



550 W. Algonquin Road
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60005
847.364.8130
PaceBus.com

Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority
550 West Algonquin Road
Arlington Heights, Illinois
Minutes of the Open Session Meeting of the Pace Board of Directors
August 21, 2024

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority, met in open session on Wednesday, August 21, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace corporate headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois, pursuant to notice.

Chairman Kwasneski led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Kwasneski called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Roll Call

Directors physically present: Canning, Carr, Guerin, Hastings, Marcucci, McLeod, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Chairman Kwasneski.

Director McLeod moved and Director Soto seconded a motion to allow Director Noak to attend via phone. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. Director Noak joined the meeting via phone immediately following the vote.

Directors absent: Arfa and Schielke.

SBD #24-53 – Resolution approving the open session meeting minutes of June 26, 2024.

Director Soto moved, and Director Guerin seconded a motion to approve the Resolution. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Public Comment

Linda Hudson, operator for SCR, a Pace contractor and a subsidiary of Beacon Mobility, and member of the Teamster Local #727 bargaining committee, spoke about how the SCR union is striking for a living wage. She said SCR is one of the largest paratransit providers in the nation, yet Beacon Mobility pays drivers below industry standards and does not recognize driver

Richard A. Kwasneski, *Chairman*

Rachel Arfa Christopher S. Canning Terrance M. Carr David B. Guerin Kyle R. Hastings Thomas D. Marcucci
William D. McLeod John D. Noak Jeffery D. Schielke Erin Smith Linda Soto Terry R. Wells

Board of Directors

Melinda J. Metzger, *Executive Director*

seniority. She said it is hard to budget when you don't know how many hours you are going to work.

John Coli Jr., Secretary Treasurer of Teamsters Local #727, reported on the formation of SCR's union this year and unsuccessful contract negotiations since spring. He said that SCR is the first Pace paratransit contractor who forced employees to an unfair labor practice ("ULP") strike on August 12, SCR offered bribes to the bargaining committee in front of a federal mediator, SCR blames Pace for the low wages they pay their workers \$3-\$5 lower than average, and SCR security guards reported that SCR is serving Pace routes with drivers that are not Pace-certified.

A. Hoodcostner, 6-year operator for SCR, reported receiving numerous employee of the month accolades, yet needs to work overtime to make ends meet. She said that if she can fill a folder with awards, then she believes she is deserving of a living wage. She reports that SCR employees taunt the strikers and SCR wants to take away holidays, nights, and guaranteed 8 or 10 hour shifts. She asked Pace to please intervene.

Monica Johnson, operator for SCR and member of the Teamster Local #727 bargaining committee, reports working for SCR for 16 years and that new drivers start at a higher wage than her. SCR's DuPage County drivers are paid more than Chicago drivers, but Chicago drivers are doing more work in the inner city. The opportunities that SCR management provides to their children, she wants those opportunities for her children too.

Marian Spotts, 13-year operator for SCR said that she misses her clients during the strike. Many depend on paratransit and have no other means of transportation. She has seen SCR employ scare tactics over the years and would like SCR to pay their drivers the same as other providers.

Chairman Kwasneski thanked all the public commenters and encouraged them to continue negotiations with SCR. Pace will encourage SCR to negotiate as well. Pace will investigate the allegation that SCR is service Pace routes with drivers that are not Pace-certified as that is part of the SCR contract.

Director Schielke joined the meeting in-person at 9:35 a.m.

Director Noak joined the meeting in-person at 9:50 a.m.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Kwasneski reported on attended an Illinois Senate Transportation Committee hearing in Southwest Cook County about the consolidation bill and funding for public transit. He said Melinda Metzger represented Pace well. He expressed frustration that the conversation was about governance and not about enhancing service to meet riders' expectations. Pace will have representatives at the few remaining hearings this fall.

Chairman Kwasneski reported on being in Springfield last week, where he met with legislators who were supportive of public transit funding and complementary of Pace. Chairman Kwasneski

spoke with Representative Eva-Dina Delgado about forming smaller working groups to discuss the consolidation bill and public transit funding. Chairman Kwasneski stresses that we cannot have state-of-the-art, next-generation transit service on current day dollars. Legislators deserve to hear what Pace can offer with more funding.

Directors' Reports

Director Canning summarized the joint meeting of the Planning and Infrastructure Committees where consultant Jarrett Walker & Associates (“JWA”) presented on the network restructuring initiative, ReVision. JWA is modelling ways Pace can deliver more service with different funding scenarios, and Pace must decide how best to invest resources. Should Pace drive ridership on heavily used routes, or drive coverage over our vast region, roughly the size of Connecticut? Pace needs a substantial investment from the state to be on par with other states.

Director Carr reported on attending the South Campus ribbon-cutting in Markham with Governor Pritzker and the dedication of the Joliet Transportation Center. He said they were well-attended by elected officials and it’s unbelievable the capital improvements Pace has built in a few years.

Director Marcucci reported several observations after attending the Illinois Senate Transportation Committee hearing held in DuPage County. He said one of the most common misconceptions brought up at the hearings was that the service boards do not work together, resulting in service problems and an overall cumbersome system. In reality, Pace planners coordinate with their counterparts at CTA and Metra every day to ensure we are serving constituents in the most efficient, cost-effective way. Director Marcucci pointed out how much Illinois underfunds public transportation compared to other states, saying the fact that the system works as well as it does despite being underfunded demonstrates how efficient the service boards are. Director Marcucci praised Director Noak, Melinda, and DuPage County Chair Conroy for their knowledgeable presentations. Director Marcucci reported that Pace was praised for its innovation, such as partnering with TNCs to augment ADA paratransit, the first public transit-TNC partnership in the nation. Director Marcucci was surprised you cannot view recordings of past hearings and was also surprised that few said they would support the current consolidation bill as it was written, showing that the bill shouldn’t pass. He commented on Kendall County wanting RTA service.

Director Noak thanked Pace staff and the City of Joliet for the event dedicating the Joliet Multimodal Transportation Center to Larry Walsh Sr., who did so much for Will County and Illinois. He congratulated Pace staff on a job well done at the activation event afterwards. Director Noak reported on testifying at the Illinois Senate Transportation Committee hearing held in Naperville. He said it was well attended despite being poorly advertised and was encouraged to see labor reps and state legislators in the audience, including Kendall County. He praised the panel speakers. He said it was interesting that the committee focused on how each county spends their funding from the RTA tax. He does not believe the bill is innovative, it’s the same consolidation plan from 20 years ago, and does not plan for 50+ years into the future. A bold plan would go further and include the input of surrounding counties like Kendall, Winnebago, Grundy, and Kankakee. He is concerned that the process is moving fast without

looking at true needs, and we should be having a more proactive approach to the future. He noted that the PART study found the service boards are the most efficient way of organizing any of the major transit agencies in the country, but the study also indicated that the service boards are too efficient. Director Noak questioned how it's possible to be too efficient, yet the service boards are open to a dialog about how we can do better, be more integrated, and provide more service. He said Pace was repeatedly praised at the hearing for being well-run. Director Noak served on a panel that spoke about the suburbs' interest in how the workforce has changed and how they connect to transit. He regrets there is no recording of the meeting because the discussion was so substantive and observed that most were clearly not in favor of the legislation as drafted.

Director Schielke reported that there is not much support from western counties and suburbs for the bill consolidating the service boards, but the bill has caused a lot of cities to examine their transit service. He described the rapid growth taking place in western counties and the number of people relocating from the city to the suburbs. For example, since 2020, 600 new living units have been built in Batavia and 70% of those new residents came from the City of Chicago. Mayor Johnson is aware of the trend. Director Schielke commented on Kendall County wanting to be part of the RTA service area, but not wanting to contribute to the RTA tax. He commented that Illinois State Senator DeWitt may emerge as a spokesperson for the legislators against the consolidation.

Director Smith thanked Director Canning for his summary of the Joint meeting of the Planning and Infrastructure committees. She emphasized that Pace's funding is 50% -300% less compared to other regions with similar demographics and travel patterns. She said Pace is very efficient with what we do, but we could do more to be on par with other regions. Director Smith reported on attending the grand opening of McHenry County's University Center, which allows residents with their community college degree to complete their undergraduate degree from four university partners while staying in McHenry County. She suspects this will increase ridership on McHenry County's fixed route between Crystal Lake where McHenry County Community College is located and Woodstock where the new University Center exists.

Director Soto reported on meeting with Great Lakes Naval Base along with Melinda, Chief Planning Officer Erik Llewellyn, and Lake County Chair Sandy Hart about expanding service to the base, which is a challenge with security. Director Soto reported on serving as a hearing officer for the permanent expansion of Round Lake Area On Demand. Ridership more than doubled during the pilot. Round Lake mayors are excited because the service has been life-changing for residents. Lastly, Director Soto continues to be astonished by how much Pace does as an agency given our lack of funding compared to comparable cities. Pace's funding has not changed since the establishment of the service boards in the 1980's, yet population grew by 42%. A lot of challenges being mentioned at the hearings can be addressed with adequate funding.

Director Wells commended the South Campus ribbon cutting in Markham, attended by several legislators, mayors, the RTA, and Governor Pritzker. He praised Pace for improving efficiencies. He said the event showed the Governor and legislators that Pace is a good steward of state

ReBuild funding and spends money to improve the lives of riders. He enjoyed that event attendees could try out an electric bus on the new driver training course.

Chairman Kwasneski added that he had the opportunity to speak with Governor Pritzker about issues with electric bus manufacturing companies going bankrupt. Governor Pritzker encouraged Pace to work with Illinois companies as there may be funding opportunities. Pace is exploring work with Rivian, who is doing electric Amazon and UPS vehicles, on electric paratransit buses.

Executive Director's Report

Melinda Metzger thanked the Operations staff who volunteered to provide emergency transport for the City of Chicago Police Department for the 2024 Democratic National Convention.

Melinda thanked the Chairman, Director Wells, and Director Carr for welcoming Governor Pritzker to the first building on South Campus in Markham. She explained that new operators were trained on the street in the past, but the new South Campus facility has a contained training track, which allows people who are not certified to drive a bus because we have a safe location. Many legislators took advantage of the opportunity to drive an electric bus. Customer Service and Centralized Training are operating of the new South Campus facility, and Sign and Shelter will move in later. Construction continues on a second South Campus building which will be Pace's first facility with fire suppression and emergency procedures for electric vehicles. The second building will house Maintenance and Technical Services, moving from South Holland.

Melinda reported on meeting with Congresswoman Lauren Underwood at Pace's Plainfield garage to celebrate a community project funding grant that she supported to buy an electric over the road coach to test on I-55 services.

Melinda reported that for Disability Pride month, Pace participated in Chicago's Disability Pride parade and an event for the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities with Director Arfa.

Melinda reported on dedicating the Joliet Multimodal Transportation Center to Larry Walsh Sr. and Activate Joliet, a celebration of the facility sponsored by an RTA station activation grant. Pace provided food, caricatures, kids activities, and Touch a Trucks for electric buses, over the road coaches, and service trucks for 150 members of the public. Melinda thanked Government Relations and Operations staff who shared information about public transit.

Melinda reported that on August 6, Chairman Kwasneski and her joined Will County officials to celebrate the expansion of Dial-a-Ride services into southwest Will County. Residents with a disability or who are over 60 years old can schedule curb to curb transit for any purpose. Pace is pleased to serve areas of Will County that we have not served in the past. The Dial-a-Ride came about through a \$200,000 grant that Pace provided to Will County to expand paratransit service.

This past Friday, Melinda signed a national pledge, along with the RTA, Metra, and the Tollway, from the Equity in Infrastructure Project to improve public contracting practices by creating more opportunities for businesses that have been historically underutilized.

Melinda reported on the next Illinois Senate Transportation Committee hearing dates and will report scheduling updates to the board as she receives them.

Melinda reported that Pace, in coordination with CTA and Metra, is offering elementary and high school students free rides on Monday, August 26.

Melinda reported that as part of Pace's commitment to strengthening post-pandemic service and to capitalize on recent ridership trends showing greater demand for weekend and late evening service, Pace will implement expanded service on selected routes:

- **Route 331** – improved Saturday and additional Sunday service
- **Route 330** – improved Saturday hours/frequency and improved evening frequency
- **Route 381** – due to the success of increased Sunday service earlier this summer, Route 381 now operates longer and with increased frequency on weekends and weekdays too
- **Route 332** – four additional overnight trips throughout the week, including weekends

Some of these routes serve third shift workers who use buses to connect to the cargo area south of O'Hare from the CTA Blue Line Station in Rosemont. Last week, Pace restored many of the I-55 bus on shoulder trips to meet the growing market demand along the corridor. With these changes, Pace is back to 96% of pre-pandemic revenue hours. More riders using the fixed route system is a testament to the hard work staff has done to draw back riders in a post-pandemic era.

More service means we need more drivers in the system. Pace continues to hold weekly Hire on the Spot events and hold events at area colleges. Pace currently has 115 candidates in training and 56 candidates in the hiring process.

Melinda reported that the YTD June budget performance is favorable for suburban service. ADA service is slightly overbudget, but Pace believes it will come within budget toward the end of the year. Pace had planned to implement RAP earlier in the year, so budget numbers are off. However, RAP is being used more than expected, so those numbers will come in line.

Melinda reported that Pace carried 1.8 million riders in June and almost 2 million riders in July. Eleven of the last twelve months Pace carried over 70,000 daily weekday riders, compared to 100,000 pre-pandemic. Several months this year, Pace carried close to 80% of pre-pandemic levels. Ridership numbers continue to trend up.

Items removed from the Consent Agenda

None.

Approval of Consent Agenda

SBD #24-54 – Resolution honoring Dave Tomzik on his retirement from Pace after 34 years of dedicated service.

SBD #24-55 – Resolution honoring Karen Shinnars on her retirement from Pace after 26 years of dedicated service.

SBD #24-56 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Clean As A Whistle! LLC for janitorial services at Pace Headquarters in an amount not to exceed \$512,803.96.

SBD #24-57 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Physicians Immediate Care Chicago, PLLC; Back To Health Chiropractic Medical Center; and Advocate Health and Hospitals Corporation for medical testing services in an amount not to exceed \$1,691,600.00.

SBD #24-58 – Ordinance dissolving the Planning Committee and the Infrastructure Committee and establishing a single ad hoc committee that will be called the Planning & Infrastructure Committee.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Noak seconded a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Canning, Carr, Guerin, Hastings, Marcucci, McLeod, Noak, Schielke, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Chairman Kwasneski. All directors voted aye.

Director Hastings left the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Action Items

SBD #24-59 – Ordinance authorizing Pace’s Executive Director to make the Round Lake Area On Demand service expansion changes permanent after the pilot period ends on August 28, 2024.

Erik Llewellyn, Chief Planning Officer, presented.

Director Soto moved, and Director Noak seconded a motion to approve the Ordinance. The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Canning, Carr, Guerin, Hastings, Marcucci, McLeod, Noak, Schielke, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Chairman Kwasneski. All directors voted aye.

SBD #24-60 – Ordinance authorizing an IGA between Pace and Cook County for Pace to receive up to \$500,000 of funding from the Invest in Cook Program for National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) documentation and advanced conceptual design for the Pulse Cermak Line project.

Charlotte Obodzinski, Department Manager of Priority Project Management Office, presented.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Marcucci seconded a motion to approve the Ordinance. The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Canning, Carr, Guerin, Hastings, Marcucci, McLeod, Noak, Schielke, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Chairman Kwasneski. All directors voted aye.

SBD #24-61 – Ordinance authorizing the Executive Director to award a contract to Patrick Engineering Inc. for a Phase I Engineering and Architectural Feasibility Study for the I-55 and Harlem Avenue Inline Bus Rapid Transit Station in an amount not to exceed \$259,190.53.

Charlotte Obodzinski, Department Manager of Priority Project Management Office, presented.

Director Noak moved, and Director McLeod seconded a motion to approve the Ordinance. The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Canning, Carr, Guerin, Hastings, Marcucci, McLeod, Noak, Schielke, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Chairman Kwasneski. All directors voted aye.

SBD #24-62 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a sole source contract to Gillig LLC for the purchase of one 40-foot battery electric bus (BEB) in an amount not to exceed \$924,538.00.

Director McLeod moved, and Director Schielke seconded a motion to approve the Ordinance. The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Canning, Carr, Guerin, Hastings, Marcucci, McLeod, Noak, Schielke, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Chairman Kwasneski. All directors voted aye.

Issues/Discussion/Reports

Erik Llewellyn, Chief Planning Officer, presented on the Lansing Area On Demand pilot project.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Director Noak moved, and Director Schielke seconded a motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote; all Directors voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, September 18, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace Corporate Headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Elissa Ledvort
Board Secretary, Board of Directors