

**NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

**November 19, 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; Walter Searcy, III, 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, Director of Marketing and Communications Jason Minser, Chief Engineer Trey Walker, Community Outreach Specialist & 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:** Vice Chair Janet Miller made a motion to approve the October 22, 2020 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.

**Darius Knight**

Mr. Darius Knight was not able to join the virtual meeting, but sent his written public comments, they are as follows:

- Mr. Knight would like to know when the 19 40ft Gillig buses will be coming into service to take the strain off the older remaining 800 buses.
- Mr. Knight said that he noticed that a number of buses are not being cleaned and is starting to dip off. He said, a few drivers are now cleaning their own buses with their own supplies.
- Mr. Knight is concerned that some drivers are still driving some of the Gillig, Proterra and New Flyer buses without dividers/shields.
- Mr. Knight thanked WeGo staff for making sure that bus rides were free on Election Day. He said, the community was made aware and it showed the community that staff are concerned with not just transit, but the livelihood of customers.
- Mr. Knight asked that the Operations and Safety departments to have strict, direct conversations with drivers about WeGo Central. The operators are blocking crosswalks and blocking bays with up to 2-3 buses trying to park in one bay. The downstairs side (4th Ave.) horseshoe keeps getting blocked at different times of the day when the 55 bays are full. They block the other buses, making routes like the 18, 52, 96 and others late pulling in and out of WeGo Central. The fact that this also creates a safety issue, as someone can end up getting hit inside of Central. Overall, Mr. Knight said that he didn't believe this was intentional on the operators' part because the operators are just trying to park close enough to get passengers on and off, but this is still not a good spot to do so. Mr. Knight said that he didn't want to see WeGo get sued over something that can be preventable.

- Mr. Knight asked if WeGo will consider a pull back with service times because of the rise in Covid cases, or will it be another modified version of times issued to the public? Mr. Knight asked because he noticed a few routes that have too many passengers and many of them are still not socially distancing, even after drivers have asked the passengers to do so.
- Mr. Knight thanked everyone in advance and encouraged everyone to be safe and have a great week.

### **John Bull**

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

- Mr. Bull stated the Nolensville Pike shelter project is looking great. He said, currently, there is a lot of activity at both the Welshwood stops.
- Mr. Bull said that he noted three agencies (Public Works, TDOT and WeGo Public Transit) working together on this project.
- Mr. Bull said that he's hopeful with Nolensville Pike being one of Tennessee's state roads that maybe sidewalks could be addressed by TDOT.
- Mr. Bull stated that he recently noticed that riders are being more attentive and cooperative with wearing masks. They are honoring the social distance rules and noses are being covered.
- Mr. Bull said that he's hopeful that Uber can be involved in "That Last Mile" at the discounted rate. Perhaps fold the Uber charge into the WeGo fare.
- Mr. Bull said that he hopes that we can get Wi-Fi on the buses and at the bus station because a lot of students may need Wi-Fi access, especially after Thanksgiving. He would like to know what it would take for these two areas.
- Mr. Bull wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and said that this will be a special time this year.

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

- Monthly Financial Compared to Budget Report (OF-D-20-023):** Chief Operating Officer Ed Oliphant reported and reflected on the statement of operations for the month of September 2020 compared to the budget and balance sheet as of September 30, 2020. There was no further discussion at this time.
- Annual Audit Report (M-A-20-023):** Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant and Erica Saeger from Crosslin reviewed the Annual Report and their required communications at the board meeting.

The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020 was emailed to board members prior to the meeting and provided for the staff and community at the meeting. Included in the report was a copy of the Audited Statement of Operations for FY 2020. We are pleased to report that the 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 Committed requested that the Board accept the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020.

Mary Griffin made a motion to approve the Annual Audit Report. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- c. **Monthly Operating Statistics (OF-D-20-024)**: Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through September 30, 2020. There was no further discussion at this time.

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

- a. **Access Improvement Study & Technology Assessment (NICE-D-20-010)**: Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg provided the board with the following update on the Access Improvement Study & Technology Assessment:

WeGo Public Transit provides advance reservation, door-to-door paratransit service for customers with disabilities throughout Davidson County (beyond the federally required service area of  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile around fixed route), averaging approximately 37,000 passengers per month (prior to COVID-19). Trips are provided through a combination of agency-operated vehicles and third-party service providers. 10-15% of paratransit trips occur on the Access-on-Demand program, a customer-choice, same-day, premium service option for paratransit-eligible customers.

Staff are in the planning stages of a project that will entail a comprehensive review of the entire Access program. Workshops and brainstorming sessions have been conducted with dozens of staff members across many departments to get a more complete understanding of the challenges and opportunities currently facing the program. Potential areas of focus are also being discussed with and reviewed by the Access Policy Advisory Committee. This collective feedback, along with input provided today by members of the NICE Committee, will be used to inform the development of a Scope of Work to be included in a competitive solicitation for 3<sup>rd</sup> party consulting services to conduct the study in close coordination with agency staff and stakeholders.

Staff are reviewing the project concept with the New Initiatives and Community Engagement (NICE) Committee and other internal and external stakeholders at this early stage to ensure that the project scope and objectives are aligned with the needs of the agency and its customers. Following the discussion, there was general discussion and feedback to help develop a Scope of Work for incorporation into a Request for Proposals (RFP) for professional consulting services. Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg said the RFP will be issued towards the end of calendar year 2020, with a recommendation for award to be brought before the NICE Committee in early 2021 following a competitive review and selection process.

- b. **Update on Advertising Program (NICE-D-20-011)**: Director of Marketing & Communications Director Jason Minser provided the following update on the Advertising Program:

The Board adopted and revised advertising standards and policies that aid and elevate the quality of the customer experience WeGo Public Transit strives to provide. The revised advertising standards reduced ad types covering bus windows to improve customer safety, sought to enhance the image of transit and protect the new WeGo brand, and examined alternate revenue sources to offset income loss from these revisions.

The discussion provided an update on enterprise-wide brand conversion, revisit the revised advertising standards, and provide an update on revenues, lessons learned

during year two of the new program, and addressed potential opportunities as we begin year three.

There was general discussion regarding the advertising being outsourced vs. in-house. NICE Committee Chair Miller expressed that she had some concerns if we had the skillset for it to brought in-house and hopes that we can maintain the brand. She said that the non-fare box generators are the way to go and she thought bundle advertising was good. Mr. Searcy stated that revenue generation should still be a prime concern during these uncertain economic times.

- c. **WeGo Youth Action Team Report (NICE-D-20-012)**: YAT representatives were provided the following update on the 2019-2020 school year progress report to the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) New Initiatives and Community Engagement Committee:

WeGo Public Transit has partnered with the Oasis Center since 2013 to engage high school students in representing student riders and facilitating outreach with schools. Students are led under the supervision of Karissa Deiter, the Oasis Center Youth Action Team (YAT) Program Coordinator. Miriam Leibowitz, Community Outreach and Engagement Specialist, facilitates program activities between the Oasis Center and WeGo.

This year, YAT consisted of a group of eight high school students who met weekly to participate in leadership development, team building skills, and:

- Met with WeGo staff and tour transit facilities,
- Facilitated travel training with Opportunity NOW interns,
- Researched and made recommendations for how to increase student ridership,
- Assisted with community outreach events, and
- Designed and evaluated youth-focused marketing materials.

Current YAT members represent East Nashville Magnet High School, Hume-Fogg Academic High School, John Overton High School, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Magnet High School. YAT presented the findings of a student survey project they completed to the Board.

- d. **MOD Uber Pilot Contract (M-A-20-024)**: Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg reported the following:

Earlier this year, staff reintroduced the Mobility on Demand concept, including a review and discussion of program goals, alignment to agency strategy, operating concepts, and potential program design elements and policies (including fare structure). Since then, we have been in negotiations with Uber Technologies, Inc. (Uber) on establishing a contract and program business rules for a pilot service in the Antioch area of southeastern Davidson County, recently reaching an agreement in principle on all contract elements.

Staff and MTA's General Counsel have worked with Uber's project management and legal teams to arrive at an agreement that addresses the primary concerns of both parties. Indemnification, insurance, and data sharing were the issues that took the most time to work through, but MTA's General Counsel has worked successfully with Uber's counsel to negotiate agreed upon terms in all areas.

With regards to data sharing, Staff were particularly focused on being able to collect the information necessary to:

- 1) Make informed decisions regarding program changes

- 2) Calculate and track Key Performance Indicators such as response times and trip costs
- 3) Audit trip records to confirm accurate subsidy calculations according to program parameters and
- 4) Obtain data that would eventually be reportable to the National Transit Database (contingent on resuming shared rides post-pilot)

Consensus with Uber on program characteristics and contract terms are significant milestones, but they are only the first steps in a successful pilot deployment. The list below provides an overview of the major remaining tasks to be completed before service begins:

- Define pilot performance evaluation criteria, metrics, and targets
- Develop operating procedures to support the program
- Educate and train internal frontline and support staff on program characteristics and procedures
- Initiate public engagement & education, including stakeholder and customer outreach

Uber and WeGo staff anticipate a lead time of three to four months from contract execution to being ready for launch. The actual launch date itself will be determined based not only on technical preparedness but also coordination with fixed route service changes and considerations regarding COVID-19.

Staff recommended the MTA Board of Directors to permit the Chief Executive Officer to execute a contract with Uber Technologies, Inc. to engage in a first/last mile pilot program connecting customers to fixed route services. The initial contract term would be for 18 months and a not to exceed amount of \$100,000.00. Funding for the pilot is available through FY21 local operating assistance, with additional operating funds anticipated to be available in FY22. The initial pilot period would be six months, with the additional time in place to allow for a pilot evaluation period without abruptly discontinuing the program.

Vice Chair Janet Miller made a motion to approve the MOD & Uber Pilot Contract. The motion was seconded by Mary Griffin and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

- e. **MTA Board Meeting Schedule (M-A-20-025)**: Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner reported the following:

The proposed schedule for the 2021 committee and board meetings was presented and Staff recommended the proposed 2021 meeting dates be adopted and approved by the Board.

Mary Griffin made a motion to approve the MTA Board Meeting Schedule. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the board by roll call vote.

## VII. **CEO's Report:**

1. CEO Bland expressed his appreciation to everyone for their patience with the remote meetings. He said, as we get more proficient with the technology, we should be able to make them more interactive and engaging. He said, once we 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. 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 about 85% of the bus fleet. Unfortunately, we have seen some decline in rider compliance, with recent surveys putting us in the high 70 to low 80% range. Our most recent data shows that we have 11 employees currently on COVID leave – 6 who have tested positive and 5 awaiting test results.
3. Looking at current ridership patterns and possible scenarios going out over the next year; our Planning and Operations Staff are examining several service design options that we will be looking at over the next few months. These would generally conform to the principles of our Better Bus plan, and we will advance them through the NICE Committee as they mature, with a first discussion scheduled for next month.
4. Progress on a number of our capital projects continues at a good pace:
  - a. For the Nolensville shelter project, 14 shelter sites will be completed by the end of the week. Two additional sites are largely complete, and only await finish work, and our two most complicated sites (Wal Mart inbound and outbound) are under construction. Designers have also completed conceptual renderings for the two Fairgrounds stations to advance through permitting. The Fairgrounds site is complicated by pending intersection reconfiguration designs, and the fact that the site is in the Browns Creek floodplain. We expect to provide you with a full project update at the January meeting.
  - b. 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.
  - c. 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.
  - d. 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.
  - e. We anticipate bringing forward two vehicle procurement contracts for your award in the next few months. We will be recommending award of replacement articulated buses in December, and our next round of body-on-chassis bus purchases in February.
  - f. We have begun to receive and conduct acceptance testing on our latest order of 40' buses. Unfortunately, delivery of the tail end of the order may be delayed by anticipated lockdown orders in California.
5. The public comment period for the Mayor's transportation plan has concluded and we are currently awaiting a final plan draft. We continue to participate in presentations to various interested groups, although the pace has slowed down considerably over the past month.

Separate from the plan but related, we have met with representatives of the Airport Authority and their engineering firms working on a runway extension that will bridge Murfreesboro Pike. The Airport wants to assure that their work does not preclude future transit enhancements in this corridor.

6. With Bill Miller's planned retirement early next year, we are in the midst of our search for our next Chief Operating Officer. We expect to begin virtual interviews in the next few weeks.
7. We are in the midst of a significant milestone on our fare collection system, as introduction packets have been distributed to our beta testers for the QuickTicket smart fare system. Actual testing should begin in the next week or so, as testers register their products and come online. About 150 people signed up to test the new system.
8. CEO Bland thanked Mary Griffin for spending a large chunk of a day with us to get both an orientation of the Authority and current issues, and to tour the Nestor Bus Operating Facility. With respect to the tour, CEO Bland also thanked Director of Operations Carolyn Riggs-Ferrer and Director of Maintenance Carl Rokos for leading a very comprehensive tour of the facility – warts and all!
9. 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.

CEO Bland yielded the floor for question and there were none at this time.

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

**IX. Chair's Report:**

- Chair Williams acknowledged and expressed her appreciation to Community Outreach & Engagement Specialist Miriam Leibowitz, the Oasis team and for Ms. Emma DuLaney being the lead presenter and presenting in such a professional manner at the meeting. Chair Williams also acknowledged and expressed her appreciation to Director of Service Quality Dan Freudberg and Director of Marketing & Communications Jason Minser for their hard work on the presentations presented at the meeting.
- Chair Williams said that she continues to be proud of the WeGo Staff for taking care of all our Nashvillians.
- Chair Williams concluded her remarks by encouraging everyone to be safe and she wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

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

**Attested:**

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**Gail Carr Williams**  
*Chair*

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**Margaret L. Behm**  
*Secretary*