

NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors Meeting

July 22, 2021

- I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at the Nashville Metropolitan Police Department, located at 2231 26th Ave. North, Nashville, TN 37208 on Thursday, June 24, 2021.
- II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Mary Griffin, Member; Jessica Dauphin, 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 Andy Burke, Chief Development Officer Trey Walker, Director of Planning & Grants Felix Castrodad, Director of Marketing & Communications Renuka Christoph, Sr. Safety Manager Nicholas Oldham, Director of Procurement & Business Diversity Amber Gooding, and Sr. Executive Assistant & Board Liaison Monica Howse.

Chair Gail Carr-Williams arrived a few minutes late to the meeting, but a quorum was established, and Walter Searcy called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Mary Griffin made a motion to approve the June 24, 2021 minutes. The motion was seconded by Jessica Dauphin and unanimously approved by the board.

Public Comments: Mr. Walter Searcy 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. Bulls said that he has ridden the bus at least 59 times in a recent 30 day period and the ridership seems up, perhaps pre-COVID-19 levels.
- Mr. Bull said the Route 52 and the Fairground bus shelters - MLS season could start in early March and he's sure the local Latinex community is very interested.
- Mr. Bull likes that the QuickTicket keeps a detailed log of bus trips. He said he continues to use the phone app.
- Mr. Bull thinks the ECO-seats is a great idea

Steve Reiter

Mr. Steve Reiter's public comments were as follows:

- Mr. Reiter was excited to hear about the presentation on the North Transit Center
- Mr. Reiter said the ridership still seems a bit low and maybe we can offer free rides to improve ridership
- Mr. Reiter said that he appreciated everything that CEO Steve Bland and WeGo Public Transit is doing

Darius Knight

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

- Mr. Knight asked the Operations staff to continue motivating operators at the beginning of each shift to keep the upward morale among the bus drivers.
- Mr. Knight said that Mr. John Giles, badge number 574 was a well-devoted bus operator who helped many customers and understood their hardships and never held his tongue for what he believed was right or wrong. He was an excellent uncle and mentor.

- Mr. Knight asked if staff could remind customers to wear masks inside the bus and at least inside of waiting areas. He said some operators are being nice and understanding, allow customers to board without masks and some customers get mad when the operators ask them to move to the back of the bus and ask other customers with a mask to distance the space for the safety of everyone on board.
- Mr. Knight said that he believes WeGo needs to actively explain to all customers and operators the issues it currently has. The transparency needs to come no later than July 31, 2021. WeGo has a shortfall of operators which isn't new.
- Mr. Knight said an assessment should have been done on WeGo Central with the repeated issues of the elevator and escalators. Every few years this has gotten fixed, but it needs to be done promptly and correctly. He believes that the escalators need to be enclosed at this point.
- Mr. Knight said WeGo needs to start becoming innovative with plans ideas and needs an overall way of keeping service moving forward and not backward as this agency is behind.
- Mr. Knight said WeGo should look into speaking with the Metro Schools transportation department and council about possible means and ways of cross-training and allowing for bus operators to have a secondary part-time open shift, with the shortages of bus operators that now plague the United States currently. Another thing is, showing appreciation and the issue operators face once they have topped out. If there is no cost of living raise, something will need to be done ASAP or WeGo will face more than a few operators shortages, it won't be able to run basic needs if we all don't start finding ways and funding to combat this widespread problem that will not disappear.

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

- Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget (OF-D-21-016):** Chief Operating Officer Ed Oliphant reported and reflected on the statement of operations for the month of May 2021 compared to the budget and a balance sheet as of May 31, 2021. There was no further discussion at this time.
- Debt Obligation Notification (OF-D-21-020):** In March 2021, the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board authorized Nashville MTA to enter into a 12-month extension of its existing line of credit loan starting at \$14 million with Fifth Third Bank with the possibility of increasing the loan up to \$20 million if needed. The Metro Council set Nashville MTA's borrowing limit at up to \$20 million through June 30, 2022 as stated in the city's FY2022 Budget Resolution which became effective July 1, 2021.

We signed a twelve-month extension agreement for our Revolving Credit Promissory Note with Fifth Third Bank effective July 1, 2021 with a borrowing capacity from \$14 million to \$20 million, if needed, with an expiration of the note on June 30, 2022. This loan is needed to cover our cash flow needs through the remainder of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. The terms of the loan are as follows:

Term:	Twelve Months
Maturity Date:	June 30, 2022
Interest Rate:	Variable – LIBOR Rate plus 1.65%
Legal Fee:	\$1,413 paid to Butler Snow Law Firm representing Fifth Third Bank
Non-Use Fee:	20 basis points on the daily unused principal amount of the note, charged quarterly. Maximum fee will not exceed \$28,000 on \$14 million and \$40,000 if the loan is increased to \$20 million.

CFO Olipant said we have submitted our grant application to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to gain access to this funding as it relates to our preventive maintenance and ADA

paratransit services. As soon as we receive these grant funds, any loan would be paid down to minimize our interest expense.

There was no further discussion at this time.

- a. **Monthly Operating Statistics (OF-D-21-021)**: Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through May, 2021. There was no further discussion at this time.
- c. **Replacement Seat Insert Contract Award (M-A-21-021)**: This competitively bid contract is for the purchase of replacement seat inserts for 97 fixed route buses. The current bus fleet has these inserts installed in the fiberglass seat shell of. Historically, these have been cloth inserts that have been difficult to clean. This project will retrofit buses that are expected to remain in service for more than 2 more years. The existing fabric seats will be replaced with vinyl seats that reduce dust, are easier and faster to clean, and are more hygienic, utilizing an antimicrobial material. The seats will be replaced by the WeGo bus maintenance staff as scheduled with other service, or when time allows. The contract is funded with CARES Act funds as intended to help mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

The Invitation to Bid (ITB) was published on the agency website, and in the B2G procurement notification system, and in *Transit Talent* on June 8, 2021. The project did not include DBE participation goals as the specified replacement seat products, which must fit within the existing seat frames, are sold through national manufacturer-authorized distributors.

The project estimate was \$514,740. Three bids were received on the June 25, 2021 due date:

- Gillig LLC \$521,088.72
- NFI Parts \$571,601.76
- AeroDesign \$874,020.00

Gillig's bid was 1% over the estimate and has been determined to be fair and reasonable and responsive to the solicitation requirements.

Staff requested the Board to provide the Chief Executive Officer the authority to enter into a fixed price contract with Gillig LLC to provide replacement seat inserts at a total cost of \$521,088. with a contingency amount of \$50,000 for a total contract budget of \$571,000. The total contract term is twelve (12) months.

Mr. Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the Replacement Seat Insert Contract Award. The motion was seconded by Ms. Jessica Dauphin and unanimously approved by the board.

- d. **Workplace Health & Safety Consultation (M-A-21-022)**: In preparation for restoring bus service to full pre-pandemic levels, make additional improvements in line with the Better Bus Plan, and a return of our employees back into the office, we desire to ensure continued best safety practices. To that end, WeGo requested proposals from firms interested and qualified to provide a long-term strategy to make certain we increase our understanding of workplace safety and continue best practices for the health and safety of both staff and passengers.

The Request for Proposals (RFP) was published on WeGo Public Transit and in *Transit Talent* on May 11, 2021. Due to the specialized nature of this service and limited subcontracting opportunities, the project has a 4% DBE participation goal. Invitations were emailed directly to 13 firms that initially responded to a request for information as well to 151 certified DBE firms identified as potential subcontractors (janitorial service and product suppliers for example). Three responsive proposals were received from:

- Fresh Start
- Spaulding Decon
- TDS & Associates, LLC

The factors considered for evaluating proposals included project approach, qualifications and experience, product and services, schedule, and cost. The evaluation committee completed the

final evaluation on June 21, 2021. TDS & Associates, LLC, a minority male owned firm, was selected and received the evaluation committee's highest ranking with strengths in training and experience of similar scope. In addition, TDS & Associates, LLC's proposal exceeded the DBE participation goal of 4%.

Staff requested the Board to give the Chief Executive Officer the authority to execute the contract with TDS & Associates, LLC to provide continued health and safety mitigation services.

Mr. Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the Workplace Health & Safety Consultation. 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. **North Nashville Transit Center Business Diversity Update (NICE-D-21-008):** Ms. Amber Gooding, Director of Procurement and Business Diversity reviewed the PowerPoint presentation with the Board providing an update, and solicited feedback on our efforts to secure maximum minority and women owned business participation on this project.

As part of the overall public engagement process for the design, construction and operation of the North Nashville Transit Center, we are working in a community-engaged process to maximize the contracting and business opportunities for minority and woman-owned businesses over the life of the project and its construction.

There was no further discussion at this time.

- b. **North Nashville Transit Center Update (NICE-D-21-009):** Trey Walker, Chief Development Officer provided an update at the meeting. The presentation included site renderings and an overview of planned features of the transit center.

Over the past 6 months, staff have been working with a design team led by our Architects, Smith-Gee Associates to advance design of the planned North Nashville Transit Center. This process has included detailed examinations of operating requirements, site constraints, and regulatory requirements associated with the project. It has included a number of work sessions with various WeGo departments ranging from Operations to Facilities Maintenance to Security to Customer Care to Safety and well beyond. The project schedule calls for design to be completed by the end of calendar year 2021, with construction bidding to occur in early to mid-2022.

There was no further discussion at this time.

- c. **Fall 2021 Service Changes & Title VI Analysis (M-A21-024):** Staff requested that the Board approve a phased approach for implementation of service changes in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 as documented in this item with Phase 1 starting on October 3, 2021.

Mr. Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the Fall 2021 Service Changes & Title VI Analysis. The motion was seconded by Ms. Jessica Dauphin and unanimously approved by the board.

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

1. CEO Bland said that he was pleased to join Members Jessica Dauphin and Mary Griffin yesterday as Mayor Cooper officially launched the new Nashville Department of Transportation and Multimodal Infrastructure. Marty Sewel is here from NDOT, and I know all of us are looking forward to working with NDOT to advance improved infrastructure to support all users, but particularly transit riders. To clarify any confusion about the role of NDOT, it neither replaces the MTA nor takes on any of its functions, but will be an important partner in developing supportive infrastructures such as safer sidewalks, crossings, bus stop improvements, and transit priority measures that have been sorely lacking for transit riders over the years.

2. Metro has continued to advance their planning effort for the East Bank, and we have been involved in several work sessions with Metro Planning and their consultants to look at options for transit circulation and access in the broader development plans.
3. Felix Castrodad touched on the challenges of Operator hiring as one of the factors leading us to recommend a staged implementation of Better Bus Improvements. Andy Burke is spearheading an effort among all of our Departments to examine the issue in detail and re-engineer all of our practices associated with employee recruitment, hiring, training, and retention.
4. In prior months, I've reported that we're working with Metro on a collaborative Downtown Traffic Study that would examine a myriad of topics, including transit routing and transit priority. We anticipate the receipt of proposals in mid-August.
5. At your seats today, we provided information on our budding governance fine-tuning initiative. We have engaged a nationally prominent expert in this field to work with the Board and staff through the rest of this year to fine-tune our processes. We have a tremendous number of challenges we'll need to address in the coming years, but also an enormous volume of opportunities and we want to make sure our organizational leadership – Board and staff – are in a position to best address all of them.
6. You recently approved a contract with the KFH Group to do a full assessment of our Access system and make recommended improvements. This project has kicked off, and you'll be hearing more in the coming months on progress and findings.
7. Construction continues on the Hillsboro Transit Center. Supply chain items have led to some delays on long lead time items, but we anticipate completion by the end of the year. If you travel in that area now, you'll notice a huge amount of activity on the site.
8. CEO Bland recently attended a strategic planning meeting of the Tennessee Public Transportation Association Board of Directors in Kingsport this month. This was the first in-person meeting of this group in about 18 months. One of the primary topics of discussion was the shortage of vehicle operators, which is a national problem and is particularly acute among the smaller transit agencies in the state. TPTA is currently collecting data on the scope of the issue statewide, with an intent to do information sharing on best practices.
9. CEO Bland thanked Jessica Dauphin for spending the better part of a day with us to do an orientation of the MTA and facility tours of Nestor, Myatt, and Central.
10. On the RTA side:
 - a. We received information from 4 consulting firms to examine future options for enhancing the Star in accordance with the range of options included in the City Transportation Plan. We will collate the information we received, along with input from the freight operator in the corridor, to put together a full scope of work for a formal solicitation process.
 - b. We anticipate the delivery of 10 commuter buses for RTA services in October. This will include 7 replacement buses for services contracted to MTA in the Rutherford County Corridor.

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

Chair Williams acknowledged and welcomed Mr. Marty Sewell from the Nashville Department of Transportation to the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority Board Meeting.

Chair Williams said that she was excited about the upcoming Board Governance Workshop. She said it will help us to better support the work and the community as a whole.

Chair Williams concluded her remarks by saying that she's in awe of the work that's being done by staff, especially during this pandemic and all of the challenges that we've faced across the past 18 months. She encouraged everyone to keep going and continue to do good work.

VIII. **Other Business:**

IX. **Adjournment:** With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Attested:

Gail Carr Williams
Chair

Margaret L. Behm
Secretary: