets in and out of Nashville increasingly called out as needing priority attention.
5. Unprecedented growth in AccessRide demand.
6. 49% of Davidson County residents live within ¼ mile of a transit route.
7. 74% of Davidson County jobs within ¼ mile of a transit route.
8. Key (early) customer preferences for more frequent service, more reliable service, more crosstown routes and later service hours (weekday and weekend).
9. Increasing traffic congestion and street closures leading to increasing service disruptions.

Strategic Regional Policy Questions to Be Better Informed Through Information Gained Through the Planning Process:

- How much transit service should we have in Nashville and Middle Tennessee, and how should we pay for it?
- How do we approach inter-county, regional transit in Middle Tennessee, and what role does the MTA/Metro Nashville play in the RTA (governance, funding, service design, “image”)?
- What are the relative preferences of riders and prospective riders with respect to various types of service improvements we might undertake?
- How are resources “best” allocated between “choice” riders and “dependent” riders?
- How can transit (MTA and RTA) better partner with other mobility partners like Metro Public Works, Metro Police, TDOT, CSX and short-line railroads, Nashville Airport, parking operators, bikeshare operators, carshare services, taxi and rideshare providers, etc.?
- How should scarce downtown space be allocated among various uses such as transit, “transportainment” operators, bicycles, pedestrians, business deliveries, auto commuters, festivals and special events, etc.?
- How should key travel corridors like “the Pikes” be treated with respect to transit, bicyclists, auto/truck traffic and pedestrians?
- How should MTA balance overall improvements in fixed route accessibility to encourage more AccessRide customers to use fixed route service vs. only continuing to expand AccessRide services? Should AccessRide play a larger role in community mobility?
- What is the image of public transit/MTA among riders and non-riders in Nashville, and how can we go about improving it?

- What technologies should we deploy to improve the customer experience, as well as support better management decision making and service efficiency?
- What role should the tourist market play in the design of transit services in and around Nashville?
- What are the goals of the Music City Circuit and how effective is it in meeting those goals?
- What capital improvements should be made to support improved services (both “low dollar” and “high dollar” investments)?
- ...and many others!!!

VII. CHAIR’S REPORT: Chair Ott stated that we will evolve the committee meetings even more. While the reports are great, she added that there is a need for the Board to focus its time on discussing the policy and governing issues within them. The Board has a performance oversight responsibility and a judiciary role which they take quite seriously.

Chair Ott has been receiving a number of positive comments from riders about the new shelters. She noted her appreciation to Mayor Dean and his administration for these new bus shelters.

Turning to the Salt Lake City intercity visit with the Nashville Chamber, Chair Ott reported that area has boldly invested in transit. The residents of Salt Lake City were able to understand the importance of spending on infrastructure, in particular transit infrastructure, in order to support the growth that was happening in their valley and that they continue to see looking forward. Also for them, she noted, it was important from an environmental point of view because they have those beautiful mountains and a significant air quality problem. In this region, she continued, we also have an air quality problem. One take-away from that visit is that we need a very clear plan. The Department of Transportation there, the MPO, and the Salt Lake Transit were all unified in their vision. It wasn’t easy getting there, but they recognized the importance of getting there. We have to keep that in mind as we move forward. Having a clear plan and a lot of the key stakeholders “on the same page” allowed them to get the resources for the plan. Even with that, there was still controversy, but people understand that big projects are controversial. We are on the right track here by developing our clear plan and we are working to involve all these stakeholders. Chair Ott then asked for other comments from the Board before she continued.

Board member Janet Miller stated that in Salt Lake they were very cognizant that there is a marketing piece of a plan, as well as the plan. We can’t just target the day-to-day transit users. One of their big audiences was the people who will probably never take transit. Their marketing spin was when we get these additional cars off the road, your commute will be easier. We have got to think about multiple audiences, not just the traditional pieces.

Ms. Miller also stated that the alignment of players was so impressive and the Utah State Legislature has some bold leadership that led the charge. Because TDOT is going to be such a big part of this, it is really going to be important to find bold leaders on the state level.

Member Freddie O'Connell noted that not everything was successful initially for them. Once the case got strong enough, and it combined all of the elements that they could get near to consensus, they then started to have successes investing in themselves. They went out and asked the public to do the investment and it was a series of referenda that got them that investment. It wasn't built overnight. It was 15 years, but at the end of those 15 years it was comprehensive and multi-modal in getting around Salt Lake. Not just the city but the entire region. They rode commuter rail to Ogden, Utah and back and it works. They talked to people on the train. It runs later enough and often enough that a variety of people from a variety of walks of life and different careers were able to make use of it – not all the time, every day, but it is a meaningful option that people are able to use.

Chair Ott reminded us that they have a dedicated revenue source that can make a big difference.

Chair Ott noted that the regularly scheduled time for the June committees would be in conflict with the regional transit conference, the Power of 10. Consequently, for the month of June, the committee meetings would begin at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 21, 2015.

VIII. CEO'S REPORT: CEO Steve Bland reported that the RTA is going through their budgeting process and, as has been known for a number of years, some of the Congested Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) money, experimental federal money, that started a lot of the commuter services is lapsing and a lot of the cities and counties are seeing significant increases in their operating contributions. Most have proposed to their councils the full amount of our ask, and some are struggling with that. Some services may lapse because of the local commitment and this is just another testimony to the power of dedicated funding for public transportation.

Over the last couple of weeks, Mr. Bland has met with individual members of the APAC committee as well as the committee as a whole. He noted that they are a real resource for Nashville MTA. The issues that they have are well known to the Board in terms of late trips and extensive ride times with grouping trips. The taxi operator attended and everyone was delighted to hear that they have added 25 more cabs to the service. We need to work forward with the cab operator to figure out what permanent part they play in that program, as well as alternate providers to see what roll they may play in our system.

Continuing, Mr. Bland stated that one thing we will work toward is coming up with a comprehensive agreed upon list of issues that we can build an action plan around as we move forward and set milestones. Some issues can be resolved very quickly while others involve the changing demand and the increasing traffic and all the issues we see on fixed routes. These may take longer to address, but at least when people see

that there are steps in place and there are interim milestones, hopefully we will be able to make some progress.

Mr. Bland stated that the focus of the Cumberland Region Tomorrow Power of 10 Summit will absolutely be regional transit mobility and he encouraged everyone to attend.

Recently the Metro Candidate briefings were held and 36 candidates, three mayoral candidates, and the staff from a fourth mayoral campaign attended. The briefings seemed to be well received. There were a lot of excellent questions and Mr. Bland continues to be impressed with the level of quality in the candidates and the elected officials in this part of the country.

Mr. Bland reiterated the earlier mention that the Metro Council budget hearings were this coming Thursday (June 4) and that they had been encouraged to arrive around 5:30 p.m.

The meetings for fall service changes started yesterday. Rt. #12 Nolensville was discussed and some potential solutions for this service. Mr. Bland added that they are looking at adding resources to that route with additional buses and more recovery time. One of the advantages of the AVL will be to pinpoint complaints of timing performance.

In closing, Mr. Bland announced that a Chief Operating Officer had been selected to begin on June 14. India Birdsong, from the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) is currently the manager of bus service management for their fleet of 1700 buses in day-to-day service. She essentially manages their on-street operation, which includes street supervision and their AVL cad system. She has had nine years of experience at CTA and can run bus service divisions, and has directed their operator training effort. Ms. Birdsong went into operations out of planning, so actually by training she is a planner. Mr. Bland believes she will bring a nice perspective. He also noted that she is widely viewed in the industry as a rising star, an emerging young leader in the industry who came highly recommended. One other real positive is that she is conversant in and majored in Spanish.

Chair Ott thanked Interim COO Charles Mitchel for doing a great job filling that position for this extended period of time. She also noted that it was Charles' choice not to take this position permanently. Chair Ott stated that the board appreciates everything that Mr. Mitchell has done and the professionalism with which he has done it and thanked him once again. (Applause)

IX. Other Business:

X. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 2:12 p.m.