

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

December 17, 2020

- I. **Call to Order:** Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the declaration of a state of emergency by Governor Bill Lee, the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) held a special, limited agenda meeting via videoconference on Thursday, November 19, 2020 to conduct essential business to protect the health, safety and welfare of Tennesseans in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. This meeting was held in accordance with Executive Order No. 60 in order to discuss essential business.
- II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Janet Miller, Vice Chair; Hannah Paramore- Breen, Member; Mary Griffin, Member; Secretary Margaret Behm; Chief Executive Officer Stephen G. Bland, Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner, Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant, Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg, Chief Operating Officer Bill Miller, Chief Development Officer Trey Walker, Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad, Community Outreach & Engagement Specialist Miriam Leibowitz, and Board Liaison Monica Howse.

A quorum was established, and Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Mary Griffin made a motion to approve the November 19, 2020 minutes. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- III. **Public Comments:** Chair Williams opened the floor for public comments. The public was reminded that comments were limited to three minutes.

Darius Knight

Mr. Darius Knight's comments are as follows:

- Mr. Knight said that he was concerned with passengers not keeping their masks on while riding the bus. He suggests that the bus drivers ask passengers to put them back on or exit the bus.
- Mr. Knight said that he has started back riding the bus and today had to clean the handrails on bus 141 around the seat and it had major dirt coming off of it. He asked staff to keep handrails and glass /plastic dividers cleaned each day.
- Mr. Knight said that he appreciated CEO Bland and staff on the approval of the Mayor's Transportation Plan and he said that he liked the new QuickTicket system.
- Mr. Knight said some of the fleet of buses need to be repaired so that they don't have to be pulled out of service or road calls for failures that prevent the bus from the entire route.
- Mr. Knight acknowledged all maintenance operators, customer service reps and others for the hard work they do each day to ensure bus service during these unprecedented times for nearly a year now. He asked everyone continue to encourage, uplift and respect operators. He also asked if it would be possible for dispatch to say some encouraging words to operators over the radio at the beginning of each shift.
- Mr. Knight said the current order on New Flyer 60ft. buses is for five buses, which is to replace the NABI 60ft buses 180-185(6), but he thought the original order was for six buses. In 2010, fourteen of those same type of buses were ordered, making it a total of 20, but if you're only ordering five, you're going to be short one bus.

- Mr. Knight said it nearly takes 18-20 months to order new buses, so we need to be mindful of how and when we purchase buses, otherwise we will have a shortage of 60ft buses for the entire fleet.
- Mr. Knight said every time an accident happens it completely pulls a bus out of operation.

John Bull

Mr. John Bull's public comments were as follows:

- Mr. Bull said that WeGo is his primary mode of transportation and he is currently sheltering-in-place but takes one trip a week for essentials.
- Mr. Bull said that he's a frequent rider of bus #52, #23 and #7 and they all seem clean, on time and well populated with riders and everyone is wearing their masks.
- Mr. Bull described the Council meeting that was held on Tuesday as seismic. He quoted a quote by Winston Churchill: "*Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.*"
- QuickTicket has been working flawlessly for him the past couple of weeks.

IV. NICE Committee: Chair Janet Miller reported the following: Vice Chair Janet Miller reported the following:

a. FY2021 Operating Budget Discussion (NICE-D-20-013): CFO Ed Oliphant and CEO Steve Bland led a discussion with a focus on the approaches we might take under three specific scenarios for our upcoming Metro Nashville budget submission:

1. Metro's financial position is sufficiently strong to address our funding request – at least for baseline services, if not for Better Bus enhancements.
2. Metro's financial position allows some restoration of last year's funding reduction, but still places us in a position requiring us to "re-order" our service priorities given current and likely short to medium-term ridership patterns resulting from the pandemic.
3. Metro's financial position requires a funding cut to the MTA that is sufficiently deep that CARES Act funding will not fill the gap, requiring more permanent changes and an overall reduction in service levels.

CEO Bland said we have begun to assemble our FY2021-2022 operating budget request for submission to Metro Finance and we anticipate the process will take place between late-January and June 2021. Primarily, we will be seeking restoration of the \$22,820,200 in funding that was cut by Metro last year (\$21,320,200 reduction from FY2019-20 levels + \$1,500,000 in requested inflationary adjustment). In addition, we will be seeking another \$1.5 million to cover projected inflationary level increases in expenses for the upcoming year, and approximately \$3.2 million to initiate service expansion as called out in the Better Bus program, and the Mayor's pending City Transportation Plan for part of the fiscal year. This would place the resulting total operating budget appropriation request at \$54,835,900. Overall, this represents an increase of 12.7% over FY2019-20 (the last "normal" appropriation) and 100% over the current year's reduced subsidy. The purpose of this discussion item was to review potential scenarios, and actions we might take in response to these scenarios; and to begin to develop appropriate communication strategies to funders and customers. This discussion was integrated with the following Board agenda item which concerned the Spring Service Update.

CEO Bland said we were only able to balance the FY2020-2021 operating budget due to the availability of one-time Federal CARES Act Funding. This year's budget programs just over \$29.5 million in CARES Act funding in order to stay in balance. Apart from

funds to offset the funding cuts from Metro, these funds are programmed to offset declines in operating revenue as a result of the pandemic, and to cover supplemental expenses created by the pandemic, such as our enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices and paid employee leave for COVID-related absences.

CEO Bland said we are showing higher than anticipated operating income losses, but lower projected spending in the capital project categories. Interestingly, we did not significantly miss the mark on passenger fares (so far). The additional projected “lost” operating income is primarily coming through reduced contract income from the RTA, as they have reduced service levels on routes operated by the MTA; on rental income from the WeGo Central Parking Garage and Dunkin Donuts; and on advertising as discussed by Jason Minser last month. On the capital project side, Metro Nashville was able to sustain capital funding for 3 projects originally identified to be replaced with CARES Act funding, and several other projects are falling under budget.

Based on current projections, we anticipate that we would have a balance of just under \$9.8 million in CARES Act funding to plug any short-term holes in next year’s budget if Metro is unable to replenish full funding for FY2021-22. Alternatively, if Metro is able to fully fund our operations at their “pre-pandemic level” (adjusted for inflation) these remaining funds could be reprogrammed to capital projects identified in the Mayor’s pending transportation plan, such as stop and shelter upgrades and/or neighborhood transit centers.

If anticipated Metro funding falls short, we should plan for cost reduction efforts (including fare increases and/or service reductions) as quickly as possible to minimize the long-term disruption to customers to the fullest extent possible. Additionally, we should consider “rearranging” our service priorities between existing services and proposed Better Bus improvements to better reflect current (and likely longer term) ridership patterns resulting from the pandemic.

As in past years, staff will prepare a “two-tier” budget request. “Tier 1” will be a summary of the funding necessary to sustain current baseline services adjusted for anticipated FY2021-22 operating conditions, such as inflation. “Tier 2” would be supplemental funding to begin the service expansion proposed in Mayor Cooper’s pending “Metro Nashville Transportation Plan,” which is largely drawn from our Better Bus initiative.

Apart from CARES Act and Metro Nashville subsidy funds, the following observed trends are pertinent to the discussion regarding the FY2020-21 operating budget:

1. Apart from restoring the \$22.8 million in funds cut last year, we would include a request for an additional increase of \$1.5 million to address inflationary increases and \$3.2 million to initiate partial-year service improvements as outlined in Better Bus and Mayor Cooper’s Metro Nashville Transportation Plan. This amounts to a total request of \$54,835,900. Better Bus enhancements encompassed in the Mayor’s Transportation Plan would be phased in over a 5-year period and are projected to add a total of \$29 million to our operating budget in current year dollars.
2. We are projecting general inflationary increases of 2% to 3%, including wages, based on stable service levels. Several offsetting trends lead us to this “average increase.” On the positive side, trends in fuel prices and our current hedge program lead us to project a decline of approximately \$1.8 million in fuel expenses for FY2021-22. Reduced demand for Access and having our own Bus Operator staffing reach full levels will also lead to reductions in third party service contract spending. On the negative side, we continue to see significantly increasing health insurance claims expenses, projecting an overall increase of 10.2%.
3. While it is difficult to forecast what ridership levels will look like in July 2021, significant increases above current levels will certainly depend on downtown employees returning to their offices and schools returning to the classroom.

Currently, we are seeing ridership levels of approximately 50% of pre-COVID levels with youth fare revenues down approximately 87%. Given the current reported status of COVID-19 and the advancement of vaccines, it is all but certain that ridership will remain at these highly depressed levels for the remainder of this fiscal year. For FY2021-22, we are assuming some recovery of passenger revenue and other operating income with the hope that schools return to full in-person instruction in the Fall, and employment levels begin to rebound in the fall with proposed vaccines reaching larger portions of the population. A more complete return of ridership and other operating income, however, will depend on a full recovery of economic activity and jobs, which will be much slower. We also anticipate that the return of downtown office workers whose professions allow them to work remotely will be very slow to return, taking at least several years. Overall, we are not projecting a “full” return of ridership due to the pandemic until FY2023-24, so we are programming CARES Act relief through FY2022-23.

4. The CARES Act funds that have allowed transit service in Nashville to escape the pandemic relatively unscathed (so far) are a rapidly declining resource. Even if current discussions of a second Federal aid package materialize, the chances that the MTA will see funding even remotely approaching CARES Act levels is extraordinarily remote. As such, it is extremely unlikely that we will have the budget flexibility for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 that we did this past year if Metro is unable to significantly restore our funding cut.
5. Concurrent with Metro Nashville’s budget uncertainty relative to our current appropriation level, the City is advancing a Transportation Plan that (if successfully adopted and funded) would expand our annual service hours by approximately 30%. Funding requests for new service are incorporated into our “Tier 2” request to Metro Nashville. As we developed operating budget proposals for our Tier 2 submission to Metro, we considered all the new service included in our Better Bus project. We took an approach of spreading the asks over a 5-year timeframe taking into consideration the time it will take to ramp up internally to support the new service and the time necessary for the City’s economy to recover sufficiently to free up the resources to allocate to the plan. Although this approach is dynamic and subject to change, the following is our general approach to service expansion under Better Bus:

FY2022 - \$3.2 million

Extended service hours on our core routes. Route extensions to serve the new Green Hills/Hillsboro Neighborhood Transit Center. This figure represents partial year funding, as it assumes start up in October 2021.

FY2023 - \$5.2 million

Improve off-peak (evening and weekend) service frequency, expand Access on Demand Service hours, expand Mobility on Demand zones. This figure, again, represents partial year funding reflecting a planned start in October 2022.

FY2024 - \$6.7 million

Additional service span expansion on more routes, improved frequency on core service and local routes, route extensions to serve the new North Nashville/Clarksville Pike Neighborhood Transit Center, additional mobility on demand zones. This figure, again, represents partial year funding reflecting a planned start in mid FY2024.

FY2025 - \$5.5 million

Additional routes gain more frequency during peak and off-peak hours, new crosstown service and improved service on existing crosstowns, continued expansion of mobility on demand.

FY2026 - \$8.4 million

Complete implementation of remaining service enhancements identified in Better Bus and Mayor Cooper's Metro Nashville Transportation Plan.

Vice Chair Miller reminded everyone of the major service cuts that took place two years ago and how incredibly painful it was. She said that she feels that there's not much fat left on the bone to offer up that wouldn't hurt the system. She said planning on current demand is not the way to go because by the summer, when this plan is going to go into effect, we anticipate that we will be on the other side of this pandemic. She said we need to hold as firm as possible on the full restoration, plus the modest ask on the addition. Also, the fact that the Council's approval of the Mayor's Transportation plan shows putting money behind that plan and she believes it will be the right time. Chair Williams agreed and said that she thinks that it's critical that we be fully funded and not where we were, but beyond that point.

- b. **Spring 2021 Service Update (NICE-D-20-014)**: Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad provided an overview of the current trends looking ahead to potential changes in the Spring of 2021:

In March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic began to force shutdowns in the Middle Tennessee area, WeGo reduced weekday service levels drastically in order to minimize operator exposure to the virus, enhance cleaning levels, and match resources to greatly reduced ridership as businesses closed, schools and offices shifted to remote modes, and riders reduced discretionary trips to slow the spread of the virus. Service levels during the week were reduced to traditional Saturday levels, with some modifications as routes serving key generators, related to essential services that typically do not operate on Saturday service, continued to operate. Service on several routes was cancelled for the duration of this service reduction. As ridership gradually shifted and increased over the course of the pandemic, WeGo made several adjustments to service to continue meeting rider needs while focusing on customer and operator safety. These changes have been made on a shorter timeline than usual service changes and on a temporary, emergency basis, to respond to changing conditions.

Nearly 9 months into the pandemic, WeGo continues to see significantly altered travel patterns and ridership, and the timeline for recovery remains unclear. In the meantime, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act allocated emergency assistance to help transit agencies affected by the pandemic. WeGo is using this allocation of funding to continue to support service operations while enhancing cleaning and safety procedures system wide. However, the CARES Act funding is limited and combined with the current economic climate WeGo will face budget challenges in the upcoming year. Despite this, the need for basic service improvements for our riders, outlined in nMotion and further developed with Better Bus is still a priority as the pandemic has further highlighted the need for such improvements. Many of the improvements outlined in Better Bus have been reflected in Mayor Cooper's proposed "Metro Nashville Transportation Plan."

Looking ahead to Spring 2021 potential service changes, WeGo must carefully consider current ridership trends to effectively design service in a way that acknowledges the existing context, while also supporting and advancing the principles of the Better Bus plan for effectively stewarding the amount of resources available. A backdrop to this conversation, will be the capacity of Metro Nashville to restore the \$22.8 million funding cut that was implemented last year. Given the magnitude of the unknowns with respect to the FY2021-22 operating budget, as well as overall ridership and economic recovery from the pandemic, we will need to seriously consider "re-arranging" current service priorities against Better Bus initiatives, possibly reallocating service hours to assure maximum benefit to our customers.

During the past several months, staff has been monitoring trends and analyzing potential scenarios for future service as the system continues to face new challenges related to the economy and the COVID-19 pandemic. Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning was present to answer an overview of the current trends looking ahead to potential changes in the Spring of 2021.

Mary Griffin questioned the frequency of service changes only being done in the Spring and the Fall. She offered up a suggestion to evaluate it quarterly vs. every six months. CEO Bland said that we don't do it more frequently because it's a rather expensive process involving the driver pick. Depending on the nature of the changes, they are also associated with schedule reprints. In addition, our passengers tend to be creatures of habit and we get massive complaints when we adjust the schedule by even two minutes. We do make interim adjustments when schools are in and out of session, but in terms of the major changes that we do, we want to do a relatively limited number because of the intense analysis required.

Chair Williams said that we do a lot with less, but we can't always operate in that mindset. We have to make sure that we're fully funded so our public can have their transportation needs met. She's excited about Council approving the Mayor's Transportation Plan because it shows that it's important to our city and it solidified the importance of transit. With everything that has happened in our city and with Covid, it is so important that we keep the public and our ridership first. We must keep equity at the forefront of the lens of what we do, but we can only do that if we're fully funded. She said we can't keep operating the way we have done in the past. We have such committed staff and drivers, but we can only be committed as the city is to our budget. She expressed her appreciation to Felix Castrodad and staff for the work that has been done. She said, to be able to provide equitable ridership for riders is exciting.

Vice Chair Miller said as far as the Spring changes, ridership is currently down, but this pandemic is only short term and workers are returning slowly to work. The demand for transportation will be back.

CEO Bland concluded the two discussion items by saying, the intent of the service changes presented by Mr. Castrodad was not to "permanently" eliminate routes but to re-order our current priorities until patron demand and funding levels allow us to fully restore all services. It would be irresponsible for us to run the pre-pandemic service patterns and watch some routes experience severe overcrowding while others run empty.

Hannah Paramore-Breen said that we must be careful how we describe the proposed changes, so we do not convey that these services aren't important.

c. Drive to End Chronic Homelessness Program Overview (NICE-D-20-015):

Community Outreach & Engagement Specialist Miriam Leibowitz introduced the representatives from the Metro Social Services Homeless Impact Division, and they presented the program's third year progress report below:

The Drive to End Chronic Homelessness (DECH/Connector Card program) was developed as a Nashville Metro Public Improvement Project (PIP) by the Homeless Impact Division (formerly the Metro Homelessness Commission) with the support of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA). The purpose of the program is to work towards the elimination of the transportation barrier to permanent housing and higher income by providing chronically homeless individuals bus passes and case worker support. The PIP was approved on July 1, 2017.

Under this program, the Nashville MTA provided the Homeless Impact Division up to 500 local bus passes to distribute to individuals age 18 or older who experience chronic homelessness. The first year of the program included sensitivity training for bus

operators and select police officers on how to interact with individuals experiencing homelessness.

As of June 30, 2020, a total of 912 individuals have received bus passes: FY2018: 344 participants; FY2019: 296; FY2020: 272.

- All have some kind of disabling condition
- More than 75% have been homeless at least 12 months in the past three (3) years
- Nearly 60% are between 45 to 64 years of age
- 10% served in the military

Over 50% of those receiving bus passes have been permanently housed between October 2017 and June 30, 2020. Most participants (74%) are housed within six (6) months, and on average, participants are housed within 139 days of receiving a bus pass. By the end of the third year of the program, 469 participants have been permanently housed.

Vice Chair Miller thanked the representatives from the Metro Social Services Homeless Impact Division for their presentation and said there's never been a greater need than right now. She said that she loved this program because it's not just a bus pass. She concluded her remarks by saying that wrap around services are so important because we know the issues are so complex.

V. Operations & Finance Committee Report:

- a. Armored Car Contract Extension (M-A-20-026):** Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant reported the following:

MTA contracts for armored car pick up services for all cash collected through our fare boxes. We are currently contracted with Loomis and are at the end of a 5-year contract as of December 31, 2020. They pick up portable vaults every weekday at our Nestor property and twice weekly at our Myatt property. They are responsible for counting the cash and delivery to US Bank for deposit into MTA's operating account.

We went out for requests for proposal (RFP) in August 2020 and received 2 proposals. Due to there being a significant difference in the quotes, Procurement has been working diligently to ascertain what the quotes were based upon from each bidder, but due to COVID and vendor availability at the different levels of management within both companies, it has taken a considerable time to get answers. In order to make the correct decision on which company with whom to move forward and the significance of the disparity between the quotes, it will be necessary to ask for up to a one year extension on our current Loomis contract, which is the minimum Loomis would allow, to give us time to complete the RFP process. The contract does have a termination at will clause for both parties.

Staff requested the Board approve a one-year contract extension with Loomis Armored Services at an amount not to exceed \$132,200 which is the same price as the last year of the current contract that expires December 31, 2020.

Vice Chair Janet Miller made a motion to approve the Armored Car Contract Extension. The motion was seconded by Mary Griffin and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- b. Shelter Vendor Contract Award (M-A-20-027):** D'Nese Nicolosi presented the following board action details:

In March of 2014, the Board approved the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority to execute a contract with Decamil for a base term of five (5) years with three (3) one-year options for the purchase of bus shelters, benches, and other related items. Concurrent

with WeGo's efforts to improve the overall transit experience for our customers, the Transit Stop Department has embarked on a campaign of stop upgrades and stop improvements. Our current bus stop portfolio consists of 1,914 total stops including 343 bench stops, and 231 sheltered stops. During the life of the Decamil contract there were approximately 150+ shelters installed, covering new stops as well as pre-existing shelters that had reached end of useful life. In addition to maintaining existing bus stops, new stop improvements are installed each year as we strive to connect people with their communities. As the Decamil contract is set to expire, WeGo has performed a solicitation for a vendor to provide transit stop amenities.

On August 25, 2020, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was published to the Nashville MTA website, the Transit Talent website, and was sent directly to eight possible suppliers of the requested items. Due to the limited availability of certified DBEs in this industry, there was a 0% race neutral DBE goal applied this project. Proposal submissions were due on October 16, 2020 no later than 11:00 a.m.

The following three proposals were received by the October 16th deadline: and each was found to be responsive:

- Tolar Manufacturing Company, Inc.
- Future Systems, Inc.
- Decamil dba AC Signs

Based upon the results of the solicitation and evaluation process, staff requested the Board provide the Chief Executive Officer the authority to enter into a goods and services contract with Tolar Manufacturing Company, Inc for a total not-to-exceed contract amount of \$1,500,000 for the initial 3 year term and a not-to-exceed amount of \$300,000 for each option year. Funding for purchases under this contract will be allocated annually in the Nashville MTA Capital Budget.

Mary Griffin made a motion to approve the Shelter Vendor Contract Award. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- c. **Bulk Fluids Contract Award (M-A-20-028)**: Chief Operating Officer Bill Miller presented the following board action details:

The purchase of bulk fluids and lubrication products are to be used for required bus maintenance to revenue and support vehicles in the WeGo Public Transit fleet. All approved fluids and lubrication products meet or exceed manufacturers published requirements. This is to ensure warranty requirements are met for fleet vehicles that are under base warranty and to ensure fluids and lubricants that are being used meet or exceed manufacturers requirements.

The Procurement Department issued an Invitation to Bid (ITB) for the purchase of bulk fluids and vehicle lubricants on October 19, 2020. This solicitation will result in an award of an initial three (3) year contract with two (2) one (1) year options which would begin on December 1, 2020, and end on November 30, 2023. The ITB solicitation was sent to ten (10) vendors directly and posted on NashvilleMTA.gov. There were three (3) companies that submitted bids by the October 29, 2020 deadline: Kimbro Oil Company, Parman Energy, and Key Oil Company.

All submittals were reviewed for responsiveness and compliance to the required specifications, by Procurement Staff and by the Maintenance Department Staff. After a detailed review of the submitted bids, Parman Energy was determined to be the lowest responsive bidder.

The staff recommended the Board to authorize the CEO to approve a contract with Parman Energy, to provide bulk fluids and vehicle lubricants. This contract shall not exceed \$1,685,000 for the maximum contract period of five years.

Mary Griffin made a motion to approve the Bulk Fluids Contract Award. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- d. **New Flyer Bus Purchase (M-A-20-029)**: Chief Operating Officer Bill Miller presented the following board action details:

Concurrent with MTA's efforts to operate within our Capital Fleet Replacement Plan for 60' Articulated Buses, staff requests approval to order five (5) New Flyer of America Inc. Clean Diesel 60' Articulated Buses to replace five (5) NABI 60' Articulated Buses that were built and purchased in 2009 and have met Federal Transit Administration (FTA) replacement criteria. The purchase will be made under the Commonwealth of Virginia's contract with New Flyer of America Inc. The approval of this purchase is consistent with the agency's efforts to execute a more balanced schedule for capital spending, and fleet replacement.

If approved, these buses will replace vehicles referenced above that have met the end of their useful life and are no longer recommended for service. Considering lead time for the production scheduling, maintenance staff anticipates delivery dates for these five (5) replacement vehicles in the 1st quarter of FY22.

According to the Federal Law, WeGo may purchase rolling stock and related equipment from any State's cooperative procurement contract or schedule. The Commonwealth of Virginia contract with New Flyer of America Inc. allows other Federally Funded Agencies the right to purchase from this contract. The Procurement Department followed the Federal requirements by ensuring the Commonwealth of Virginia contract that was awarded was a full and open competition and is not subject to geographical preferences. To confirm the bus purchase complies with the FTA's 70% Buy America requirements, WeGo's third-party inspector, First Transit, conducted the required Pre-Award Audit. The audit found that the overall bus components equated to 70.15% American Built Content and met the FTA's final assembly requirements, proving compliance to Buy America requirements. When bus production is completed, First Transit will perform post-delivery inspection as well confirming Buy American content requirements are met. Additionally, if approved by the board, all Federal clauses are issued with the purchase order.

The staff recommended the Board provide the Chief Executive Officer to approve the purchase of five (5) replacement 60' Articulated buses from New Flyer of America Inc. for the attainment of replacement vehicles used in Fixed Route Service.

The total sum for this purchase is \$3,920,266.49 (\$784,053.30 per bus) the cost per bus includes tools and training. Funding sources for the Purchase of the vehicles will be funded utilizing a 2018 Federal 5339b discretionary award that is matched by a TDOT and approved Metro Capital Funds.

Mary Griffin made a motion to approve the New Flyer Bus Purchase. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- e. **Monthly Financial Compared to Budget Report (OF-D-20-025)**: The Monthly statement of operations for the month of September 2020 compared to the budget and balance sheet as of September 30, 2020 was included in this month's board packet for review but was not discussed board meeting. Chair Williams advised anyone with questions to contact CFO Ed Oliphant at ed.oliphant@nashville.gov. There was no further discussion at this time.
- f. **Monthly Operating Statistics (OF-D-20-026)**: The Monthly Operating Statistics Report through September 30, 2020 was included in this month's board packet for review but was not discussed board meeting. Chair Williams advised anyone with questions to

contact Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg at dan.freudberg@nashville.gov. There was no further discussion at this time.

VII. CEO's Report:

1. Like everyone in the nation, we are concerned about the recent significant uptick in positive COVID-19 cases. We continue to employ enhanced cleaning measures on our vehicles and facilities and continue to deploy security personnel to supplement our Operators efforts to enforce the city's mask mandate. Operator barriers have been installed on almost all of our buses. Unfortunately, we have seen some decline in rider compliance, with recent surveys putting us in the high 70 to low 80% range. Of significant concern, we have seen a tripling of the number of employees we have on leave for COVID – either by testing positive or being exposed to someone testing positive and awaiting test results. This week, the number of people off is just about 40.
2. Ridership has been stable at about 50% of normal for the past several months. Of course, we know who hasn't been riding – largely our downtown commuters and students. However, I want to take a special note of who has been riding – the critical service workers (largely low wage) who have kept this region running while many people have been fortunate to be able to work from home. These are the folks who are cleaning our hospitals, stocking our supermarket shelves, and cooking the meals we have delivered by Uber Eats. With a segment of our community questioning the value of transit, after all why have it when no one is riding it? it will be critically important for this Board to advocate for the continuity, expansion and full funding of our services.
3. Progress on a number of our capital projects continues at a good pace:
 - a. For the North Nashville Transit Center, all property documentation is in place and we are advancing into preliminary design. Two active pieces of the project are the preparation of a scope for demolition of the existing structures on the site, and the traffic study that will dictate how much right of way we will need for the outbound station on Clarksville Pike. Public engagement on the initial phases of design is expected to begin shortly after the first of the year. Our Planning and Grants staff are currently preparing responses to questions posed by TDOT with respect to our pending IMPROVE Act Grant for this project.
 - b. We have consultants developing a design solution to permanently address the sinkhole in our Nestor Bus Lot. This will entail decommissioning a failing sewer line that currently runs beneath the lot. You should see more on this project in early 2021, as well as a study we are currently undertaking to evaluate our future options for renovations of the Nestor facility.
 - c. We are in the process of replacing our telephone system, which will significantly enhance our call center capabilities for Customer Care and Access; as well as make it easier for more of our employees to work from home if necessary. Zeda Riggs, who runs our Customer Care Center and our IT Department have been instrumental in advancing this project.
 - d. We have received all our new buses scheduled for delivery, and 6 have completed their acceptance testing and are now in revenue service.
4. With Bill Miller's planned retirement early next year, we are interviewing several candidates to fill the position. We hope to have someone in place by early February.
5. Beta testing on our new QuickTicket mobile payment and smart card system has begun, and it was hard for me to contain my enthusiasm when I was able to board the bus using my phone. Fortunately, the new barriers prevented me from hugging the Operator.
6. This past Tuesday, The Metro Council adopted a resolution endorsing Mayor Cooper's Metro Nashville Transportation Plan by a vote of 33-5, with 1 abstaining. There were 3

amendments offered and accepted into the plan. Those having some impact on WeGo include an amendment by Councilman O'Connell committing to include a study of high capacity transit in the West End Corridor, and another from Councilman Rhoten requesting a Star station at Central Pike. Overall, the plan calls for an increase in capital spending for transit projects of \$825.9 million over 10 years, and an additional \$35.21 million in annual operating investment in current year dollars. Now comes the hard part of figuring out how to pay for it.

7. As discussed earlier, given the adoption of the Mayor's Transportation Plan, current trends resulting from the pandemic, and last year's 45% operating funding cut from Metro; it will be extremely urgent for us to communicate our budgetary needs for FY2021-22 to the Mayor, Council and broader community in order to
8. On the RTA side:
 - a. Two of the four locomotives have been completely rebuilt and are in service, working well. The third locomotive is currently at the rebuilder in St. Louis, in the early stages of its rehabilitation.
 - b. Mt. Juliet Station is all but complete, with just a few punch list items remaining. We are currently working with the City of Mt. Juliet on a long-term maintenance agreement.

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

IX. **Chair's Report:**

Chair Williams reiterated her comments on the budget discussion by saying, the budget should be fully funded to be able to run the service as we had in the past, and whatever is needed to make certain that we're where we should be. She said that she would draft a letter to the Mayor's office in support of our budget proposal over the holidays, and possibly present it to the board at the January meeting.

Chair Williams congratulated Ms. Faye DiMassimo for her hard work on the Mayor's Transportation Plan. She said that she has worked tirelessly in the community and holds the equity banner very high, and lives and works by it. She said that she's excited to work alongside staff with the Mayor's office on the transportation plan and thanked everyone for their efforts.

Chair Williams wished everybody good health and happiness over the holidays. She said It's a time to recharge and get together with our families safely. She said that it might not look like what we're accustomed to seeing, but it's still going to look the way it should, and that is with love and comfort, whether it's in person or online.

Chair Williams thanked CEO Bland for his unwavering leadership during these unprecedented times. Additionally, she thanked staff for their hard work and said that MTA employees are essential to the citizens of Nashville.

- X. **Adjournment:** There was no further discussion and the meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary