

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

September 26, 2019

- I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at WeGo Central, located at 400 Dr. Martin L. King Jr. Blvd., Nashville, TN 37219 on Thursday, September 26, 2019.
- Present:** Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Janet Miller, Vice Chair; Member; Glenn Farner, Member; Hannah Paramore Breen, Member; Secretary Margaret Behm; and Chief Executive Officer Stephen G. Bland.
- Absent:** Walter Searcy, Member
- A quorum was established, and Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 2:40 p.m.
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** Minutes of the August 22, 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.

James Thomas

Mr. Thomas reported the following:

- AccessRide van 362 had a passenger side headlight out.
- He likes the bus drivers that pick him up on the 7:00 and 9:00 routes.

John Bull

Mr. Bull reported the following:

- He liked the personal touch from the WeGo staff that passed out the new survival guides with all of the route changes.
- He thought that the presentation on the neighborhood transit centers was good. He's never seen a transit center that he didn't like.
- The new signage at MCC is much better and looks good.

Peter O'Connor

Mr. O'Connor reported the following:

- He would like to see extended customer service hours and bus hours.

Tracie Wood

Ms. Wood reported the following:

- She stated that she has been rider since February, 2019 and is a promoter of the transit system.
- She's concerned with the timing of when buses leave ahead of schedule and no notification of early departure.
- She loves WeGo Public Transit and wants to be a part of the solution.

Richard Forberg

Mr. Forberg reported the following:

- Issue with not having retail bathrooms for passengers and drivers in the proposed neighborhood transit centers.
- Park & Rides need to be larger.
- We need more neighborhood centers near hospitals, schools, etc.
- Suggestion to have shared rides to reduce congestion.
- He spoke with Michael Briggs and Lucy Kemp and we need to ask them to help with the transit centers.

Sheila Hanson

Ms. Hanson reported the following:

- Bus stop 1348 – Old Hickory Boulevard and Hickory Plaza bus stop sign is still not fixed.
- Issue with new bus drivers asking passengers to get off during layovers and sometimes asking passengers to pay again.
- She appreciates the new signage at WeGo Central.
- Nolensville Dollar General stop is still non-ADA compliant.
- She would like to know why Bus 60 is not running due to driver shortage.
- She thinks that the crosstown transit centers are a good thing.
- Restrooms for drivers are a good thing, but passengers need restrooms too.
- National Federation of the Blind's meetings are streamed online and she would like to know if our meetings can be streamed online as well.
- She won't be able to attend the board meetings going forward due to her employment relocation.

Darius Knight

Mr. Knight reported the following:

- He said that he was tired of reporting the same bus maintenance issues and they haven't gotten any better. We have over 40 Gillig buses that are still breaking down. He asked us to look at another company, such as New Flyer.
- Issues with passengers standing and waiting on a bus that has been canceled internally is not good, disrespectful, and unfair. Also, there are stops that don't have display signs to let them know that a bus has been cancelled.
- Most of the older generation don't have smart phones don't get notified of when a bus is cancelled.
- He spoke with bus operator on the 56 Gallatin Pike route and she stated that she works at least three days overtime to accommodate passengers.
- We keep having hiring events, but drivers don't stay. If drivers aren't happy, they will eventually quit.
- He reports that one of the bus drivers is having nightmares due to someone shooting paint balls at his bus.
- He rode a bus with broken seat and almost fell into the engine and that bus was not pulled out of service.

Carla Rodriguez Cavaughna

Ms. Rodriguez Cavaughna reported the following:

- She suggested Nashville MTA having a volunteer program in Nashville to help clean buses, etc.
- She's a mother of a three and she would like to replicate the same experience that she had as a child with the transit system.

- She suggested that we look at or speak with someone at the Frist Museum and how they have limited amount of funds set aside to assist community partners with the cost of associated with transportation.

There were no other public comments to come before the board.

IV. Operations & Finance Committee Report: Committee Member Hannah Paramore Breen reported the following:

- a. Resolution for FY2020 Annual Grant Applications (M-A-19-026):** Nashville MTA has the authority to receive federal, state, and local financial assistance for transportation projects.

In order for Nashville MTA to apply and receive federal funds, Nashville MTA must comply with Federal Certifications and Assurances and annually submit compliance in accordance to these terms.

The attached resolution comprises the annual submittal of Certifications and Assurances for Federal Transit Authority (FTA) funds and authorization to submit applications for grants with the FTA, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), and other grant funding entities.

The Operations and Finance Committee recommended the Board to:

- Adopt the attached resolution;
- Authorize the application for 5307, 5339, and 5310 funding and State/Local match;
- Authorize the submittal of application for State Operating Assistance; and,
- Authorize the submittal of applications and execution of contracts for any other federal, state, or local grant funding that may become available during FY2020 for the benefit of Nashville MTA.

There was no further discussion. The vote of approval was unanimous.

V. New Initiatives and Community Engagement Committee Report: Janet Miller, Vice Chair reported that team did an outstanding job on the Transit Center Background. Additionally, she reported:

- a. Title VI Program Update (M-A-19-027):** Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that "No Person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance". The FTA requires all recipients of federal funding to adopt and submit an agency Title VI Program every three years. The Nashville MTA Board approved the current Nashville MTA Title VI Program in September 2016 and submitted the Program to the FTA in October 2016. The updated Title VI Program is required to be submitted to FTA in October 2019 upon approval by the recipient's board of directors, appropriate governing entity, or official(s) responsible for policy decisions.

The Nashville MTA Title VI Program establishes specific system-wide service standards and policies as well as a Major Service Change Policy, a Disparate Impact Policy, Disproportionate Burden Policy, policies for oversight of sub-recipients, and a Public Participation Plan (PPP). The PPP describes Nashville MTA's plans and strategies to engage minority and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations in its planning and programming activities. The PPP also details what shall be placed in

Nashville MTA's notices to the public as well as the methods by which we communicate with the public. Additionally, the PPP defines what constitutes a Major Service Change (this includes changes to fares) and includes a description and explanation of how comments are considered through the service planning process for all proposed service changes. The final document can be viewed at <https://nashvillemta.org/PDF/MTA Title VI 2019.pdf>.

The FTA submitted comments on the 2016 Title VI Program to Nashville MTA that were addressed in full when completing the 2019 update.

The Draft Program was released for a 30-day public review and comment period beginning on August 1, 2019 and ending on September 1, 2019. The public was given the opportunity to provide comment via phone, email, and at two public hearings held at WeGo Central. Public notice was provided on the Nashville MTA website; in a media advisory; on social media; and in three local newspapers, including one Spanish language publication. The document was made available online and hard copies were made available at the public hearings. The following is a summary of comments and general discussion during the public comment period:

Upon review and revision of the Title VI Program, the New Initiatives and Community Engagement Committee recommended the Nashville MTA Board to approve the 2019 update to the Nashville MTA Title VI Program to be submitted to the FTA in October.

There was general discussion regarding the trends in the comments of the Title VI program. The common concern was regarding the threshold for when a Title VI analysis is conducted. Ms. Schaefer stated that FTA recommends a 25% change of a route's daily revenue miles as a threshold and that is what we use. She stated, although this is the defined threshold, as a public transit provider, Nashville MTA remains cognizant of the potential negative impacts on minority and low-income populations when determining any fare or service changes regardless if it meets the defined threshold or not. These community engagement strategies were exemplified when route 8 8th Avenue South experienced a minor change when it was rerouted in Spring 2019 and Nashville MTA conducted targeted outreach to these impacted riders. There was no further discussion and the vote of approval was unanimous.

VI. Chair's Report: Chair Williams began her comments by saying that she's excited about the neighborhood hubs; it's another step towards innovation, how we do transit in Nashville, and how we reach our communities in more meaningful ways. She said that she was appreciative of the hard work that is being done by the WeGo staff.

Chair Williams concluded her remarks by congratulating CEO Bland on the new hire of the Chief Operating Officer (COO) position. It's pleasure to have COO Bill Miller join the team.

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

- CEO Bland called everyone's attention to pages 11 and 12 in the Operations and Finance Committee packet which lists significant upcoming procurements. He stated that we'll include this information in each month's packet and asked that everyone take a look and let us know if they are aware of any suppliers of the particular goods and services that we should reach out to.
- CEO Bland introduced Bill Miller as the new COO. COO Miller and CEO Bland worked together for a number of years at the transit agency in Pittsburgh, PA where

he worked his way up from Maintenance Forman, to Maintenance Manager, to Director of the Main Shop, to Director of Bus Maintenance, to Director of Bus Operations, to Chief Operations Officer. CEO Bland stated that if that career progression were not enough, prior to joining the agency in Pittsburgh, he was a servicer and mechanic for Trailways and Greyhound. While we were sorry to see India Birdsong leave, I can say I was delighted that it coincided with Bill's retirement from Pittsburgh, and the fact that he and his wife are huge country music fans.

- A tremendous amount of effort has been invested over the past several months preparing for this Sunday's service changes. Everything from reprinting schedules, to developing the Survival Guide and distributing it to customers, to tagging over a thousand bus stops that will see some change, to conducting our Operator pick, and reprogramming head signs and annunciators. This has literally involved every department in the organization, and it has gone extremely smoothly. Despite a massive effort to get information out to all of our customers, we know that there will be people who are confused come Sunday and Monday morning. Toward that end, we are beefing up our Customer Care staffing and temporarily extending call center hours to accommodate an anticipated increase in call volume.
- Relative to the service changes, we will see the number of peak buses required for fixed route service reduced from 157 to 139. With the conversion of some routes to pure crosstowns and connectors, the number of vans we use in fixed route service will actually increase from four to 12. The total number of Operators required for service will be 397, down 35 from our current service. This will put us about even and should relieve pressure on Access runs and general Operator availability.
- Despite this relief to our Operator shortage, we continue to hire and train new employees. Earlier this week, Human Resources conducted a Job Fair, with excellent turnout. In total, 42 people attended, and employment offers were extended to five Operators and four General Helpers.
- Speaking of excellent turnout, we held our Annual Bus and Maintenance Roadeo on the grounds of the Myatt facility last Saturday and had an excellent turnout of Operators, Mechanics, judges, and families. Among our paratransit operators, Shunta Johnson placed third; Wanita Whitmore, second; and Joyce Banks, first. In the 35' bus division, Kevin Sentes placed third; Eric Liggett, second; and Michael Featherston, first. In the 40' division, Joyce Banks placed first; Mark Johnson, second; and Michael Featherston, first. Troy Willis and Pedro Ochoa placed first and second in the Bus Maintenance Division, respectively; Christopher Brown won the Van Maintenance Division. Beyond their accomplishments last Saturday, all Roadeo contestants must have exemplary records for safety, attendance, and customer service in order to qualify. Our highest finishers in each division will compete in the State Roadeo in Chattanooga in October. Many employees volunteered to judge and support the event, but special thanks to Earl Rhodes for his ongoing leadership in conducting this event.
- CEO Bland joined members of our Procurement Department at Tennessee State University (TSU) this past month for a joint conference between the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Small Business Administration that focused on increasing business diversity in the transportation sector. Apart from explaining our organization to the 50 or so businesses in attendance, CEO Bland said that he was proud of the individual attention our procurement representatives gave those businesses who came to our booth.
- Chief Engineer Trey Walker and CEO Bland attended a meeting for the Green Hills Alliance Board of Directors this week to discuss conceptual plans for the Hillsboro

Transit Center. At this same meeting, representatives of Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) also updated the group on the progress of school construction. Feedback to our project was very positive, including from the Green Hills Mall management whom had earlier expressed concerns. This stop is currently the seventh busiest in our system, and we expect its usage to increase after the transit center and related infrastructure improvements.

- The last remaining task associated with the Murfreesboro Road Transit Signal Priority Project is the completion of signal integration software by Econolite, which has experienced several issues. They are currently testing upgrades which are to be installed next week. Meanwhile, we are issuing a letter jointly signed by Nashville MTA, Metro Public Works, and Metro Information Technology (Metro IT) outlining our concerns with the lack of progress on this matter.
- The Access Passengers Advisory Committee (APAC) met yesterday with a significant amount of discussion centering on the possibility of offering volume ride discounted fare products. The committee will continue to investigate this issue, with the intent of presenting recommendations to the Nashville MTA Board.
- Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Items:
 - We received the first of four completed locomotives for the WeGo Star commuter train scheduled for complete rehabilitation. The railroad is currently completing dynamic testing before placing these in service. Once they are placed in service, the second locomotive will be sent for rebuild.
 - We are working with HDR Engineers on a feasibility study for potential upgrades to the WeGo Star that could accomplish objectives such as additional trips, speed improvements, and line extensions.
 - At the request of Mayor Pitts of Clarksville, I am participating in the search committee for the City's next Transit Director. We forwarded three finalists to the mayor for his consideration.
 - Plans have been completed for the expansion of the Mt. Juliet Station Park & Ride expansion, which will add about 100 spaces to this currently over capacity lot. We expect bidding to proceed over the next two months.

VIII. Other Business: There was no other business at this time.

IX. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 3:22 p.m.