



MINUTES
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
MAY 17, 2017

- I. CALL TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (RTA) Board of Directors was held in the meeting room at Music City Central, 400 Charlotte Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee on Wednesday, May 17, 2017. A quorum was established, and the meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Vice Chair Randall Hutto, Wilson County Mayor.
- II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Vice Chair Hutto entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the April 19, 2017 meeting. Proper motion was made and seconded, and the minutes were adopted unanimously.
- III. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Chair Hutto opened the floor for public comments and recognized the following members of the public:

Cheryl Lewis, a frequent rider of the Music City Star, was recognized and stated her support of Transit Solutions Group's (TSG) management of the Music City Star and encouraged the Board to renew their management contract with TSG just as soon as possible.

Jo Ann Graves, President and CEO of the Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee (TAMT), reported:

- The groundbreaking was recently held for the transit-oriented development, Hamilton Springs.
- The Transit Improve Act (Tennessee) passed.
- TAMT and Cumberland Region Tomorrow (CRT), under contract with MTA/RTA, are doing another series of community outreach to talk to the communities about the effect of the Improve Act and what the next steps are in transit. They are beginning in Wilson County and will go into all of the counties surrounding Nashville/Davidson County.

City of Clarksville Mayor Kim McMillan joined the meeting at this time and attested to the need for something to be done concerning the traffic congestion in the region – particularly the Northwest Corridor.

There were no other public comments at this time.

IV. **FINANCE AND AUDIT REPORT:** Chair Sumner County Executive Anthony Holt called upon Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant to review the following report with the Board:

a. **Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget (I-17-012):** Mr. Oliphant briefly reviewed the financial report (included in the May Board book) with the Board. All was in order and there were no questions for Mr. Oliphant at this time.

V. **MONTHLY OPERATING STATISTICS (I-17-013):** Chief Operating Officer India Birdsong briefly reviewed the monthly operating statistics report with the Board.

Following Ms. Birdsong's report, conversation ensued. Williamson County Mayor Rogers Anderson asked if it would be possible to reduce the size of the commuter buses that, at this time, are carrying a small number of passengers compared to their capacity. He wants to be sure that we are operating as efficiently as possible.

Sumner County Executive Holt expressed his concerns about the coming year's finances. Reserves have now been used, ridership is going down, and dues will dramatically go up because of the reduction in the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) federal funds.

CFO Ed Oliphant reported that they will bring the budget to the Board in June for FY2018. He noted that the year that Mr. Holt is concerned about is 2019. In August and September the Finance Committee will begin working with the 2019 budget to see what can be done.

Chair McMillan noted that while ridership may be down on some of the routes, other corridors are robust and continue to increase monthly. She noted that we need to consider all the corridors and look at what works for some and what works for others as we move forward.

City of Franklin Mayor Ken Moore noted the 18.9% increase year-to-date in ridership for the Franklin Transit Authority (FTA) local bus service. Six percent of those routes are going to work. We have just worked with the FTA to change their routing system to a bridge system and to change their headway from an hour to 30 minutes. It is time for us to seriously consider how we can fill that bus up when it comes from Nashville. There has to be some opportunity there for people in Davidson County to ride to Williamson County to their jobs (reverse commute).

Ms. Birdsong said they are working to make service more reliable and more frequent knowing how important rider's confidence is in growing our transit system. She further noted that they will also be doing some restructuring on the scheduling side as well and RTA will be included in that effort.

Julie Navarrete, Chief Development Officer, noted that MTA has contracted for a Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA). She stated that while this is an MTA-led contract, they are looking at how MTA will restructure its services. Included in that is how MTA interconnects with the RTA system and how it works together. So,

ultimately, RTA will get the benefit of that work, and RTA will see some of those results.

VI. NORTHWEST CORRIDOR DISCUSSION (I-17-014): Chair McMillan recognized Felix Castrodad, Director of Planning & Grants, who led this discussion.

Mr. Castrodad reported that when they looked at what people said about the nMotion strategy, there was a general agreement that there needs to be an increase in transit opportunities and they need to be done quicker than in 25 years. While there were different opinions on how to implement this, the majority agreed on the need for improvements in transit. Specifically, they want to see improvements in the mobility of people without cars; commuter routes that don't get stuck in traffic; a seamless system that makes it easier to use all transportation options interchangeably; and prioritization of big mobility infrastructure investments in high growth corridors. There was overwhelming support for dedicated transit lanes for Commuter Rail, Light Rail, Bus Rapid Transit, and Rapid Bus.

The purpose of the Northwest Corridor Transit Study was to build consensus with different jurisdictions, elected officials, and agencies participating in this corridor on improving mobility that is phased, enhanced, cost effective, and reliable transit improvements for the northwest corridor, while making sure we provide connectivity in those destinations for all travelers and commuters. At the same time, we want to promote economic development and provide modal options in the corridor.

Mr. Castrodad reviewed further elements of the study noting which corridors were studied, what modes of transportation were studied, the methods of public outreach, and the evaluation process. He stated that the locally preferred alternative that was selected was commuter rail, and more specifically utilizing the Nashville and Western Corridor. There is strong public and stakeholder support for this alternative. It connects Clarksville to Nashville on a dedicated rail right-of-way (ROW) and provides both express service from Clarksville and local service within Davidson County. It also operates with a competitive travel time and frequency.

Mr. Castrodad continued with a more detailed analysis of how this particular alternative performed in the study. He noted that this is a very different alignment than the Music City Star in terms of how it has been maintained, the length of it, and the opportunities. This will have other challenges that will make it a little more difficult to have the same type of controls as with the Music City Star.

There are three distinct sections in this one corridor – North Nashville: Downtown Nashville to Briley Parkway; Briley Parkway to Ashland City; and Ashland City to Clarksville. Mr. Castrodad reviewed the benefits and opportunities, the challenges, and the initial opinion of probable cost at the conceptual level for Nashville and Western Railroad Corridor preservation and proposed Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) project implementation.

In closing, Mr. Castrodad presented next steps which include:

- Continuing to improve 94X Commuter Express Bus Service to support growing ridership;

- Preserving existing Nashville and Western Rail corridor. RTA and the Cheatham County Rail Authority (CCRA) are currently reviewing options for transfer of property ownership to RTA;
- Revisiting options for corridor connection to downtown Nashville;
- Incorporating North Nashville connections; and,
- Beginning dialogue on acquisition of ROW in Cheatham and Montgomery Counties for rail and greenway shared use corridor.

VII. CHAIR'S REPORT: Chair McMillan noted her appreciation of everything that each member is doing to continue to move forward transportation plans and options in the entire Middle Tennessee area. We want to be sure we are looking at other options and other things that we can do in this entire region to make certain that we are maximizing, as best we can, the taxpayer's dollars that we are using to move forward in this area to increase our transportation options. This is something that we need to do and is why we are here. We appreciate everything that the Tennessee Department of Transportation does to continue to work with us in that regard. We want to continue down that path of finding the best way in this region that we can to maximize transportation options for our citizens, while at the same time making sure that we are good stewards of the taxpayer dollars that we are using to fund it in that regard.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS: There was no other business to come before the Board.

IX. ADJOURNMENT: Motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:32 a.m.

Respectfully,

Paula Mansfield

Governor's Appointee
RTA Secretary