

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

October 24, 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, October 24, 2019.

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

Absent: Hannah Paramore Breen, Member

A quorum was established, and Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 2:43 p.m.

- II. **Approval of Minutes:** Minutes of the September 26, 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:

- Bus 1803 charging ports are not working.
- Bus 732 was supposed to leave at 11:15 a.m., but didn't arrive until 11:19 a.m.; driver arrived late and didn't leave until 11:22 a.m.
- Bus 1816 charging ports are not working.

Richard Forberg

Mr. Forberg reported the following:

- He made the Board aware that the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC) would host its' Metropolitan Planning Organization 25-year Regional Planning effort (a federally required function every five years by the U.S. Department of Transportation). It goes through the necessary process of allocating highway dollars but can also be set aside for transit needs. Mr. Forberg stated that he hoped Nashville MTA and RTA would take advantage of this process in multiple ways to grow our public transportation system.
- He didn't know if this could be used as dedicated funding, but it could be potential repeat sources of funding for these types of things.
- He stated our region can accomplish some of these long-term goals best by building more transit centers at the metro, regional, and neighborhood levels across our 10-county region, combined with managed high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and bus express routes.

Peter O'Connor

Mr. O'Connor reported the following:

- He would like for there to be extended bus and customer service hours.
- He would like consideration on his proposal for route 72.
- He said low-income people that have cars don't always have money for parking.

- He got stuck Downtown at 4th and Church due to buses being rerouted at the last minute.
- He said drivers that are new to routes need to understand that regular passengers know the routes better than they do.
- The header signs and the side window signs aren't working.
- On Route 52A - the end of the line stop needs to be moved to the rear side of Walgreens.

Darius Knight

Mr. Knight reported the following:

- He said that he was present to report the same bus maintenance issues that he reports on a monthly basis.
- He's noticed that drivers aren't writing buses up for repairs.
- On occasion, he's had to report bus maintenance issues that happen in the back of the bus, because evidently drivers can't feel what's happening in the back of the bus.
- He reports the Donelson customers are complaining about drivers not arriving and departing per the on time
- More advertisement discussions need to be had amongst the Better Bus Committee.
- The new wraps look a lot better than the old wraps.

John Bull

Mr. Bull reported the following:

- He appreciates the new seven high quality cameras on the buses.
- He likes the new crosstown connectors; but modifications to need to be made to the 52 (at the Fairgrounds).
- He's glad that the Nolensville bus stop is being addressed.
- He stated that we need dedicated funding to support extended hours.

James Terry Livingston

Mr. Livingston reported the following:

- He stated that he was present on behalf of the residents at Trevecca Towers Retirement Center on Murfreesboro Road. He said that due to the service changes that many of the residents are having issues with rude drivers who ignore passengers in wheelchair and on canes.
- He stated that the disabled passengers are having to stand for long periods of time because no one is willing to give up their seat on the bus for the disabled.
- He said that there are always a couple of bad apples, but overall, we have a great group of drivers.
- He stated that he felt like the Access Ride program was for the elderly and disabled passengers, however in reality, is only for the people that can afford it and not for the low-income people.

Glen Alan Graham

Mr. Graham reported the following:

- He mentioned the meeting regarding the proposed cutback and service changes a couple of months ago reminded him of what took place in 2008.
- He understands that we have to have a balanced budget, but at the same time we need to provide the city with a viable and valuable mass transit alternative to the increasing traffic crisis in this city.

- He didn't like that we lost so many bus stops along the former BRT corridors.
- There is still a bus stop at 7th & Charlotte, but the drivers aren't aware of this.
- He stated that we need forward-facing seats versus inward-facing seats.

Sealy Shannon (Written comment sent to Chair Williams)

Ms. Shannon reported the following:

- Eliminate bus stops with less than two blocks apart.
- Use more WeGo vans instead of full buses during non-peak periods, saving full buses for peak morning/afternoon transportation to town and for low-volume activity routes.
- Create fare cards (much like gift cards) that can be sold at retail stores (Target, Walmart, grocery stores, etc.)
- Have dedicated buses
 - Commuter buses that picks up from parking areas (Shopping malls, church parking lots, etc.) during morning commutes and make no other stops along the way.
 - "Fun Bus" that picks up from designated suburban parking areas for to transport people to the downtown area (Titans Stadium, Bridgestone Arena) for special activities, at a special fare of \$20-\$30 roundtrip per person
- Advertisement
 - Promote commuter bus with the downtown companies and/or government agencies
 - Coordinate with coffee shops to have kiosks at designated pickup points, as well as newspaper stands

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

- IV. Operations & Finance Committee Report:** Committee Chair Searcy stated that there were no actions items to approve at this time. He, along with Board Chair Williams, asked that the Statement of Operations Compared to budget and the Upcoming Projects and Operation Statistics reports be included in the minutes.
- V. New Initiatives and Community Engagement Committee Report:** Vice Chair Miller stated that we reviewed Marketing Strategy and Advertising plans. There were no action items to approve at this time, but she said that the NICE Committee will carefully review and assess the new wraps.

Ms. Miller concluded her remarks by acknowledging and congratulating Board Chair Williams for being honored at the Academy of Women's Achievement tonight at the Music City Convention, located at 501 Fifth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37203.

- VI. Chair's Report:** Chair Williams thanked CEO Bland and the WeGo staff for the hard work they do on a daily basis. She thanked the drivers in particularly for having to learn new routes and being flexible with route changes that are given in a short period of time. She also thanked the passengers for being patient with the drivers that have had to recalibrate at a moment's notice.

She thanked CEO Bland for writing a lovely letter of recommendation on her behalf for the Academy of Women's Achievement Award.

She concluded by saying that she liked the passport on the services changes.

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

- He called everyone's attention to page 10 in the Operations & Finance Committee packet, which listed significant upcoming procurements. Updating the information the Board members had, the Nolensville Stop Improvement Project was out to bid now, as were the last two items – Banking Services and Line of Credit. Bids for the Mt. Juliet Station Lot Expansion would be issued tomorrow.
- He stated that it's been almost a month since we implemented the most significant service change in system history. Our stop and shelter crew have made tremendous progress in updating stops and shelters to coincide with the system revisions. Overall, changes went rather smoothly, and we were monitoring operations for adjustments that need to be made. We needed to address some overcrowding issues on the 8 and 55 routes, and we were monitoring schedule adherence on certain routes that will likely need schedule adjustments with our spring service changes. Among other changes we were examining was a routing change to the 73 Bell Road Connector to improve its connections with the Nolensville Pike service.
- It was far too early to draw any conclusions about the longer-term impacts of the service changes – particularly when combined with the impacts of our August 1 fare increase. However, preliminary figures showed revenue tracking well in September. After the fare increase, ridership adjusted for service hours declined just under 2% compared to the prior September, and revenue per passenger was up about 22%. With respect to the October service changes, results were even more preliminary, but comparing school days between October 2018 and 2019, total ridership was down 7.7%. Adjusting for the impact of the elimination of the Circuit, total ridership was down by about 2%.
- Last weekend, Nashville MTA held its' Annual Family Fun Day event. Overall, 250 employees and retirees attended. As part of this event, we honored our retirees with special recognition for those who have retired in the past year. This past year, we had a total of 24 people retire.
- Next week, winners of our Roadeo event will compete against the best in the state at the Tennessee Public Transportation Association Roadeo Competition in Chattanooga. He stated that he didn't want to jinx anything, but next month he expected to announce that we collected a whole lot of hardware at this event.
- We conducted our quarterly meeting with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regional staff in Atlanta this past month. FTA continues to be satisfied with our progress on significant Nashville MTA and RTA projects. Also relative to the FTA, we received our triennial review report from them and are preparing our responses. We would report on their findings and our corrective actions at the Operations & Finance Committee meeting next month.
- Several Board members and staff were pleased to represent WeGo at the Public Education Hall of Fame Luncheon this past month where Gail and David Williams were honored for their many contributions to public education in the community.
- He attended the inauguration of Nashville Mayor John Cooper in September. Staffing of the Mayor's Office was still in progress, and he would be meeting with several Mayor's Office staff to discuss WeGo and general mobility issues next week. Notably, Mayor Cooper announced the appointment of Faye DiMassimo to head up transportation and infrastructure for his office. Ms. DiMassimo has extensive experience in mobility, holding several senior positions in the Atlanta region.

- At the invitation of Vice Mayor Jim Shulman, he gave a short presentation on transit and mobility issues that will face the Council in the coming four years, during a day-long orientation session held at Vanderbilt two weeks ago. As part of the session, he attended the full day where Council received briefings from a variety of departments and on a variety of issues. What was striking was how we all pointed out the interrelationships among our issues. As examples, both Education and Affordable Housing advocates pointed out the necessity for a robust public transportation network in advancing their efforts.
- Vice Chair Miller and CEO Bland would be participating on discussion panels for GNRC's "Regional Convening on Transportation" next week. This event, which would be opened by Tennessee Governor Bill Lee, is a precedent to the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization updating the region's long-range transportation plan over the coming year.
- RTA Items
 - The first of four locomotives scheduled for rehabilitation on the WeGo Star has been placed in service, and the second is being scheduled for shipment to the rebuilder. The rebuilt locomotive features the new paint scheme featuring the WeGo Brand.
 - Last week, the RTA Board awarded a contract for rebuilt passenger cars for the Star. This project would replace all passenger cars with newer equipment that has been completely refurbished to Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Standards. These cars will be entering service in 2020.
 - We will be issuing an invitation for bids for construction of the expansion to the Mt. Juliet Park & Ride lot tomorrow. This lot, which has been over capacity for some time, will see increased capacity by more than 100 cars as well as pedestrian and landscaping enhancements.

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

IX. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.