



NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY Board of Directors Meeting

April 25, 2019

- I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at Bradley L. Barrett Training at the Tennessee Bankers Association, Nashville, TN 37228 on Thursday, April 25, 2019

Present: Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Hannah Paramore Breen, Member; Glenn Farner, Member; Walter Searcy, Member; Secretary Margaret Behm; and Chief Executive Officer Stephen G. Bland.

Absent: Janet Miller, Vice Chair

A quorum was established, and Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 3:12 p.m.

- II. **Approval of Minutes:** Minutes of the March 28, 2019 board meeting were approved.

- III. **Public Comments:** Chair Williams opened the floor for public comments. The public was reminded that comments were limited to three minutes. The following members of the public addressed the Board with these comments:

Darius Knight

Mr. Knight reported the following:

- A plan was in place 10 years ago before the nMotion plan, and we still haven't seen anything. He's taken the initiative over the past eight to nine months and shared it with staff of what needs to be done as it relates to routes that need to be combined to save money and still nothing.
- The Better Bus program should have been ready prior to routes being cut.
- There are Council members that remember these same conversations that took place in 2006, and if routes are cut, the Council is going to look at WeGo Public Transit and say, "you keep asking for funding, but we haven't seen progress."
- WeGo should look at its route data to help.
- Route 29 should have never been eliminated; Route 60 and 61 need to be eliminated because nobody is riding those buses.
- WeGo should stop wasting millions of dollars buying buses that are worthless.

James Bull

Mr. Bull reported the following:

- Dunkin' Donuts is as good as it gets.
- 5307 Capital expenditures – He sent an email to the junior senator of Tennessee who is on the Transportation Committee to see if the funding can be expedited.

Richard Forberg

Mr. Forberg reported the following:

- This meeting has been very depressing because a year ago we heard of a big bold plan from the Mayor, but it was the wrong big bold plan that people can't get excited about.
- We need a new plan to reduce congestion using the transit system; that's what the voters are going to care about. We need to grow the transit system to at least 25% of the daily commuters.
- We need a new bold plan; where is it going to come from? The Mayor, Metro Council? The WeGo Public Transit Board can play a huge part in this bold plan, but so far he isn't seeing any progress. We don't have 25 years to roll this new plan out. We need a road base plan/transportation plan.
- He'd be happy to work with Mr. Darius Knight and others to get this new plan rolling.

Ms. Jackie Simms

Ms. Jackie Simms reported the following:

- Ms. Simms stated that a road base plan is our best solution. She doesn't feel like rail is a good fit for Nashville. She stated that she grew up in Philadelphia where there were all kinds of transportation, so she's a huge supporter of the public transportation, but we have real problems that we need to address now.
- She thinks that we need a more ideal situation to help with congestion because Nashville is growing and growing fast. She suggested that we think about whom else needs to come to the table to help with moving public transit forward.

There were no other public comments at this time.

IV. Operations & Finance Committee Report: Committee Chair Searcy reported the following:

- FY2020 State EasyRide Contract Renewal (M-A-19-0-13):** In 2006, the Nashville MTA and the State of Tennessee began a program for their employees in which the State would pay the work commute transportation cost for all their employees who utilize public transportation. While we have seen some decline in ridership over the past two years, the program continues to work well in helping the State with their employee parking issues and supplying Nashville MTA and the Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (RTA) with fairly consistent ridership.

The current \$1.75 million contract managed by the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) is scheduled to expire June 30, 2019.

The Operations & Finance Committee recommended to the Board their approval for the Nashville MTA to enter into a contract with TDOT for the EasyRide program at \$2.50 per ride and \$3.40 for AccessRide with a contract amount of \$1.75 million and a contract term of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020.

There was no discussion, and the vote of approval was unanimous.

- b. WeGo Third-Party Lease Extension (M-A-19-014):** In March 2009, Nashville MTA entered into a 10-year occupancy lease arrangement with Tennessee Business Enterprises (TBE), in the Division of Rehabilitative Services in the Tennessee Department of Human Services allowing Sweet Liberty, LLC (Sweet Liberty), a franchise operator of Dunkin' Donuts, who has a contracting agreement with TBE, to utilize space on the 5th Avenue level of WeGo Central to operate a Dunkin' Donuts store. A blind vendor operating under license through TBE was also included in the lease arrangement. The original lease was for 10 years and two five-year options with Nashville MTA receiving 5% of Dunkin' Donuts monthly gross sales as a form of lease payment. Sweet Liberty and TBE have requested that the two option periods be combined into one 10-year extension to the lease. With the 10-year extension, Sweet Liberty plans to invest approximately \$150,000 in upgrades to equipment and renovations.

We have had a very good working relationship with Dunkin' Donuts, and they have been a positive benefit for our customers that pass through WeGo Central on a daily basis. The lease generated approximately \$42,000 in lease revenues for last calendar year and with their willingness to invest in and upgrade their lease space, we feel it is appropriate to extend the lease an additional 10 years.

The Operations & Finance Committee recommended to the Board to renew and extend the lease with TBE, Sweet Liberty, LLC, and the blind vendor for the WeGo Central 5th Avenue retail space for a period of 10 years. The extended lease term would be effective May 1, 2019 and would expire April 30, 2029. However, the 10-year extension is subject to the completion of substantial improvements to the premises in the approximate amount of \$150,000 ("improvements") with the intent to maintain and increase sales. If said improvements are not made within a reasonable time, not to exceed one year, then the extended lease term will be for two, five-year terms as currently provided in the lease. Nashville MTA would continue to receive a lease payment equivalent to 5% of Dunkin' Donuts gross monthly sales for the life of the lease.

There was no discussion, and the vote of approval was unanimous.

- V. New Initiatives and Community Engagement Committee Report:** In the absence of Vice Chair Miller, Glen Farner reported the following:

- a. Oasis Center WeGo Youth Action Team Overview (NICE-D-19-006):** WeGo Public Transit has partnered with the Oasis Center since 2013 to engage high school students in representing student riders and facilitating outreach with schools. Students

are lead under the supervision of Karissa Deiter, the Oasis Center Youth Action Team (YAT) Program Coordinator. WeGo Public Transit Community Outreach and Engagement Specialist Miriam Leibowitz facilitates program activities between the Oasis Center and WeGo.

YAT is a group of eight high school students who represent Hume-Fogg Academic High School, Martin Luther King, Jr. Magnet High School, East Nashville Magnet High School, Pearl-Cohn Entertainment Magnet High School, and John Overton High School. The team presented a PowerPoint presentation that gave a summary of the Opportunity Now Transit trainings, youth transit surveys, community outreach, and what YOUth stood for. Their presentation concluded with a presentation slide that summed up what they believe would make our city bus system better for teens:

- Loud and/or intoxicated riders removed from the bus;
- Safety Improvements (i.e. Security Guards);
- Ability to use StrIDe when we lose our student ID's;
- Buses that stop directly in front of high schools.

- b. nMotion Status Report (NICE-D-19-007):** Since the nMotion plan adoption, the agency has been strategically working on incremental improvements to help advance its strategies within the existing resources. To that end, staff has developed a status report to update the Board and the public on progress made toward implementing the plan. Director of Planning and Grants Felix Castrodad presented an overview of the status report at the meeting.
- c. COA/Better Bus Next Steps (NICE-D-19-008):** Following direction from the Board at the October meeting, staff has continued work on data collection and public and stakeholder partnership development to obtain meaningful engagement and to define a balanced recommendation for the bus network changes. Senior Transit Planner Justin Cole and Director of Planning and Grants Felix Castrodad presented the next steps for the engagement process to the New Initiatives and Community Engagement Committee
- d. WeGo Budget Discussion Update (NICE-D-19-009):** Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant and CEO Bland gave an update on the status of the FY2020 Proposed Budget, and there was general discussion with respect to “principles” that we should prioritize as an organization with respect to any fare increase or service reduction if these become necessary. Examples of such principles could be:
- Preserve service quality (frequency and span) on those high performance routes that carry the majority of our customers.
 - Reduce or eliminate redundant services where transit alternatives exist within reasonable walking distance.
 - Eliminate extremely underperforming routes in terms of ridership or subsidy per rider.
 - Assure that any reductions are applied in a geographically equitable manner.

- Assure that any changes do not disproportionately impact disadvantaged populations and/or neighborhoods.
- Reduce frequency and/or span on routes where service is above standard for the type of route but ridership/productivity is below standard.
- Where there are compelling reasons to completely eliminate service from an area, make every effort to assist individuals in that area whom have no alternative transportation in identifying options.

VI. Chair's Report: Chair Williams congratulated Ms. Leibowitz and the work that she's done with the Oasis Youth Team. She spoke of the youth being our future and how they are building a great infrastructure to help us as we go out and get public engagement. They are wonderful, bright and a good example of what our schools are doing for our students and how the students are helping our city.

She stated, in looking at the reports, we have a lot of work ahead of us, but we have very skilled professionals here to help us get to the next level; and as always, she appreciates the public comments because they help us to think differently, and it helps us be better and do better.

VII. CEO's Report: CEO Bland reported the following to the Board:

- He called everyone's attention to pages 15 and 16 in the committee packet which listed significant upcoming procurements. Going forward, this information will be included in each month's packet, and he asked that they take a look and let us know if they are aware of any supplies of the particular goods and services that we should reach out to. In particular, three of the four upcoming procurements are for construction services, and we'd like to do all we can to assure multiple responsive bids on these projects.
- We continue to advance the Clarksville Pike/North Nashville Transit Center project, with most focus now on property negotiations. We did receive good news this week in that the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) has determined that the project qualifies for a categorical exclusion in terms of environmental impact due to size and nature. In discussing this project with Metro, we will also be preparing an application under the USDOT Build Act program for Federal discretionary funds.
- Not just at WeGo, but around the city, attention has been focused on the NFL Draft. An estimated 300,000 visitors are expected to attend the festivities. In combination with Saturday's marathon, this means that essentially all of our service is experiencing detours, delays, and other challenges. Our Operations, Customer Care, and Marketing teams in particular have been doing outstanding work in terms of planning for minute-to-minute service changes and communicating these changes to our customers as quickly as we receive information about changes in traffic patterns. We appreciate the patience of our customers this week, and we do expect to see a negative ridership impact as many folks decided to work remotely.
- Much of this month has been focused on continuing budget preparations and contingency planning. As you know from our discussions over the past few months, we are currently facing an \$8.7 million operating budget deficit to sustain current service and fare levels next year. We are seeking significant increases in funding from Metro,

as well as a flexing of Federal funds from the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to address this gap. We will likely know the status of Metro funding next week when the Mayor submits his budget proposal to Council, but we will not know the status of flex funding until June during the next scheduled cycle of the MPO decision making process. As such, we will need to plan for “what if” scenarios if additional requested funding does not materialize in full or in part. Given competing spending priorities at both sources, this is a very real possibility. A deficit of this magnitude would require a combination of service hour reductions and fare increases to be implemented as quickly as practical, following a public hearing process. Your discussion of policy principles staff should apply in addressing these issues was extremely helpful in this regard. As such, we will come back to you next month with more specific options to be considered for public hearing as we will know more about the Metro and flex budgets. Our scheduled budget hearing before Metro Council will be on May 15 at 5:15 p.m. in Council Chambers.

- Renovations of the Nestor facility continue on schedule, with most work moving to the second floor. Later this summer when work is substantially complete, we will plan a Board field trip to the facility for an update.
- Last week, the Urban Land Institute was in Nashville for their spring conference. As part of the event, he participated in a panel discussion with Michael Skipper from GNRC, Pete Wooten from the Transit Alliance Board and Mayors Hutto of Wilson County and Moore of Franklin on regional transit initiatives and “lessons learned” from last year’s ballot initiative.
- He attended the annual CEO Seminar of the American Public Transportation Association in Chicago. Apart from general networking, specific topics addressed many of the issues we’re addressing including partnerships to address homelessness, working with transportation network companies (TNC’s) and the entire Mobility as a Service landscape, Transit Asset Management and System Safety Plans. In addition, we had the opportunity to discuss upcoming Federal Transportation Reauthorization priorities and to discuss issues of mutual interest with the Acting Federal Transit Administrator.
- RTA Items:
 - The first round of public engagement on the South Corridor Study begins next week in Maury County. This study will examine mobility options in the Maury-Williamson-Davidson County corridor roughly parallel to I-65.
 - Staff has continued to work with the Office of State Comptroller as their auditors have initiated RTA’s performance audit in advance of the expiration of its enabling legislation next year. We understand that they are wrapping up their work and will have a draft report to us in the next two months.
 - Work is progressing on rebuilding the first of four locomotives on the Music City Star. This overall project will take about two years.

VIII. Other Business: There was no other business to come before the Board.

IX. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 3:37 p.m.