

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

May 20, 2021

- I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at the Music City Center, located at 201 Rep John Lewis Way S., Nashville, TN 37203 on Thursday, May 20, 2021.
- II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Janet Miller, Vice Chair; Mary Griffin, Member; Jessica Dauphin, Member; Secretary Margaret Behm; Chief Executive Officer Stephen G. Bland, Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant, Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke, Chief Development Officer Trey Walker, Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad, Director of Procurement and Business Diversity Amber Gooding, Director of Marketing & Communicacatons Renuka Christoph, Procurement Projects Administrator Denise Richardson, Access Manager Marilyn Yokley, and Sr. Executive Assistant & Board Liaison Monica Howse.

A quorum was established, and Vice-Chair Janet Miller called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

Vice-Chair Janet Miller acknowledged and welcomed MTA's newest board member, Ms. Jessica Dauphin to the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority Board. She also expressed appreciation, on behalf of the board and WeGo staff to Ms. Hannah Paramore-Breen for her years of service as a board member, and all that she contributed during her tenure.

Approval of Minutes: Mary Griffin made a motion to approve the April 22, 2021 minutes. The motion was seconded by Jessica Dauphin and unanimously approved by the board.

Public Comments: Vice-Chair Janet Miller opened the floor for public comments. The public was reminded that comments were limited to three minutes.

John Bull

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

- Mr. Bull said the operators and staff have been doing a great job during this pandemic.
- Mr. Bull said that he noticed that the ridership on bus # 7-outbound has picked up.
- Mr. Bull said the sooner we can get more funding, it will help and assist with the economic recovery.
- Mr. Bull said the bus stop at Welshwood is fully operational now and looks really good.
- Mr. Bull said the North Nashville Transit Center event is happening this coming weekend and he plans to attend it.
- Mr. Bull said that he was excited about the "WeGo Link Mobility On Demand" pilot and he recently signed up to be a beta tester and is looking forward to seeing how it will work.
- Mr. Bull suggested administering COVID shots in the waiting rooms and maybe people can sign up for QuickTicket and bus passes all at the same time.

Darius Knight

Mr. Darius Knight's public comments were as follows:

- Mr. Knight said as we open back up that we remember that the pandemic is still in effect and asked that we keep the mask mandate in effect.

- Mr. Knight said that he hopes that when we order new buses that we would consider ordering a darker floor color so that it won't show up the dirt as much.
- Mr. Knight said there are racial issues that are happening on the buses and he doesn't want us to get media attention from it. He encouraged staff to address these issues.
- Mr. Knight asked that we consider not implementing the QuickTicket and fall service changes at the same time; he said we don't want to confuse our customers and advocates.
- Mr. Knight gave special thanks to Cynthia Whitehead and Carolyn Riggs-Farr for their timely response in addressing his concerns, particularly regarding the Dickerson Road bus stop.
- Mr. Knight asked the Maintenance Department if they could look into the brake issues with some of the 2020 Gillig buses. He said that they are jerking when they first take-off and when they brake again, and this could potentially lead to a customer falling. He also said that it could be that operators need more training on how to operate the buses.

Adam Nicholson

Mr. Adam Nicholson's comments were as follows:

- Mr. Nicholson, Volunteer Board Chairman for Transit Now Nashville, said that he was still trying to digest Metro's budget and he's still trying to figure out what the best advocacy should be. He said that he was advocating for the Better Bus Phase I and hopes that the Better Bus Phase I can be funded by Metro. Mr. Nicholson concluded his remarks by saying that he celebrates the successes that WeGo has had.

III. Operations & Finance Committee Report: Vice-Chair Miller introduced the following items for discussion and action:

- Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget (OF-D-21-013):** Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant reported and reflected on the statement of operations for the month of February 2021 compared to the budget and balance sheet as of February 28, 2021. CFO Oliphant availed himself for questions and there was no further discussion at this time.
- Monthly Operating Statistics (OF-D-21-014):** Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through March 31, 2021. Vice-Chair Miller said that she would like to see what the ridership was in comparison to last month's ridership. COO Andy Burke said that we could incorporate a report to show those numbers in future reports.
- Quarterly Route Performance (OF-D-21-015):** Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through March 31, 2021.

Ms. Mary Griffin said that she would like to be a part of the transportation discussions, particularly as it relates to the transportation for the students at the Hillwood High School. She said that the ground breaking for the new school has begun and we possibly have two years before completion, but wants to be ahead of the game on our transportation plan for that area.

Vice-Chair Miller asked if the most important measure that we look at is passengers per hour. Felix Castrodad said that we keep a close look at passengers per hour because it's a good indication of the ridership and helps to determine if we need to put more service on a route or not. He said we need to look across the spectrum because there's always going to be things that pop up in some places more than others that requires a change. CEO Bland said that the passengers per hour statistic is a good snapshot of overall route performance, but a full picture requires examination of factors such as ridership by time of day, day of week, etc. For instance, weekend ridership and Access ridership are recovering faster than peak hour ridership.

- d. **Access Improvement Study Contract (M-A-21-010)**: Marilyn Yokley, Access Manager and Denise Richardson, Procurement Project Administrator reported the following:

The Access Improvement Study is a comprehensive review of the WeGo Access Paratransit program, with a focus on improving both service reliability and operational efficiency. The study will also examine service coordination with fixed route, including strategies to encourage fixed route use among current paratransit customers. Key tasks include a Benchmark Review, Policy Review, Organizational Assessment, Fixed Route Integration Strategy Review, and a Technology Review. The final deliverables include a comprehensive set of program recommendations and an accompanying detailed, phased implementation plan. Public outreach and engagement will be integrated throughout the project, with staff, stakeholders, and customers all playing an integral role in both determining priorities and reviewing recommended changes. No recommendations will be finalized without the opportunity for input from those that would be affected by the changes under consideration.

The notice of the Request for Proposals (RFP) was published on the WeGo and Transit Talent websites, and in the American Public Transit Association’s (APTA) bi-weekly industry newsletter beginning January 26, 2021. Notifications were also sent to the Shared Use Mobility Center, the Eno Transportation Center, and to the Nashville chapter of the American Council of Engineering Companies.

The project has a 16% DBE participation goal, and 31 DBE firms with certifications indicating they perform the type of work included in the project scope were individually contacted. Four proposals were received on the solicitation due date of March 10, 2021, with all proposals exceeding the DBE participation goal. Proposals were received from the following companies:

- KFH Group
- IBI Group
- Stantec Consulting
- TransPro Consulting

Following the evaluation committee’s initial review of the proposals, each proposer was requested to respond to questions and participate in a presentation and interview. Factors considered in the evaluation included project approach and schedule, proposing team and key personnel qualifications, and total project cost. The cost proposals received ranged from \$619,000 to \$680,000, all within the study’s estimated \$682,000 cost. The evaluation committee completed the final evaluation of the proposals on April 26, 2021 and selected KFH Group as having the most responsive proposal at a price of \$630,691.56 with the team’s strengths including the public outreach plan and national paratransit operations expertise.

KFH Group is a certified DBE firm and will be self-performing all work related to project management and participating with their subcontractors on the project’s other tasks. The total DBE participation for this contract will be 54% through the following engagements:

Company	Owner	Work Description	Percentage
KFH Group – Woman-Owned	Sue Knapp	Project management; operational and organizational analysis and related work	43%
Fairpointe Planning-Minority and Woman Owned	Tanisha Hall	Public engagement and fixed route integration	11%

It was recommended that the Board to provide the Chief Executive Officer the authority to enter into a professional services contract with KFH Group to conduct the Access Improvement Study in the amount of \$630,691.56 with a contingency amount of \$69,308.44 for a total

contract budget of \$700,000. The total contract term is 24 months with a milestone for substantial completion at 18 months. The study will be funded using federal CARES Act funds.

Ms. Jessica Dauphin made a motion to approve the Access Improvement Study Contract. The motion was seconded by Ms. Mary Griffin and unanimously approved by the board.

IV. New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report: Vice-Chair Miller introduced the following items for discussion and action:

- a. Operating Budget Forecast Discussion for FY2022- FY2025 (NICE-D-21-004):** CFO Ed Oliphant and Chief Executive Officer Steve Bland led a discussion on the Operating Budget Forecast with the Board to get their input and direction for planning and communication purposes as we enter the new fiscal year. This discussion item dovetailed with related issues covered in the Fall 2021 Service Change update and capital plan discussion later in the agenda.

Staff reviewed data showing an 8-year history of expenses and Metro Operating support. The trends showed a relatively flat cost per service hour over the period, with increasing budgets generally associated with service increases. It also illustrated that Metro funding had been flat from FY2018 through FY2020, and then cut significantly in FY2021 due to the pandemic and Federal relief funds received from FTA. Mr. Bland and Mr. Oliphant went on to show how the approximately \$94 million in Federal relief had been allocated so far, with just over \$56 million in these funds not yet allocated by the Board.

With Mayor Cooper having released an operating budget proposal that would restore the funding cuts absorbed by WeGo in the prior year and fully funding baseline service, the unallocated Federal relief funding would give the Board some discretion as to near-term direction. Among the options they might consider:

- Preserve funding for future contingencies to stabilized service for a longer period of time.
- Assign funding to the capital improvement plan scheduled for discussion later in the meeting.
- Allocate some of these funds to “jump start” Better Bus service improvements that the Mayor’s proposal did not include, recognizing that these are one-time funds.

This discussion was intended to “tee-up” following items with respect to Fall service changes and the capital improvement plan. Staff will begin preparing the operating and capital budget proposals for consideration, at the direction of the Board at the June meeting.

- b. Fall 2021 Service Change Update (NICE-D-21-005):** Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad reported the following:

The implementation of the spring service changes in April 2021 aimed to address shifts in ridership trends that were dramatically altered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The changes allowed WeGo to make strategic decisions to respond to those shifts and more effectively allocate resources to manage the current demand. The changes also provided an opportunity to advance some of the Better Bus guiding principles to improve service like frequency and span on our core routes (serving over 70% of the total system ridership) and other high ridership local routes as we continue to make the system more resilient.

Since the spring changes, service has returned to approximately 90% of pre-pandemic levels. The goal for the fall 2021 is to return to 100% pre-pandemic service level. However, the biggest question leading into that was whether the resources to get there would be available. Last month’s announcement from Mayor Cooper’s proposed FY 2022 Metro Budget to restore WeGo’s operating funding gap with inflation will provide a more reliable outlook in the near

term for approaching service changes in the fall. This will allow not only for maintaining current service levels and restoration of other routes to previous pre-pandemic levels but also to begin implementing Better Bus expansion improvements including frequency, span, and other route enhancements consistent with the Metro Nashville Transportation Plan if the Board chooses, utilizing Federal relief funds.

Mr. Castrodad reviewed a series of possible service enhancements that would be taken through public engagement and Title VI analysis. Overall, these enhancements would expand service hours by approximately 35,500 hours annually, a 7% increase in service. As we move toward the Fall 2021 service changes, staff continues to carefully consider ridership trends as well as the existing and future environment to effectively design a service that caters to riders' needs while advancing improvements that strengthen the system for the future.

Staff plans to return to the Board at the July meeting with final service recommendations based on public engagement and June Board actions on the Budget and Capital Plan.

c. Nashville MTA FY2022 Capital Investment Plan Update (NICE-D-21-006): Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad presented the following:

The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority's (MTA) Capital Investment Plan prioritizes, identifies funding sources, and sets timelines for MTA's capital projects over a five-year period. The plan outlines regulatory, state of good repair, growth and expansion needs that promote the provision of continuous efficient services by MTA. The plan is closely coordinated with prior agency efforts like the nMotion Strategic Plan and the Transit Asset Management Plan (TAMP) as well as with partner agency processes including TDOT, GNRC, and Metro Nashville.

Although the plan covers a five-year horizon, the main emphasis is on the first couple of years of the plan as the outer years are more conceptual in nature, requiring additional scoping and more detailed information on cost and funding sources.

Capital funding typically comes from several different sources including federal, state, and local sources and can be allocated based on specific formula or competitive discretionary opportunities. Expected revenues vary by funding source and the detailed requirements associated with each source.

During the past year, the federal government made some one-time funding opportunities available because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Federal bills including the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, provided 100% federal money (no match required) designed to provide relief and support to transit agencies keeping them operational in light of reduced and uncertain local revenues.

These one-time relief bills along with recent operating budget information provide an opportunity for MTA to review capital investment opportunities as part of the FY2022 Capital Plan development.

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

1. Employees off on COVID leave remains relatively low at 2 as of this morning. Although the CDC and Metro Public Health have relaxed requirements associated with wearing facial coverings, the Transportation Security Administration's requirement that individuals wear facial coverings on public transportation extends into September, so we are still requiring customers and employees to do so.
2. CEO Bland expressed his thanks to the Mayor, staff, and the staff at Metro Finance for restoring stability to our operating budget.

3. CEO Bland said design work has begun on the North Nashville Transit Center project. The public side of this effort will get off to a rousing start this Saturday at the project site when we host an open house to engage the community in the design process. We'll have a variety of stations including WeGo Public Transit and design team staff to share information about the project, and to get input on programming and design elements. So far, we have gotten RSVP's from Council Members Taylor and Toombs who serve that district, plus Council Member Sharon Hurt, Senator Brenda Gilmore, and State Representatives Harold Love and Vincent Dixie. The in-person event will be from 11 am – 1 pm, and we will be live streaming on Facebook from 12:30 pm – 1 pm.
4. CEO Bland and CAO Rita Roberts-Turner have been participating in weekly meetings hosted by the Mayor's Office to coordinate various Metro Department and related agency initiatives in North Nashville. The meetings have been very informative and the information sharing has been positive.
5. CEO Bland said that he was pleased to attend the Metro Council meeting this past Tuesday night to support Ms. Jessica Dauphin at her nomination hearing to the MTA Board. He said that she knocked all of her responses out of the park.
6. Metro has kicked off its planning effort for the East Bank. Felix Castrodad is representing us on the steering committee for this effort.
7. CEO Bland expressed his appreciation to the staff in Procurement, and Finance & Operations during the recent Colonial Pipeline fuel supply disruption. He said they demonstrated their nimbleness in securing various alternate sources of gasoline and diesel fuel for us, so our supply was never truly at risk. It was another important lesson of our vulnerability as a society to disruptions in our basic infrastructure.
8. On other "less optimistic" notes, we are growing somewhat concerned about supplier shortages in a variety of sectors. Of short-term concern, the actual delivery date for 25 Access Vans and 10 Commuter Buses is somewhat in question, as our suppliers indicate sporadic shortages of key components that go into a wide variety of products.
9. On the RTA side:
 - a. We are soliciting information from the consulting community to examine future options for enhancing the Star in accordance with the range of options included in the City Transportation Plan. These run the gamut from maintaining the status quo to incremental improvements to add a small number of trips to significant investments including the installation of positive train control.
 - b. The RTA Finance Committee and Board met this month for similar budget and capital plan discussions to those we just had. A key issue for the RTA is the renewal of funding resources from TDOT in the coming year. The Executive Committee has directed staff and a group of the mayors to meet with Commissioner Bright to discuss RTA plans in the coming months.

CEO Bland concluded his remarks by thanking Ms. Jessica Dauphin and Mr. Jim Hawk for allowing him the opportunity to speak at their most recent graduation ceremony of the Transit Alliance's Neighborhood Transit Institute.

VII. Chair's Report: Vice-Chair Miller reported the following:

Vice-Chair Miller thanked all of the staff for all that you do and wished everyone a happy Memorial Day.

IX. **Adjournment:** With no further business, Vice-Chair Miller called for a motion to adjourn the meeting and the meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary: