

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

February 25, 2021

- 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, February 25, 2021 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. 71 in order to discuss essential business.
- II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Mary Griffin, Member; Walter Searcy, Member; Secretary Margaret Behm; Chief Executive Officer Stephen G. Bland, Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner, Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant, Chief Operating Officer Bill Miller, Chief Development Officer Trey Walker, Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg, Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad, Director of Procurement and Business Diversity Amber Gooding, Project Manager Lydia Benda, and Sr. Executive Assistant and Board Liaison Monica Howse.

A quorum was established, and Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Mary Griffin made a motion to approve the January 28, 2021 minutes. The motion was seconded by Walter Searcy 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.

Jessica Dauphin

Ms. Jessica Dauphin's comments were as follows:

- Ms. Dauphin, President and CEO of the Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee said transit alliance supports WeGo's ongoing efforts to preserve access to transit, and they continue to educate residents of the region about the value of transit and how it adds to the quality of lives, including health, environment, economy and pathways to equity.
- Ms. Dauphin concluded by saying she was saddened to see that WeGo only received a small percentage of its' submitted capital spending requests, and Transit Alliance is working diligently to see that the annual operating budget is fully restored to WeGo, including the Tier II ask through their new transit advocacy training program and tool kit on their website. Ms. Dauphin said with every issue that Nashville is struggling with will come a silo, be it housing, affordability, education, or even providing equitable services, transit underscores them all. She believes being fully funded would support helping citizens return to work and school with greater efficiency and efficacy.

Darius Knight

Mr. Darius Knight's comments were as follows:

- Mr. Knight said that he appreciated the hard work and dedication of staff, particularly in the Planning & Operations departments for helping to keep people safe during the extreme weather last week. He also expressed his appreciation to Mr. Dan Freudberg, Ms. Zeda Riggs and the Customer Care Department for their timely response in resolving QuickTicket System issues.
- Mr. Knight said in order to ensure that Nashville's future is bright, everybody needs to reach out to council members regarding the drastic need for funding.

- Mr. Knight asked everybody to do all they can to encourage bus operators and maintenance staff during these uncertain and difficult times.
- Mr. Knight suggested that we expand our advertising opportunities by building relationships with Amazon and maybe some ideas of naming rights to Central (ie: future of downtown bus routing like a Amazon Circuit from the Broadway location to Vanderbilt to the WeGo Star).

John Bull

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

- Mr. Bull said that he appreciated that his bus arrived on schedule when he went to go take his first Covid vaccine.
- Mr. Bull said that he was a frequent rider of buses 52, 55, 7 and 23, and generally the buses are all clean and on time.
- Mr. Bull thanked the staff for all that they do and said that everything seems to be running smoothly.
- Mr. Bull said in order for transportation to better we need to get the funding where it needs to be.

IV. Operations & Finance Committee Report: Walter Searcy introduced the following items for discussion and action:

- Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget (OF-D-21-003):** Chief Operating Officer Ed Oliphant reported and reflected on the statement of operations for the month of December 2020 compared to the budget and balance sheet as of December 31, 2020. CFO Oliphant availed himself for questions and there was no further discussion at this time.
- Monthly Operating Statistics (OF-D-21-004):** Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through December 31, 2020. Mr. Freudberg availed himself for questions and there was no further discussion at this time.
- Quarterly Ridership Performance Report (OF-D-21-005):** Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through December 31, 2020. Mr. Freudberg availed himself for questions and there was no further discussion at this time.
- Purchase of WeGo Access Vehicles (M-A-21-002):** Chief Operating Officer Bill Miller reported the following:

In September 2017, the Board approved the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) to enter into a three-year contract with two one-year options for the purchase of up to 135 Champion Body-on-Chassis Vehicles under the procurement contract labeled #2015561. During the procurement evaluation process, several end-user departments (including Maintenance, Information Technology, Parts, Operations, Safety, and WeGo Access) re-evaluated the internal configuration of these vehicles to ensure optimal operating ease and safety for both operator and customers.

Staff requested that the Board provide the Chief Executive Officer authority to approve the purchase of Twenty - Five (25) replacement Champion Body on Chassis Cutaways from Central States Bus Sales Inc. for the attainment of replacement vehicles used in WeGo Access Service. The total sum for this purchase is not to exceed \$3,572,675 (\$142,907 per bus). Purchase of the vehicles will be funded utilizing Federal formula 5339 State of Good Repair funds with State and Local Match.

Walter Searcy made made a recommendation to approve the Purchase of WeGo Access Vehicles action items. Mary Griffin made a motion to accept this recommendation, and it was unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- e. **Nestor Facility Pavement Repair (M-A-21-003)**: Facility Manager Patrick Hester reported the following:

The Nestor facility serves over 270 fleet vehicles a day for operations, parking, and maintenance. This project will replace the pavement by first addressing the subsurface conditions that have caused the deterioration and then installing a new paved area. The Nestor facility will continue to operate during construction; however, the bus wash area will be affected. As time is of the essence to complete the work, the contract terms include liquidated damages of \$1,057 per day for delays in completion beyond the contract's planned 21-day construction duration.

The Invitation to Bid (ITB) was published on the agency website and in Transit Talent on December 2, 2020. The project has a 14% DBE participation goal and 37 DBE firms with certifications indicating they perform the work included in the project were contacted. The solicitation was also sent to the Tennessee Road Builders Association for distribution to their paving contractor members. Three bids were received on the solicitation due date of January 14, 2021. Bids were received from: Push 4J Construction, \$349,893.62; Wright Construction, \$383,285; and SBW Constructors, \$434,375. All bids were comparable to the project estimate of \$397,150.

Walter Searcy made a recommendation that the Board provide the Chief Executive Officer the authority to enter a construction contract with Push 4J Construction for an amount of \$381,783.12 which includes the base bid and an alternate for subgrade cement stabilization. Mary Griffin made a motion accept this recommendation, and it was unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- f. **Ground Maintenance Contract (M-A-21-004)**: Facility Manager Patrick Hester reported the following:

In January 2017, Beard Property Maintenance, INC. was awarded as a DBE Contractor, the grounds maintenance service contract with Nashville MTA. The contract includes ground maintenance services at four (4) Nashville MTA Facilities: Nestor, Myatt, Central and the Bellevue Park and Ride.

Ground Maintenance Services for Nestor, Myatt, Central, and Bellevue include:

- **Continual**: (Peak and non-peak) Mowing, edging, blowing, and debris removal
- **Quarterly**: Mulch bed treatment of shrubs and flowers, lawn fertilization, and weed control
- **Semi-Annual**: Fall and Spring cleaning: Tree trimming, aerating & over seeding, and clearing of overgrown land & brush
- **As Needed**: Pesticide/fungicide applications
- **On Call Service**: Snow removal and deicing, Tree removal

Walter Searcy made a recommendation that the Board approve an increase of \$91,000.00 for the Ground Maintenance Contract, resulting in a not-to-exceed contract value of \$390,460.00 in order to maintain ground service needs through January 13, 2022. Funds utilized within this contract are part of the operating budget for each Nashville MTA facility. Mary Griffin made a motion to accept this recommendation, and it was unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- V. **New Initiatives & Community Engagement Committee Report**: In the absence of Vice Chair Janet Miller, Mary Griffin introduced the following items for discussion:

- a. **Spring 2021 Service Changes & Title VI Analysis (M-A-21-005)**: Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad presented the following for discussion and approval:

During its December 17, 2020 meeting, the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board reviewed recent ridership trends and a series of approaches for service changes to address the temporary emergency adjustments utilized for most of 2020 to respond quickly to changing conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ridership patterns that surfaced from the outset of the pandemic are likely to be much longer lasting than the restrictions we face on personal interactions until a significant percentage of the population has been vaccinated. Combined with service enhancement needs that have been unmet for a long time, and enumerated in the Better Bus Service Improvement Strategy, these trends call for a longer term adjustment to our service patterns than the temporary changes permitted under Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations.

Staff developed a service changes proposal and presented it to the public for review and comments. The formal comment period for proposed service changes was open between January 25 and February 15, 2021. WeGo staff held virtual public hearings on February 4th and February 9th. Staff presented the proposed service changes to the public at these meetings, answered questions, and received comments for the official record. All meetings were advertised in local newspapers, posted at WeGo Central, on the WeGo website, and on social media outlets, including Facebook events, and Nextdoor events. An onboard bus announcement was placed on our buses as well. Route-specific maps were posted at bus bays for routes 23 and 34, and rider outreach was sought at these bus bays and onboard these routes. Copies of the presentation materials were made available on the agency's website at WeGoTransit.com, including public meeting materials and a comprehensive chart with all proposed changes by route. Additionally, the public notice and the presentation were translated into Spanish and posted on the WeGo website.

There was a general discussion about the public's feedback regarding service reductions and how we monitor what ridership will be when people return to work. Felix Castrodad said that we didn't see an overwhelming response, but we received a total of 41 comments via phone, email, Twitter, Facebook, Nashville MTA Board meeting public comments, virtual public meetings, and via Customer Care's COM system. Comments ranged from general to specific. Themes included: clarification on frequency and span of service; stop requests and retention; feedback on routing, layovers and stops for Routes 23 Dickerson and 34 Opry Mills; questions about Route 24 Bellevue as MNPS students return to in person learning, and requests to retain Route 72 Grassmere/Edmonson. CEO Bland concluded by saying that we will be monitoring RTA ridership, which is down to the 80-90% range. If we see Metro restore us to our baseline, then we can get those bus routes back sooner.

Mary Griffin made a recommendation to approve the Spring 2021 Service Changes & Title VI Analysis action item. Mr. Searcy made a motion to accept this recommendation, and it was unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- b. WeGo Business Diversity Program (NICE-D-21-002):** Director of Procurement and Business Diversity Amber Gooding presented the following for discussion and approval:

At the September Board meeting, staff presented the DBE goal and methodology for 2021 through 2023. At the conclusion, Chair Williams requested regular updates. The Procurement Department's implementation of the roll out is progressing. The compliance module and vendor data base were launched in mid-January. As a result, tracking diversity spends is now automated with prime and subcontractors confirming payments monthly.

Ms. Amber Gooding availed herself for questions and there was none at this time. However, Ms. Amber Gooding was complimented for a good report and for positioning Nashville MTA to be a leader for others to follow.

- c. Nolensville Stop Improvement Project (NICE-D-21-003):** Project Engineer Lydia Benda presented the following for discussion and approval:

WeGo staff, with the assistance of consultants from CDM Smith, completed the design and construction plans for key transit stops. This effort includes coordination with Tennessee Department of Transportation (TOOT) Region 3, TDOT Headquarters, Metro Public Works,

and Metro Planning. The plans consist of design concepts from the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Transit Street Design Guide. The designs reflect WeGo's Transit Design Guidelines and exemplify WeGo's expectations to comply with current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. The new transit stop designs update amenities, improve safety, facilitate service operation, and enhance access to transit.

The construction package included 18 upgraded transit stops. WeGo contracted with SBW Constructors for the construction of the project. As of December 2020, the contractor completed sixteen of the eighteen stops. All the transit stops are complete except for the two custom shelter Wal mart inbound and outbound stops south of Welshwood Drive which are targeted for completion in the first half of 2021.

Chair Williams asked if WeGo has had conversations or partnerships with the construction workers at the Nashville Fairground Stadium. CDO Trey Walker said that they have met with them on several occasions and he participates in monthly coordination where information is exchanged regarding stadium construction, infrastructure projects, and what the next steps will look like.

VI. CEO's Report: CEO Bland reported the following:

1. CEO Bland said after significant concern with the post-Thanksgiving spike in cases resulting in as many as 40 of our employees being off – either having tested positive, or awaiting test results – active cases have come back to 7 as of this morning. Hopefully, we will hold the line until our employees can be vaccinated. Right now, they fall into the “critical infrastructure category” for vaccine priority, and we’re hopeful that they will begin their vaccinations in April.
2. As vaccinations have begun to become available for highly vulnerable populations, we have partnered with Metro Health, MDHA and Neighborhood Health Services to provide Access service to those citizens receiving vaccines who do not have an alternate mode of transportation. When they arrange their vaccination appointments, they can indicate that they need transportation. Thursday, Access gets these details for trips the following week. To date, this program has served over 50 people.
3. The Mayor released his Capital Spending Plan, which is currently undergoing Council review before anticipated action in March. Overall, the plan is one of the largest Metro has issued, with over \$474.6 million for projects. Among the wide-ranging projects are \$121.9 million (just over ¼) programmed toward implementation of the recently adopted City Transportation Plan. Although only \$6.6 million is programmed directly for transit projects, we are hopeful that planned investments in sidewalks, traffic management systems, and the Downtown Neighborhood Traffic Study will have long-term benefits for public transportation. MTA and RTA were programmed for \$6.66 million in capital spending, out of our total request of \$21.5 million.
4. Members received copies of our FY2021-22 Operating Budget Submission to Metro. As previously discussed, this request asks for restoration to our baseline funding level of \$51.6 million plus an additional \$3.2 million toward the Better Bus service expansion outlined in the City’s Transportation Plan. Metro’s current schedule will have us meeting with them to review the budget request between March 15 and April 3; and budget assembly based on departmental requests, mayoral priorities and revenue projections during the month of April, with the Mayor’s budget being released on April 1 for Council consideration and adoption by June 30.
5. CDO Trey Walker and Ms. Lydia Benda briefly spoke on the progress of the Nolensville Pike stop upgrade project. Progress also continues on a number of our capital projects at a good pace:

- a. Outreach efforts have begun on the North Nashville Transit Center Project, as our communications consultants have started interviews with key community stakeholders. We are in the process of advertising bids for demolition of existing structures on the property, and we anticipated bringing forward the design contract authorization to you next month.
 - b. Next month, we also anticipate bringing forward a construction contract award recommendation for the Green Hills/Hillsboro Pike Transit Center. This will keep us on pace to complete construction of the center this summer. Work on related right of way activities along Hillsboro Pike is occurring now.
 - c. The Quick Ticket Fare Collection project keeps moving along in its current beta test mode. If COVID has had one benefit, it's that the reduced level of ridership has made managing the volume of transactions more manageable. Now, however, we are getting to a point where more volume to step up putting the system through its' paces will be beneficial, so herd immunity can't come soon enough.
6. Ms. Lydia Benda reported that the Nolensville Pike project had been awarded Walk Bike Nashville's "Most Walkable/Bikeable Project" outside the urban core. In addition, Mr. Justin Cole was nominated for Walk Bike Nashville's "Government Champion of the Year" for his role in promoting pedestrian and bicycle accessibility. Although Justin did not win the award, this important recognition is a terrific testimony to the partnerships we're building in making our system more accessible to more users.
 7. Speaking of testing, at previous meetings, we've briefed you on our mobility on demand first mile/last mile pilot program. Several months ago, the board approved a contract with Uber to start this pilot up. Uber has set up the software necessary to implement this program, and we are currently working with them on internal testing to track the transaction and reporting flow. After these tests are completed, we will initiate beta testing some time over the next several months. We will be marketing this new service model as "WeGo Link."
 8. CEO Bland provided updates on 2 key staff changes; Bill Miller will be wrapping up his full-time duties as our Chief Operating Officer over the next couple weeks, and Andy Burke will be joining us as the new COO. Andy comes to us from the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority in the Silicon Valley of California, where he had responsibility for their contracted service, rail shuttles and innovative flexible services like our WeGo Link service.
 9. Also, CEO Bland previously reported that our Director of Marketing Jason Minser left the organization. CAO Rita Roberts-Turner and CEO Bland are currently reviewing resumes, and expect to begin interviews in the next month.
 10. On the RTA side:
 - a. We had an unfortunate accident on the WeGo Star yesterday afternoon where a locomotive struck someone on the tracks near Donelson Station.
 - b. Mt. Juliet Station is complete. The developer of the Vintage Station North Mixed Use Development on the opposite side of the tracks from the station is working with us, the City and the railroad to construct a platform on their site to enable boarding on both sides of the train.
 - c. Procurement Staff are currently preparing a "Request for Information" to the consulting community to support an examination of options for significantly enhancing the Star, with a focus on how to add additional trips.

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

VIII. Chair's Report: Chair Williams reported the following:

Chair Williams thanked the board members and staff; she said, just by virtue of the agenda, it's evident that staff is working extremely hard, diligently and very intentional to make certain that MTA (WeGo) is #1 of the most equitable transit systems in America.

Chair Williams expressed her appreciation to Ms. Mary Griffin and Ms. Amanda Clelland for working together to draft correspondence to make certain the Mayor understands the critical need for Nashville MTA to be fully funded. This correspondence should be complete and ready to go out in mid-March.

Chair Williams expressed her condolences to the family of Ms. Elizabeth Duff, our first African-American female bus operator, who recently passed away from COVID-19. Ms. Duff worked with us for over 40 years and will be missed.

Chair Williams thanked COO Bill Miller for all of the work that he has done and will continue to do for Nashville MTA, and wished him the best in his future endeavors.

Chair Williams said that she was recently interviewed as a stakeholder for the North Nashville Project and said that this project is moving in the right direction and positions us to be a good leader, and be the example of excellence and equity in Nashville. This project will create so many opportunities for Nashvillians.

- IX. Adjournment:** With no further business, Chair Williams called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Walter Searcy made a motion to adjourn and the meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary