

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

November 21, 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, November 21, 2019.

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

Absent: Janet Miller, Vice Chair

A quorum was established, and Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 2:36 p.m.

- II. **Approval of Minutes:** Minutes of the October 24, 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.

Patrick Green

Mr. Green reported the following:

- He stated that he likes working with our new Chief Operating Officer Bill Miller.
- He said that he thought the resolution to amend the Gillig purchase contract was an excellent idea. He said that he works with the Labor Network for Sustainability, which is all about doing things that are environmentally sound.
- He reminded everyone that he was the voice of reason for the international body. He stated that we can't forget there must always be a just transition and when that just transition doesn't take place, we end up with technology that is purchased that no one below the Mason-Dixon line is qualified to work on. He asked that when we look at purchasing new technology to go beyond the benefit of the technology and ask how to maintain it.

James Thomas

Mr. Thomas reported the following:

- He stated that there is an issue with customers knowing if the Haywood Lane stop is a bus stop or an X stop.

Glen Alan Graham

Mr. Graham reported the following:

- He stated that he appreciates that WeGo is opening new channels for input from bus riders. He was able to share his thoughts and concerns at a recent Transit Out Loud meeting.
- He also appreciates the advisory committee made up of riders
- He stated that the September cutbacks has caused him to walk more, and he honestly appreciates it. He stated that he's had to walk from 6th & Shelby all the way to the downtown bus station, which is not a bad walk.

- He stated that he's concerned the number of buses has increased with inward facing seats than face-forward seats, and such seating is not cost productive.
- He said bus drivers are taking breaks in between runs and saunter back to the waiting bus after the scheduled departure time.
- He stated that whenever he is at the downtown depot in the evenings, the doors to the lobby entries on both levels are already locked an hour or two before the final departure time; this keeps passengers from seeing some of the schedule screens and having access to the drinking fountains.

John Bull

Mr. Bull reported the following:

- He's glad that the Access on Demand (AOD) numbers are really looking good.
- He stated that the State of Tennessee is always pushing Metro Government in cash management issues with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) surplus. He stated that we are great at writing grants and perhaps some of TANF surplus can be steered towards AOD ridership.
- He said on-time performance seems to be ticking up a little bit in light of the problems with maintaining the electric buses. He said that he's glad and is in favor of the resolution to amend the Gillig purchase contract.

Darius Knight

Mr. Knight reported the following:

- He thought amending the Gillig purchase contract was a good thing.
- He asked why we were switching back to the hybrid buses when there are issues with those buses.
- He asked what we were going to do with the 50-foot buses that we've purchased and what is Gillig going to do about the bus issues that we keep reporting.
- He reported the 181 Nabi bus is extremely loud and unsafe.

Ms. Sheila Hansen

Ms. Hansen reported the following:

- She has issues with the way drivers communicate with the visually impaired. She stated that they don't need to speak with hand motions to the visually impaired.
- She stated that drivers are annoyed when passengers ask them to repeat what they said.
- She has an issue with one person taking up three seats on the inward facing seat.
- She has an issue with passengers bullying and bad-mouthing other passengers, and the drivers don't say or do anything about it.

Peter O'Connor

Mr. O'Connor reported the following:

- He would like for there to be extended bus and customer service hours.
- He reported that header signs are still not working on the buses.
- He said the end of the line on Route 52A needs to be moved behind Walgreens.
- He asked if we can have chairs placed in the second level hallway area just outside the meeting room at WeGo Central for latecomers.
- He said there are no results from complaints given to supervisors.

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

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

- a. **Annual Audit Report (M-A-19-028):** The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019 is attached, and the auditors will have hard copies available at the meeting. The attached is a copy of the audited Statement of Operations for FY2019 in the format normally presented to the Committee. We are pleased to report that the Nashville MTA once again received a clean opinion on the report from our auditors and that no material internal control weaknesses were encountered during the audit.

The Nashville MTA's outside accountants from Crosslin were present to review the Annual Report and their required communications at the committee meeting.

The Operations & Finance Committee recommended the Board accept the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019.

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

- b. **Proposed EasyRide Pilot Program (M-A-19-029):** The EasyRide Program is an employer-paid transit pass program to provide employee commuter benefits on Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (RTA) and Nashville MTA services in Middle Tennessee under the name WeGo Public Transit. The program has been used predominantly by the State of Tennessee, Vanderbilt University, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Metro Nashville Public Schools, and several other smaller users.

Over the course of the past two performance audit reports conducted by the Office of the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, RTA received findings relative to the lack of formal agreements between itself and employers participating in the EasyRide program. During review of the program, staff found that program pricing for the business community varied considerably, causing considerable confusion for the staff's understanding of the program and how to sell it. This structure also causes disproportional staff management time every month to track revenue and ridership to prepare invoices. In addition, the lack of an established, consistent pricing structure with defined and predictable monthly or annual costs for participants is a significant barrier to program recruitment of the business community. Current and potential business customers have expressed a strong preference for a consolidated pass program – one which their employees could utilize a single pass for both Nashville MTA and RTA services. Although the original finding of the Comptroller of the Treasury recommended that RTA have individual contracts with each customer, staff expressed the verbal opinion that a consolidated program could work, provided that there was specific documentation relative to pricing structure and revenue splits between the Nashville MTA and RTA and that compensation to the RTA under the program was fair relative to overall use.

In order to both address the findings of the Comptroller of the Treasury and to expand usage of the EasyRide program, Nashville MTA and RTA want to revise the EasyRide program to address the following program objectives:

- All: Simplify program transportation benefits;

- All: Simplify program administration;
- All: Simplify program fee structure to better predict costs and revenues for annual budgeting;
- Nashville MTA/RTA: Protect existing program revenue;
- Nashville MTA/RTA: Grow program participation to increase overall ridership and operating revenue;
- Nashville MTA/RTA: Increase transparency between the two agencies on program revenue and ridership;
- Business Partners: Manage and reduce both direct and indirect transportation costs;
- Business Partners: Provide sustainable and competitive employee benefits.

Given the significant change anticipated in program structure and the varying needs of current and prospective business partners, it would be extremely difficult to recommend a specific structure to address these objectives at this time.

The Operations & Finance Committee recommended the Board provide management the flexibility to work with the business community in developing and entering into pilot agreements for the EasyRide Program. These agreements would stay within the confines of the program objectives defined above and meet the overall requirements for greater formalization of the program as required by the Comptroller of the Treasury. At the point a new EasyRide Program has been developed, we will come back to the Committee and Board for discussion and possible approval of a new permanent EasyRide Program.

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

- c. **Resolution to Amend Gillig Purchase of Replacement Buses (M-A-19-030)**: In March 2019, the Board approved a purchase agreement with Gillig, LLC for the acquisition of 19 40-foot Low-Floor Hybrid Diesel Electric Buses to replace vehicles that had reached the end of their useful life. The maximum amount of the purchase contract was \$14,782,000 (\$778,000 per bus) based on a hybrid diesel electric propulsion system. Funding has been secured through a competitive Federal Section 5339b grant, matched with Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and Metro Capital funds. Buses are scheduled for delivery during late 2020, with final configuration decisions required by mid-December.

Subsequent to this award, Operations staff conducted an evaluation of our hybrid diesel electric program and recommend the Board amend this purchase and planned future purchases for the immediate future of heavy-duty transit coaches from hybrid diesel electric to clean diesel propulsion. This recommendation is based on cost effectiveness, extreme challenges with the reliability of these systems, and very limited emissions benefit from the hybrid diesel electric technology.

The Operations & Finance Committee recommended the Board amend the existing purchase contract with Gillig, LLC for the acquisition of 19 40-foot Low-Floor Hybrid Diesel Electric buses to the acquisition of 19 40-foot Low-Floor Clean Diesel Buses, and that the total sum of this purchase be reduced from \$14,782,000 (\$778,000 per bus) to \$10,165,000 (\$535,000 per bus). Funding for this purchase will still be

comprised of 2018 Federal 5339b discretionary award funding, matched by the TDOT and Metro Capital funding.

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

- d. **Gresham Smith Contract Extension (M-A-19-031)**: In December 2015, Nashville MTA awarded Gresham Smith and Partners (GS&P) an Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) Contract for three years for a not-to-exceed amount of \$2 million with two additional one-year options. The original three-year term expired on December 17, 2018. In April 2018, the Board approved a one-year extension until December 31, 2019, and an increase in the not-to-exceed amount to \$3 million. This contract allows Nashville MTA to retain a qualified professional architectural and engineering firm to perform services associated with any projects or lease holding improvements necessary to maintain and improve the Nashville MTA operations on a task order basis. The agreement contains reasonable and competitive hourly rates that were negotiated prior to contract execution.

The contract expires on December 31, 2019. Current contract allocation is approximately \$2.6 million with approximately \$2.1 million invoiced to date. Nashville MTA is engaged in multiple projects using these services, including the Murfreesboro Pike Transit Signal Priority (TSP) project and the Hillsboro Transit Center, and expects to continue these projects through completion. Given current project allocations, the Murfreesboro Pike TSP project task order requires supplemental funding and Board authorization.

The Operations & Finance Committee recommended the Board provide the CEO the authority to execute a one-year contract extension through December 31, 2020 with GS&P and increase the not-to-exceed value of the entire contract from \$3 million to \$3.5 million.

Additionally, the Committee recommended to the Board provide the CEO the authority to amend the task order under this contract for the continued support of the Murfreesboro Pike TSP project to reflect an increase in not-to-exceed value from \$500,000 to \$643,000.

Funds are available in the previously identified funding sources as identified in the Nashville MTA Capital Plan to cover the additional costs associated with this contract.

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

- e. **Trapeze Sole Source Agreement (M-A-19-032)**: Trapeze Group enterprise software and hardware products are used by WeGo Public Transit for a variety of operations, including route scheduling, fixed-route operations, Access, payroll, real-time information, call center operations, and customer information. Each year, Trapeze Group provides notice of its warranty and maintenance fees for the various products the company provides.

In October 2018, the Nashville MTA Board approved sole source support/warranty and maintenance expenses for Trapeze software products for the FY2019 operational budget in the amount of \$730,000.

In addition, future software and hardware purchases are required to maintain and improve WeGo services. These capital and/or operational expenses have been calculated not to exceed \$2 million.

In order to maintain the level of maintenance support under Information Technology (IT) operations, the Operations & Finance Committee recommended the Board to approve a sole source support/warranty and maintenance agreement for \$769,544 with an additional not-to-exceed amount of \$2 million for future enhancements for a total of \$2,769,544.

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

- f. **Nashville MTA 2020 Committee & Board Meeting Schedule (M-A-19-033):** Attached is the proposed schedule for the 2020 committee and board meetings. Notes for some of the dates are as follows:

July 23 – Historically, the Nashville MTA Board chooses to have an abbreviated meeting either as a board or a committee in July.

November 19 – Thanksgiving falls on the fourth Thursday, so the November meeting will be on the third Thursday.

December 17 – In recent years, the Nashville MTA Board has met earlier in December to free up the week prior to Christmas for travel and family plans for Nashville MTA Board members and staff.

Staff recommended the proposed 2020 meeting dates be adopted and approved by the Board.

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

- V. **New Initiatives and Community Engagement Committee Report:** Glenn Farner stated that there were no actions items to approve at this time.

- VI. **Chair's Report:** Chair Williams stated that this has been a very lengthy, but good meeting. She expressed her appreciation to COO Miller for presenting good reports before this Board. She also said that she was thankful for the drivers and staff, and the work that they do on a regular basis.

Chair Williams asked that the Annual Audit Report be included in the minutes. The Annual Audit Report is incorporated herein by reference.

She concluded by wishing everyone a safe and happy Thanksgiving.

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

- At the Operations & Finance Committee, Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad reported on our quarterly route by route ridership trends. In next quarter's report, we'll see the full impact – at least short term – of the service changes that went into effect on September 29. Service Development and Operations are fine tuning the adjustments, primarily addressing areas of recurring overcrowding and looking at schedule adjustments for the next schedule change to improve on-time performance. Stops and

Shelters have completed all bus stop and shelter changes required by the service changes.

- This past month, winners of our local Bus and Maintenance Roadeos competed at the Tennessee Public Transportation Association (TPTA) Roadeo in Chattanooga. I was proud and happy to report that we brought home one Big Wheel Award and two Big Wrench Awards. Michael Featherston placed first in the 40-foot bus competition; Kevin Sentes placed second in the 35-foot bus competition; Troy Willis placed first in the Bus Maintenance Competition; Pedro Ochoa placed second in the Bus Maintenance Competition; and Christopher Brown placed first in the Van Maintenance Competition. Our state winners will go on to compete against their national peers at the American Public Transportation Association Roadeo (APTA) in San Antonio in the spring.
- We've had several meetings with Nashville Mayor John Cooper's Senior Advisor for Transportation and Infrastructure, Faye DiMassimo. Ms. DiMassimo has extensive experience in transportation, mostly in the Atlanta region, and will be advising the Mayor on broad issues of transportation, mobility, and infrastructure.
- We are currently out to bid for construction of the Nolensville Pike Shelter Improvement project, with bid opening scheduled in December and Board Award scheduled for January. Our pre-bid meeting generated significant contractor interest.
- There are only two remaining items on the Murfreesboro Pike Transit Signal Priority Project – utility closeouts with the Nashville Electric Service and completion of the signal software functional testing and burn-in period. Unfortunately, software testing conducted earlier this week continued to produce system failures that prevent us from accepting this system from the supplier, although our previous on-board software issues appear to have been resolved. The signal software supplier has been formally noticed of their requirement to cure and is working to address the remaining open items.
- CEO Bland attended the special Metro Council Budget and Finance Committee meeting where the State Comptroller briefed the Council on Metro's financial condition. Unfortunately, and as you likely have read, the news was not particularly positive, and we are likely to be in for another year of austerity budgeting. Mayor Cooper and Director of Finance Kevin Crumbo are kicking off the FY2020-2021 budget process early, and we are scheduled to meet Finance staff in December.
- With respect to our fare collection project, we are scheduled to begin internal testing of various fare products next month, with beta testing among a controlled number of customers scheduled for early next year. This past month, we initiated periodic Projective Executive Team meetings including myself, Keith Durbin from Metro IT, senior management from our vendor, and project staff from all 3 organizations to receive updates and resolve high level issues pending on the project.
- CEO Bland, Community Outreach and Engagement Specialist Miriam Leibowitz, and Director of Operations Carolyn Riggs-Farrar attended the annual meeting and update with the Youth Action team from the Oasis Center. About 10 high school students from a variety of schools are on this year's team and have conducted numerous transit-related projects.
- WeGo staff has been actively engaged with City Emergency Management and Social Services staff to support the City's planning for cold weather homeless response. As in

past years, we are providing emergency cold weather transit cards and supporting special moves when the city must activate its emergency shelters.

- RTA Items
 - The second of four WeGo Star locomotives have been shipped off to be rebuilt. It is expected to be returned to service in the spring of 2020.
 - Staff members are working on receiving eight new used cars for the Star from a railroad in Michigan. The sales agreement with the RTA has been completed, and the seller is working on several make ready items before we accept the fleet and move it to Nashville.
 - Construction bids are out for an expansion of the Mt. Juliet Park & Ride Lot. This lot is over capacity at 160 spaces, and we will be adding about 100 spaces. This project has taken on greater urgency as adjoining businesses where overflow riders have been parking have started tagging cars.
 - We have begun discussions with the City of Murfreesboro to potentially advance a joint project that would include construction of a new operating facility for their city bus system, Rover and incorporate a permanent park-and-ride lot for RTA commuter service.

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

IX. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.