

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

September 24, 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, September 24, 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. 51 in order to discuss essential business.

- II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Janet Miller, Vice Chair; Walter Searcy, III, Member; Secretary Margaret Behm; Chief Executive Officer Stephen G. Bland, Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner, Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant, Chief Engineer Trey Walker, Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg, Director of Marketing and Communications Jason Minser, Director of Procurement & Business Diversity Amber Gooding, Sr. Safety Program Manager Nick Oldham, Sr. Advisor for Transportation & Infrastructure Faye DiMassimo, and Board Liaison Monica Howse.

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

- III. **Approval of Minutes:** Vice Chair Janet Miller made a motion to approve the July 23, 2020 minutes. The motion was seconded by Walter Searcy and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- IV. **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 public comments are as follows:

- Mr. Knight mentioned that there are passengers still not wearing masks and the Operations department needs to enforce passengers to wear the masks.
- Mr. Knight stated that there are some 60 ft. buses that have cracked seats and he's sent emails and pictures to the Operations Department and hopes that this can be resolved.
- Mr. Knight concluded his remarks by saying that he hopes that this board and the WeGo staff will address customer concerns about the referendum.

John Bull

Due to technical difficulties, Mr. Bull was not able to leave his verbal public comments, but emailed his written public comments below:

- Mr. Bull said the Department of Transportation & Infrastructure is a very good idea but needs reliable funding and coordination.
- Mr. Bull said the Nolensville bus stops looked great. He noticed that Public Works added pedestrian signals at the Nolensville & Southern Hills intersection and he's hopeful that the State Highway Department will fund the sidewalks project on Nolensville Pike, as it is a state highway.

- V. **Operations & Finance Committee Report:** Chair Walter Searcy reported the following:
 - a. **Resolution for FY2021 Annual Grant Applications (M-A-20-018):** The Nashville

Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) has the authority to receive federal, state and local financial assistance for transportation projects.

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

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) formula funding sources are as follows:

5307 Urbanized Area Formula Funds

When the apportionment is made available, Nashville MTA is eligible to use 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Funds, along with the 10% State and 10% Local match. The FY2020 apportionment for the region, combined with the State and Local match, is \$30,003,022 (total).

5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Funds

Nashville MTA is eligible to use Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Funds. The FY2020 apportionment for the Nashville Urbanized Area, combined with State and Local match, is \$2,099,094 (80% Federal/10% State/10% Local).

5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (EMSID) Funds

Nashville MTA is eligible to receive EMSID funds for projects that will enhance mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities beyond traditional services that are part of a locally developed and coordinated public transit human services transportation plan. At least 55% of the program funds must be used on capital projects and requires a 20% State/Local match; operating assistance requires a 50% State/Local match. The FY2020 Federal apportionment is \$825,452 (Federal amount).

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) funding sources are as follows:

Operating Assistance

Nashville MTA is eligible for State operating assistance from TDOT. The amount for FY2020 was \$4,977,900. The FY 2021 amount has not been published.

Match Assistance

Nashville MTA can request a 10% match from TDOT for all federally executed awards for formula funding of capital or planning projects.

IMPROVE Act Assistance

Nashville MTA can request up to \$3 million (requires a 25% match) for capital projects that support public transportation services.

The attached resolution comprises the annual submittal of Certifications and Assurances for FTA funds and authorization to submit applications for grants with the FTA, the TDOT, and other grant funding entities.

Staff recommended the Board:

- Adopt the attached resolution;
- Authorize the application for 5307, 5339, and 5310 funding and State/Local match;
- Authorize the submittal of application for State Operating Assistance; and,
- Authorize the submittal of applications and execution of contracts for any other federal, state, or local grant funding that may become available during FY2021 for the benefit of Nashville MTA.

There was no further discussion. Vice Chair Janet Miller and seconded by Walter Searcy and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- b. **Agency Safety Plan (M-A-20-019)**: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) granted authority to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to create and enforce a comprehensive framework that will oversee the safety of public transportation throughout the United States. This new authority gave FTA the ability to assist transit agencies in moving towards a more holistic, performance-based approach in Safety Management Systems (SMS).

On July 19, 2018, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) published the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Final Rule, which requires certain operators of public transportation systems that receive federal funds under FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grants to develop plans that include the processes and procedures to implement Safety Management Systems. The plan must include safety performance targets that will be voluntarily shared with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the local Department of Transportation. The PTASP rule became effective on July 19, 2019. Consequently, FTA published a Dear Colleague letter, on the same day, to alert the transit industry of the July 20, 2020 safety compliance deadline. FTA published a Notice of Enforcement Discretion on April 22, 2020 effectively extending the PTASP compliance deadline to December 31, 2020 due to the global Coronavirus pandemic.

Once the plan has been adopted, MTA will move towards finalizing the entire Safety Management System as a systematic and comprehensive approach to identifying and mitigating safety hazards and risks associated with transit system operations and related maintenance activities which will further help us address FTA regulations established by Section 5329(d) of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act signed into law by President Barack Obama on July 6, 2012. A brief high-level overview of our Agency Safety Plan will be provided by Nick Oldham, Senior Safety Program Manager, and copies will be made available.

Staff requested the Board give the Chief Executive Officer the authority to execute the Agency Safety Plan to comply with FTA's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan Final Rule.

There was no further discussion. A motion was made by Walter Searcy and seconded by Vice Chair Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

c. **Upcoming Procurement List**

Pursuant to earlier Board discussions, WeGo staff provided a rolling list of upcoming procurements for board members to review. This list was provided for information purposes and to make staff aware of any potentially interested suppliers for planned procurement activity.

VI. **NICE Committee: Chair Janet Miller reported the following**: Vice Chair Janet Miller reported the following:

- a. **nMotion Status Report (NICE-D-20-006)**: Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning, gave an overview of the nMotion status report and updated the Board on progress made toward the plan implementation. He said, the Nashville MTA adopted the nMotion Strategic Plan in the fall of 2016; a 25-year comprehensive strategy designed to meet Nashville's and the region's vision for transit. The plan was the culmination of an intensive two-year process with over 20,000 engagements from a broad range of Nashvillians and Middle Tennesseans about the future of transit in this region.

The nMotion plan identified several opportunities and outlined a series of strategies to enhance the transit system by improving service, attracting and retaining riders, and meeting the growing needs of the Middle Tennessee region through the year 2040.

The plan consists of service improvement strategies designed to:

- Make service easier to use
- Improve existing services
- Improve access to transit
- Make service more comfortable
- Develop a network of regional transit centers
- Expand service to new areas
- Build a high-capacity/rapid transit network

Since the nMotion plan adoption, the agency has been strategically working on incremental improvements to help advance its strategies within the existing resources. As transit continues to face new challenges related to the economy and the COVID-19 pandemic, the resiliency built into the nMotion plan improvements will play a critical role in enhancing WeGo's relevance for the future.

b. Mayor Cooper's Transportation Plan: Faye DiMassimo, Senior Advisor for Transportation and Infrastructure in the Office of Nashville Mayor John Cooper provided an overview of Mayor Cooper's Transportation Plan. Information will be forthcoming regarding the release of the plan later this year.

c. Establishing Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program Goals (M-A-20-020): In 1994, the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) adopted a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) policy to ensure that DBE firms have the maximum opportunity to participate in contracts funded in part or in whole by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). In May 2011, Nashville MTA approved and adopted an amended policy which incorporated a new three-year FTA reporting requirement. Accordingly, Nashville MTA is required to submit three-year DBE goals to the FTA. The goals are established in part by reviewing anticipated public transit projects and census data for Tennessee businesses as well as meeting with current DBE partners, prime contractors, and various community groups. Through this analysis, the 2021 through 2023 overall DBE goal was determined to be 14%.

Outreach efforts to consult with minority and woman owned firms consisted of an email marketing campaign to approximately 2,000 DBE, SBE and MWBE firms introducing them to WeGo's Procurement and Business Diversity office and inviting them to participate in the DBE Goal Setting Methodology session held on Wednesday August 12th. 28 registered with 23 participants including WeGo staff.

Per FTA regulations, the calculated goal was advertised on WeGo's website for a 30-day public comment period. We have received no comments, questions, or objections regarding the goal; however, we have received a few phone calls inquiring about upcoming opportunities and our diversity program.

Staff recommended the Board approval of the 14% DBE goal for 2021 through 2023.

Chair Williams asked that we see regular updates along the way and Walter Searcy asked that we add the Prime and Sub-Contractors to the reports.

There was no further discussion. A motion was made by Walter Searcy and seconded by Vice Chair Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

d. Access Improvement Study & Technology Assessment (NICE-D-20-007): This board discussion item was deferred to next month's board meeting.

- e. **Update on Advertising Program (NICE-D-20-008)**: This board discussion item was deferred to next month's board meeting.

VII. CEO's Report:

1. First, I want to express my appreciation to everyone for your patience with these remote meetings. As we get more proficient with the technology, we should be able to make them more interactive and engaging. I'll remind you that, once we can return to in person meetings, we'd like to reinstitute our normal process of working discussion of items through our committees, but we have enacted this "consolidated approach" to streamline these meetings.
2. You'll note that my e-mailed COVID updates to you have become less frequent, simply because there hasn't been a lot of new information to report. Ridership has been slightly trending upward, but still remains at about half our normal levels. With the announcement that Metro Schools will not hold on campus high school classes until at least January, we do not anticipate significant ridership increases or service additions until then. We have, however reinstated all front door boarding and full fare collection, as Maintenance has done a great job installing the barriers in our Operators compartments.
3. I hope you all noticed that, this past week when the Metro Nashville Department published its list of "COVID-19 hotspots," public transportation was obvious in its absence from the list. As we have been reporting throughout, we have seen no significant exposure risk to our employees or customers, and this is proving true all over the world. The simple truth is that public transportation is safe to ride, and especially when our employees and riders follow the basic rules of wearing a facial covering, washing their hands frequently, and not riding if they are sick. I have tremendous confidence that we will be able to get our riders back as restrictions continue to lift and economic activity returns. I will note that, while our transit ridership is only at about half its normal level, patronage in our downtown parking garage is well below that, as are other modes like Uber, and airline travel so maybe my confidence is not cockeyed optimism.
4. Progress on a number of our capital projects continues at a good pace:
 - a. For the Nolensville shelter project, 11 shelter sites have been completed to date, and construction has started on 5 more. The largest challenge of this project will likely be the Walmart stop, which is one of the busiest in the system. Engineering and Operations are currently working with Public Works and other affected entities to develop a plan for accommodating passengers during construction, and work has begun on the outbound stop.
 - b. For the Hillsboro/Green Hills Transit Center, phase 1 construction activities in terms of site preparation will take place as it makes sense in the context of the overall school construction project. Our existing stop has been relocated to a temporary location, as work progresses on the intersection relocation. Design for phase 2 construction is wrapping up, and we expect to review the design with you at your October meeting.
 - c. For the North Nashville Transit Center, we will file legislation with Metro Council this week for two specific items – one related to a change in language on a previously funded capital project to allow us to use these funds for the North Nashville Project, and an action authorizing a payment in lieu of taxes agreement on our portion of the development site that would have the sole impact of making the MTA's portion of the property exempt from property taxes, as all our other properties are. Pre-design activities continue, including platting so the Planning Commission can approve a property subdivision separating our site from the

remainder of the property, and scoping for the demolition of the existing building on site and removal of underground storage tanks. Initial outreach meetings have also been held by property owners on the adjacent parcels, with positive outcomes so far.

5. As reported by Ms. DiMassimo, we continue to work with the Mayor's Office on developing a new transportation plan, with a goal of releasing the plan for comment later this year. Supporting this release, our Planning and Communications staff are developing an interactive web site with expansive information about the Better Bus portions of the plan. This site will be available concurrent with release of the plan by the Mayor's Office.
6. Work continues on our new fare collection system, primarily delayed by the COVID-19 conditions. Now that we are back to full fare collection, we are recruiting riders to beta test smart card and mobile payment app functions over the next few months.
7. You may have seen recent reporting on Channel 5 about the potential impacts of a pending Metro Charter Referendum on transit service, as well as other Metro services. Passage of a measure that would roll back this year's Metro budget would have a longstanding negative impact on WeGo Public Transit services, and we would expect major service reductions if this were to take place. In 2019, the hard work of our staff allowed us to minimize the damage of a 10% reduction in service hours necessitated by a reduction in State funding in 2018. This was done by focusing on redundant services and those with extremely low patronage. That well is now just about dry, and any further service reductions required due to funding cuts would have disastrous impacts on thousands of individuals, many of them the most vulnerable in our community.
8. On the RTA side:
 - a. All of the new passenger cars for the WeGo Star are in service and operating well. Work is also wrapping up on the rebuilding of the 2nd of 4 locomotives.
 - b. With respect to the Mt. Juliet Station, work is progressing well, current users are being relocated to the new section of lot to allow the contractor to resurface the existing lot. We expect this project to be completed by the end of the year, and it will add about 100 spaces to the lot, as well as better connect the station to the City's trail system.

CEO Bland paused for comments and questions and there were none at this time.

VIII. Chair's Report:

Chair Williams expressed thanks and appreciation to CEO Bland for his hard work and leadership. She also thanked Ms. Monica Howse for never missing a beat during her mother's illness and death.

Chair Williams acknowledged and thanked Ms. Amber Gooding and Mr. Nick Oldham for their hard work and being first time presenters at the MTA Board Meeting.

Chair Williams thanked the drivers and staff for getting passengers to and from necessary appointments. She said, our drivers are on the front lines, risking their lives so that our passengers have reliable transportation.

Chair Williams said that she appreciated Ms. Faye DiMassimo for being present at the meeting and for her collaborative efforts.

Chair Williams concluded her remarks by saying that the board members are here to help in any way that they can and asked the staff and public to feel free reach out to them whenever they need them.

IX. **Adjournment:** There was no further discussion and the meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary