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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 November 13, 2024

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority ("Pace), met in open session on Wednesday, November 13, 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, Hastings, Marcucci, McLeod, Smith, Soto, and Chairman Kwasneski.

Director McLeod moved, and Director Carr seconded a motion to allow Director Noak and Director Schielke to attend via Zoom. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. Director Noak joined the meeting via Zoom immediately following the vote. Director Schielke did not join immediately following the vote but did join via Zoom later on in the meeting, as specified.

Directors absent: Arfa, Guerin, Schielke, Wells.

SBD #24-80 – Resolution approving the open session meeting minutes of October 16, 2024.

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

Public Comment

None.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Kwasneski recognized Native American Heritage Month and Veteran's Day, complimenting the Facebook post picturing Pace veterans. He thanked staff for their work preparing Pace's 2025 budget and board members for presenting Pace's budget to county boards. He said Pace looks forward to continuing dialog with our stakeholder partners in 2025.

Chairman Kwasneski reported on the ribbon-cutting event for Pace's 11th On Demand service in the Lansing area, adding another transit option in the south suburbs. He complimented the success of the On Demand program, saying it is convenient and well-received by riders, and Pace continues to look at areas throughout the region to complement fixed routes with On Demand. About 40 people attended the event including Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Commissioner Stanley Moore, State Representative Marcus Evans, and Mayor Patty Eidam of Lansing, who rode the service and spoke highly of her experience at the event. Chairman Kwasneski thanked staff for a great event.

Director Arfa joined the meeting in-person at 9:33 a.m.

Chairman Kwasneski reported on attending an RTA summit in Arlington Heights with Director Canning and Director Noak. Pace participated in a panel discussion featuring Melinda Metzger; Executive Director of Metra, Jim Derwinski; Executive Director of the RTA, Leanne Redden; and Brian Wilton, Chief Legal Officer for New Jersey Transit, who is experiencing similar funding issues as the RTA and ironically is having an opposite conversation about breaking up a large organization to get better service. That was enlightening to legislators who were there; the legislators made good comments on funding solutions.

Chairman Kwasneski reported on the launch of Pace's Hinsdale Lake Terrace Rideshare Access Pilot Program in partnership with DuPage County, the culmination of conversations over several years regarding service in south DuPage. This program uses TNC companies to augment transit options and is another way Pace is working with county government to identify areas of need and provide additional transportation opportunities. Residents can sign up for the program now and the program will start in January.

Directors' Reports

Director Canning reported that on October 23rd, he presented Pace's 2025 budget to the Cook County Board along with the RTA, Metra, and the CTA. He thanked Director Guerin and Director Arfa for attending and Melinda for answering questions. He reported that on October 29th, Pace's Planning & Infrastructure Committee met to hear a detailed update on the ReVision network revitalization plan, which will be presented to the board today by Jarrett Walker & Associates ("JWA"). He pointed out that New Jersey Transit, mentioned by the Chairman, will be called out in the ReVision presentation as a counterpart to Pace regarding the size of the service area.

Director Carr reported on attending a budget public hearing in River Grove where Pace received three comments unrelated to the 2025 budget. He thinks everyone left the meeting more knowledgeable. He complemented Director Guerin on chairing the hearing.

Director Marcucci reported on Pace's budget public hearing in DuPage County. He said the good news is that no one showed up because it is a year of no service cuts and no rate increases, so everyone is happy. The bad news is that we are inching closer to the fiscal cliff in 2026 that we have been talking about for some time. It is a real problem that still needs to be solved. His fear is that we are not going to address the fiscal cliff and will face massive service cuts in the next 18-24 months. He said we need to alert people to start paying attention. Unfortunately, consolidation of the service boards has dominated discussion. He believes that consolidation is not going to solve the budget problem, which is the true issue. A change in governance will save taxpayer money, but not enough to make a difference in the budget. He believes consolidation will not improve real issues like on-time performance. He is cautioning officials in DuPage County that if you call a consolidated board with a service issue, they will not be familiar with local areas as the boards of Pace, the CTA, and Metra are now. He cited the new Hinsdale Lake Terrace RAP as a great example of being close to the ground, responding to local issues. He has been fielding calls from residents, mayors, and officials wanting a bus route in the southeast corner of DuPage County. Pace's Planning Department investigated and determined that there is not enough trip generation to warrant dedicating resources to a fixed route. So, Pace developed new, innovative programming with the sophisticated, app-driven RAP program that partners with TNCs to respond to residents' needs. He congratulated Melinda, Pace staff, and Community Relations Representative, Chris Rose, for working with DuPage transit advocates to create a great program.

Director Schielke joined the meeting via Zoom at 9:42 a.m.

Director McLeod congratulated staff on developing a great budget for 2025. He reported that on October 25th, he served as a hearing officer for a virtual budget hearing. A few people called in.

Director Noak thanked Melinda and staff. He believes that the consolidation discussion has distracted from funding solutions, which is what many warned about when the process began.

Director Smith reported on serving as a hearing officer for the McHenry County budget hearing. One person representing the Climate Reality Project expressed concerns about hydrogen fuel. Director Smith is supportive of the budget and Pace's great work. She would like to see more public participation in the budget hearings, saying it is the most important meeting of the year.

Director Soto reported on serving as a hearing officer for the Lake County budget hearing. They received three comments, including complements on electric vehicles and the pace at which Pace is moving towards zero emissions, and concerns about hydrogen fuel. She said Pace should note the difference between gray vs. green hydrogen. She appreciated hearing constructive, articulate criticisms and requests for service. She encouraged commenters to be concise when reporting

complaints, with dates and times that service issues occurred, to help Pace analyze and correct problems. The Mayor of Waukegan sent staff to the hearing to state on the record how pleased Waukegan is with Pace's efforts. Director Soto also reported on presenting Pace's 2025 budget to the Lake County board with Melinda. Numerous Lake County board members complemented service improvements, project involvement, and Melinda and Community Relations Representative, Ed Gallagher. Director Soto reported on a DBE open house taking place today at the Waukegan Development Coalition for Phase 1 Design Build for the North Division garage.

Director Schielke reported that the Kane County Board wrote him a letter of appreciation for Pace transporting senior living communities to Covid vaccine clinics. Several thousand people received their vaccine in Batavia, which was the second largest producer of vaccines in the Chicagoland area. Kane County is crediting Pace's Ride in Kane program for that success.

Executive Director's Report

Melinda Metzger reported that Pace recognized Veterans Day by honoring employees and their family members who have served in the U.S. Armed forces. Pace also recognized Native American Heritage Month and honors the rich history of all cultures in the region we serve.

Melinda reported on wrapping up the 2025 budget season and thanked all the board members who participated in Pace's nine budget public hearings. Pace received public input requesting more service, complementing adding back bus on shoulder service, and complementing the creation of the Rideshare Access Program (RAP).

Melinda provided updates on Pace's ReVision network revitalization initiative. Pace recently kicked off the public input process by presenting initial service concepts to the board Planning & Infrastructure Committee and conducting eight virtual municipal briefings. Staff will hold in person open houses and ride buses to engage riders in taking the survey.

Melinda reported on appearing on WTTW's Chicago Tonight along with the other service boards to discuss Pace's innovations and ongoing efforts to adapt to post-Covid travel patterns. They addressed the RTA's challenges to find sustainable transit funding for the region after 2026.

Melinda echoed Chairman Kwasneski's comments about the RTA panel and about the success of the Lansing On Demand ribbon cutting. She thanked the communications and government affairs staff for arranging the event and reported that the service has good initial ridership.

Melinda reported that Pace and Pace's general contractor for North Division electrification, Paschen, are hosting a DBE hiring event to continue networking efforts to promote DBE participation in North Division electrification projects.

Melinda commented on the launch of the Hinsdale Lake Terrace community RAP program reported on by Chairman Kwasneski and Director Marcucci, and the partnership between Pace and DuPage County to provide public transit opportunities to an underserved area. DuPage

County will help fund the program. Participants can take up to four trips per day and receive up to \$30 in subsidy. The program will launch in January, but residents can start signing up now.

Melinda reported on another record-breaking ridership report for October 2024. Pace carried 2.2 million systemwide riders, beating last month's record for the highest monthly ridership since the start of Covid. This is a major milestone that reflects the growing demand for Pace service.

Melinda reported that Pace extended 79 offers to candidates at Hire-on-the-Spot events, which are now held at <u>two</u> locations: at Pace headquarters and at Pace's new Markham facility.

Chairman Kwasneski noticed a dramatic uptick in the paratransit-TAP ridership in the October 2024 ridership report and suggested breaking out ridership for the new RAP program in the report. Melinda reported that 277,000 RAP trips were performed in September 2024.

Items removed from the Consent Agenda

None.

Approval of Consent Agenda

SBD #24-81 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Bus & Truck of Chicago, Inc., Midwest Bus Corporation, Atlas World Class Body Shop, Inc., GPM Truck Center, and CoachCrafters, Inc. for collision repairs for the Pace bus fleet in an amount not to exceed \$6,527,723.00.

SBD #24-82 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Crowe LLP for professional auditing services in an amount not to exceed \$563,500.00.

SBD #24-83 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Kates Detective & Security Agency and Special Events Services, Inc. for armed guard security services at the Harvey Transportation Center and the Chicago Heights Terminal in an amount not to exceed \$1,505,232.40.

Director McLeod moved, and Director Smith seconded a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. All directors voted aye.

Action Items

SBD #24-84 – **Resolution** honoring Brett Burkardt on his retirement from Pace after 40 years of dedicated service.

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

SBD #24-85 – Ordinance honoring Larry Winston on his retirement from Pace after 40 years of dedicated service.

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

SBD #24-86 – Ordinance adopting the 2025 Operating Budget and 2026-2027 Two-Year Financial Plan for Suburban Service and Regional ADA Paratransit Service, the 2025-2029 Five-Year Capital Program, and 2025 appropriation of funds in accordance with the Operating Budget and Capital Program. This ordinance also authorizes the Operating Budget and Capital Program to be submitted to the RTA upon adoption by the Pace Board.

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

SBD #24-87 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Mythics, LLC for managed database services and OnDemand database services in an amount not to exceed \$2,662,286.25.

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

SBD #24-88 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Cabconnect, Inc. for Taxi Access Program Management System services in an amount not to exceed \$3,587,000.00.

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

SBD #24-89 – **Ordinance** authorizing the award of a contract to F.H. Paschen, S.N. Nielsen & Associates LLC for design and construction services for the Pace North Division Phase 2 electrification project to expand the indoor bus storage, maintenance, and administration areas and to make building upgrades to accommodate charging and indoor storage for 60 battery electric buses in an amount not to exceed \$81,283,773.00.

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

Issues/Discussion/Reports

Daniel Costantino, Principal Consultant of Jarrett Walker & Associates, presented on ReVision, Pace's Network Revitalization and Systemwide Restructuring Initiative.

Chairman Kwasneski commented that over the years, Pace has done well growing ridership and filling in transit gaps in collar counties through On Demand services or dial-a-ride partnerships with counties, townships, and municipalities that link up to fixed routes, Metra, or the CTA. He cautioned that counties contribute to the RTA tax and want an equal return on their investment, and any network changes could affect that. He disagrees with trying to expand how far people can travel in an hour, saying that is not realistic. Do people really want to ride transit for an hour if they can get to a job or grocery store closer in less time? He argued that there are jobs in Lake County and McHenry County without needing to travel outside the counties. He advocates for filling in gaps and linking up services to each other so people can better move around the region. Melinda added that links between services will be developed as concepts move forward. She noted that some of the concepts eliminate On Demands because more frequent fixed route service is proposed. Chairman Kwasneski added that you need to balance out dollars if services are changed. For example, On Demand is less costly to operate than a fixed route, so if an On Demand is eliminated, that money can be invested in more frequent, faster fixed routes. He also added that what works in Cook doesn't work in Lake, and what works in Lake doesn't work in Will. Increasing ridership in each part of the region needs to be looked at individually.

Director Soto explained that Lake County has a dense population on the east end of the county, which is served by several fixed routes, but On Demand has been a blessing for central and western Lake County, which has transit deserts and lower demographic needs. Eliminating some fixed routes, expanding On Demand, and adding express Pulse lines that serve transportation hubs may potentially connect those gaps and result in a reasonable travel time for longer rides.

Director Smith said that it is fundamentally important to understand that the plus 50 ridership concept and the plus 50 coverage concept propose a 50% increase in funding by county above what each county already receives, because of the taxpayer contribution to the RTA. If you are looking holistically at the region, most of the service increases under the ridership model occur closer to Chicago and most of the service increases under the coverage model occur in McHenry and Lake counties. The Planning & Infrastructure Committee agreed that the answer is not one extreme or the other (all ridership or all coverage), it is somewhere in-between. The board needs to consider the tradeoffs. We need to recognize that in some places, even if we build it, the riders will not come. If a suburbanite in a subdivision lives five minutes from a train, would they walk a quarter of a mile to catch a new fixed route bus to the train, or will most still drive to the train? Yet, there are other communities with low-income populations who have no bus service other than the county funded dial-a-ride. She believes if Pace extended more coverage in those areas, many people would walk the quarter mile to get on a bus to go to jobs in McHenry County.

Director Smith commented that she does not see the public engagement needed so far and Pace needs to be very proactive about soliciting input. When she attended the virtual McHenry County municipal leaders briefing, no questions were asked. She encouraged Directors to attend COG functions and transportation committee meetings and reach out to mayors individually in their regions. We need to make sure every city understands the models being proposed because this is a long-term plan that will drive decisions for decades. We cannot assume that if an area did not respond then they do not have opinions and just go with our opinions. It is too important.

Director Soto commented that many people still do not understand what On Demand is and how convenient it is. On Demand is door to door service. On Demand could connect you to a train or fixed route without walking or having to find parking.

Director Arfa encouraged Pace to make sure opinions from people with disabilities are included. This is an opportunity to partner with the Center for Independent Living to get a sense of what is working or not working regionally. She encouraged Pace to look at gaps in service between suburbs, counties, or within municipalities that affect paratransit and other types of transportation with civil rights protections. She said it was important for outreach materials to be accessible.

Melinda said that one of the focus groups will be members of the disability community to make sure we get their input in this process. Pace recognizes that we have a lot of service gaps, which we try to address with On Demand, dial-a-rides, and now RAP. To solicit public input, Pace appreciates any help from board members and will be giving materials to the board to distribute to their county officials. Pace wants as much input as possible. One major unknown factor is how much money Pace is going to get as the fiscal cliff is resolved. Will Pace receive 10% more funding to return to baseline pre-Covid levels, 20% more, or the full 50% more that we requested? Chairman Kwasneski commented that Pace has to plan for the full 50% because Springfield is asking if we give you this money, what will you do with it? Pace has to be prepared to answer that question and can scale back if necessary.

Chairman Kwasneski added that Pace cannot be everything for everybody. We must identify areas where public transit is the only option for people and how to serve those pockets. We should not discount people who have a car and want an extra option, but those who have no transportation should be our priority. The biggest challenge will be figuring out how to maximize public dollars for people who need the service the most and will ride public transit as a necessity.

Chairman Kwasneski asked for a modified version of the presentation, saying he wants to make sure we are respectful of the mayors, the COG staff, and their time. He agrees that this is an important opportunity for mayors to weigh in on the services they could get. He acknowledged the challenge of getting people to engage, but Pace needs to go the extra mile for input.

Director Smith noted how unified the McHenry COG is on prioritizing road improvements throughout the county. She would like to see local COGs unified on bus transit priorities.

Director Marcucci recognized that the board needs to make a critical decision. He commented on Pace's competing goals to serve as many people as possible by investing in routes with the highest ridership (ridership model), and also to serve all parts of the region that contribute to the RTA tax which may not generate the most ridership (coverage model). He is concerned about taking away bus routes from people in favor of efficiency. He agreed that we need to make an effort to inform the county boards, COGs, mayors, transportation committees and the public because if we do not, people will be upset. He committed to speaking with elected officials in his county and asked Pace to inform the board when having conversations with elected officials in their regions, so the board has a sense of what people are saying. He personally does not think a 50% increase is a realistic option but believes you will not get it if you do not ask for it.

Melinda stated that Pace will work with board members on how they want this information shared. Pace will put all the ReVision data on Pace's ReVision website. The information will be shared with mayors and legislators. Pace staff will start getting on buses and talking to riders about the ReVision survey. Pace has met with county DOTs and planners throughout the region. In addition to the eight municipal briefings that were held, Pace can do more.

Director Hastings asked if a video of the presentation could be shared to make it easier for the average citizen or busy mayors to absorb the complex information. Chairman Kwasneski praised the idea saying a summary would be good to avoid overwhelming people with information. He suggested short presentations at COG meetings. Director Soto asked about reaching out to municipal planning employees or departments, saying mayors generally do not spend enough time on mass transit in their comprehensive plans.

Daniel Costantino responded to several discussion points:

- Daniel will record a more concise version of today's presentation, which will be available on the project website. The website contains the full ReVision report, plus an executive summary with six pages of text and four maps. The online survey summarizes the concepts so people can learn about the project and provide input in five minutes.
- We recognize that plus 50% is ambitious in terms of the amount and the share that Pace has historically received, but it is also arguably not big enough of an ask when you compare suburban Chicago bus service to peer providers in other states. The plus 50 level was set based on the maximum that Pace can do within the limits of its current and planned physical capacity of buses and facilities.
- Pace needs to figure out how to provide service throughout the region. Investing funding in <u>coverage</u> means that there are other <u>ridership</u> needs Pace is not meeting, and vice versa. JWA is not advocating that either coverage or ridership is the correct service model, but in early 2025, Pace will seek a determination from the board about how much to invest in each model. It is a challenging decision that leads to consequences. If we do not get enough public engagement now and people do not know this is coming, the draft plan could be shocking, and you will hear from a lot of people. Pace will probably hear from a lot of people regardless of the decision made. Board members and staff should be prepared for the reasons behind the final decision to prepare to respond to feedback.
- Chairman Kwasneski mentioned that different things work in different parts of the region. One thing that has been historically challenging for Pace is how the funding

structure encourages Pace to customize each part of the service area. If you zoom out on the regional map, it can be difficult to understand how the network is broadly coherent. The concepts being discussed right now tried to work on developing a regional vision. After the public comment phase, the planning phase will allow us to customize more. The secondary aspect to the ridership vs. coverage tradeoff is one vision vs. customization.

Director Canning thanked Daniel Costantino for incorporating feedback from Pace's Planning & Infrastructure Committee into the presentation. Director Canning complimented the data in the full ReVision report and asked that the full report and community maps be made available to the board to see how their towns and nearby communities are affected and the data supporting those decisions. He mentioned that one of the impediments to taking the bus is waiting. People do not like waiting and especially do not like waiting when the bus is late. People want to leave their house just in time to get on the bus because their time is valuable. If people need to wait a half hour for the bus, they are more likely to drive instead. He encouraged Pace to make the right investments in technology, so people do not have to wait.

Daniel Costantino replied to Director Canning, saying that technology is great but is not a full replacement for frequency in terms of waiting. When the bus comes every 30 minutes and one trip is cancelled, you are stuck waiting for an hour. However, if the bus is scheduled more frequently, every 10 minutes and one trip is cancelled, then you are only waiting 20 minutes. Technology can help riders leave their houses later which is great, but it does not solve the problem that when you look up real time arrival in the Transit App and you find out your trip was delayed, you are already stuck waiting at the bus stop.

Daniel Costantino acknowledged Director Arfa's earlier point about working with people with disabilities. JWA has worked on making all ReVision documentation accessible and screen reader accessible, including reports, summaries, and the survey through SurveyMonkey. Melinda added the ReVision materials will be given to Pace's ADA Advisory Committees.

Chairman Kwasneski thanked Daniel Costantino for the informative presentation and asked Pace to follow through on the public input goals discussed today.

Adjournment

Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion to adjourn into closed session for the purposes of discussing closed session minutes (2-C-21), pending litigation (2-C-11), and employment matters (2-C-1). Director Soto moved, and Director McLeod seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. All directors voted aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Reconvene

Chairman Kwasneski reconvened the open session of the Pace Board of Directors meeting at 12:05 p.m.

Directors physically present: Arfa, Canning, Carr, Marcucci, McLeod, Smith, Soto, and Chairman Kwasneski.

Directors telephonically present: Noak and Schielke

Directors absent: Guerin, Hastings, and Wells.

SBD #24-90 – Resolution approving the closed session meeting minutes of October 16, 2024.

Director Soto moved, and Director Carr seconded a motion to approve the Resolution. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. All directors voted aye.

SBD #24-91 – Ordinance approving action on Suleiman Othman v. Pace; 18 WC 036308.

Director McLeod moved, and Director Canning seconded a motion to approve the Ordinance. The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Arfa, Canning, Carr, Marcucci, McLeod, Noak, Schielke, Smith, Soto, and Chairman Kwasneski. Director Marcucci voted no. All other directors voted aye.

SBD #24-92 – **Resolution** approving a Second Amended Employment Agreement with the Executive Director.

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

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Director Smith moved, and Director Noak seconded a motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote; all Directors voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, December 11, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace Corporate Headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Elissa Ledvort
Board Secretary, Board of Directors