

**Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority
(f/k/a the Regional Transportation Authority)
550 West Algonquin Road
Arlington Heights, Illinois
Minutes of the Open Session Meeting of the Pace Board of Directors
July 15, 2026**

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority (f/k/a Regional Transportation Authority) (“Pace”), met in open session on Wednesday, July 15, 2026 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 9:31 a.m.

Roll Call

Directors physically present: Canning, Carr, Guerin, Marcucci, Schielke, Smith, Soto, and Chairman Kwasneski.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Marcucci seconded a motion, to allow Director Noak to attend via Zoom. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. Director Noak joined the meeting via Zoom immediately following the vote.

Directors absent: Arfa, Hastings, McLeod, and Wells.

SBD #26-51 – Resolution approving the open session meeting minutes of June 17, 2026.

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

Public Comment

Scott Fedro commented that Route 471 in Highland Park has been operating on a detour for two years and the route operates a half hour later than the posted online schedule. Executive Director Melinda Metzger reported that Pace is aware of the issue and working through it with Highland

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*

Park. The temporary detour will likely become permanent because Pace's bus exceeds the weight limit on one of the bridges that the route travels. Director Soto reported that she will reach out to the Lake County Department of Transportation. Mr. Fedro also reported issues using his RAP subsidy.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Kwasneski thanked Director Noak for leading the event in Will County celebrating the introduction of 24 hybrid buses into Pace's fleet, as well as Director Smith for leading an event in McHenry County celebrating the launch of the Crystal Lake Van Go.

Chairman Kwasneski reported on upcoming NITA Ad Hoc meetings regarding the NITA transition on July 22 and August 13, which will be attended by Directors Noak, Smith, and Wells as they have been reappointed to the Pace Board of Directors. Chairman Kwasneski reported that Melinda continues to work with the Governor's Office, CTA, and Metra on the NITA transition.

Chairman Kwasneski reported that a couple years ago when Pace began discussing changes in legislation and governance, he decided that he would not seek another term as Chairman. His term expires August 31. Chairman Kwasneski has served on the Pace Board of Directors for 24 years, with twenty years as Chairman. He thanked the entire board and staff, saying that Pace is a great agency and will continue to be well into the future.

Directors' Reports

Director Canning thanked Lindsey Umek and Pace Operations for working with the Wilmette Park District and Police Department to provide transportation for fireworks. He complimented Pace's work planning the routes, publishing press releases to make the public aware of bus stops, and assigning staff. He reported that the fireworks were cancelled so everyone could get home safely and not be impacted by the weather, but he appreciated how Pace was ready, willing, and able to serve.

Director Noak thanked Chairman Kwasneski for his service to the Pace Board of Directors and highlighted how much has been accomplished by staff and this Board under his twenty-year leadership as Chairman. Director Noak reported on hosting an event at Heritage Division in Plainfield to celebrate Pace's new hybrid buses. Pace was joined by Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant and State Representative Natalie Manley. He thanked Pace staff for the outstanding work they did putting together a great event and noted the good media coverage.

Director Schielke reported that he attended a luncheon held by Kane County Chairman Pierog. He spoke with several Kane County board members who reported they are not happy with the direction that transportation in the county and region is going under the new NITA transition and they want to seek changes. He is not sure what changes they will target specifically.

Director Smith reported on hosting a ribbon cutting to celebrate the new VanGo service at the Pingree Road Metra Station in Crystal Lake. She thanked staff for the long hours spent on the

event. She was thrilled with the bipartisan turnout from McHenry County board members. She noted a good article following the event and that the Crystal Lake Park District and McHenry County Economic Development Corporation are promoting the program with manufacturing facilities in the area. County Treasurer Kurtz pointed out that VanGo opens up a great opportunity for businesses to recruit from outside McHenry County, as it is really difficult to fill hourly manufacturing positions. McHenry County is already discussing future VanGo locations.

Director Smith also reported that after the VanGo ribbon cutting, she met with McHenry County Administrator Hartman, Brian Sager, who was appointed as a new Metra board member and NITA representative for McHenry County, along with Melinda and Pace Chief Planning Officer Erik Llewellyn to discuss the future of public transportation in McHenry County. Director Smith reported that it was a good discussion, and she approves of the direction and ideas proposed.

Executive Director's Report

Melinda reported that on Monday, Pace received final approval for the \$20 million federal RAISE grant funding to proceed with the construction of the new Harvey Multimodal Facility. To recap, Pace had set aside funding to refurbish Pace's existing Harvey Transportation Center, but decided to approach Metra, the City of Harvey, and IDOT to propose relocating and combining the transit hub with the Harvey Metra station for riders to easily transfer between bus and rail. All parties agreed to the change, which required IDOT to move some streets. The total project will cost \$67 million, funded using the \$20 million RAISE grant, \$10.8 million of federal funding contributed by Pace, \$11.8 million of Rebuild Illinois funding, and \$24 million contributed by Metra. Metra will oversee the construction of the new facility, which will have restrooms for customers and drivers, real-time departure and arrival information, 14 bus bays, 4 bus bays for buses on layover waiting to go back in service, an ADA paratransit boarding area, and more security. Pace's vision for the facility will come to fruition in 2030. Melinda congratulated the Board of Directors and all parties who came together for Pace riders.

Chairman Kwasneski praised the Harvey Multimodal Facility and recalled going to Washington, D.C. with Metra to pitch the idea, which was met with enthusiastic support. This is an example of collaboration between service boards to best serve riders. He praised Pace for navigating the local issues and individual concerns and ideas from the City of Harvey, IDOT, Metra, and Pace, and then pulling it all together. This will be a great improvement for the south suburbs.

Melinda reported that Pace was proud to join communities across the country to recognize America 250. Pace wrapped a few buses throughout the region operating out of Northwest, South, and West Divisions, and coordinated with Metra who also wrapped certain trains.

Melinda joined Director Canning in thanking Pace Operations for all they did for July 3rd fireworks service in Wilmette. She complimented Director Canning for promptly notifying Pace of the cancellation and helping Pace get buses and employees home safely.

Melinda reported that July is Disability Pride Month and Pace is proud to annually participate in the City of Chicago's Disability Pride Parade. This year is particularly special because July is the 20th anniversary of Pace operating ADA paratransit service for the whole Chicago region.

Melinda reported that Pace participated in the DuSable Black History Museum Juneteenth celebration by showcasing Pace's 1949 GMC bus, which is the same series of buses built on the same production line as the bus that Rosa Parks famously protested in. The historic bus is a crowd-pleaser, with long lines of people excited to see it. After the Juneteenth celebration, Pace brought the 1949 GMC bus to the grand opening of the Obama Presidential Library. Melinda thanked staff who were at both events telling attendees about Pace job opportunities, Hire-on-the-Spot events, and how to use public transit and Pace service to travel to the museums. Pace bus on shoulder service feeds into downtown CTA service, and Pace provides ADA paratransit for the region.

Melinda praised Director Noak for leading the event at Heritage Division celebrating the introduction of 24 hybrid buses into Pace's fleet. She thanked Will County Executive Bertino-Tarrant and Representative Manley for their support of Pace service in Will County and the continual growth of bus on shoulder service.

Melinda praised Director Smith for leading the ribbon cutting of VanGo service in Crystal Lake, and for the positive feedback from McHenry County officials about how the service can impact the community, helping connect people to work locations. Pace and local officials want to continue to grow the VanGo program to serve the many hospitals and industries in the area.

Melinda reported that this week, Pace kicked off the Pulse Harlem line study, with proposed service along the 14-mile segment of Harlem Avenue between North Avenue and 103rd street, serving River Forest, Forest Park, North Riverside, Riverside, Lyons, Summit, Forest View, Stickney, Berwyn, Oak Park, Bedford Park, and Bridgeview. Pulse Harlem will be Pace's sixth Pulse line, joining Pulse Milwaukee that debuted in 2019 and Pulse Dempster that debuted in 2023. Pulse Halsted and Pulse 95th Street are both in design and will debut in 2029. Work has begun on Pulse 22nd / Cermak, which is scheduled to debut in 2030. Pulse Harlem is scheduled to debut in 2032. If service can be fast, people will ride.

Melinda reported that an Ad Hoc committee was formed by NITA for the NITA transition, with the goal of providing feedback on key short-term decisions while the new boards are being established. She and Directors Noak, Smith, and Wells will participate in meetings on July 22 and August 13 on behalf of Pace.

Melinda reported on ridership. In June, the Pace system provided 1.95 million rides, which is 72% of 2019 ridership levels, based on farebox data. Fixed route ridership from operating divisions is up 3.1% and paratransit ridership is down 7.7%, which is expected due to the reduction of monthly trip limits for the TAP and RAP programs.

Melinda discussed anomalies in ridership data, specifically a discrepancy in the farebox data traditionally used for ridership reporting, and the automatic passenger counter (APC). APC data, which is the equipment at the top of the bus door that counts people coming in and out, suggests that ridership is at 87% of pre-Covid levels. Pace will work with a statistician to determine the appropriate way to reconcile the differences between ridership information. True ridership is most likely somewhere in-between the two data sets. Meanwhile, Pace is replacing aging Cubic (the provider of Ventra) farebox equipment and addressing fare evasion. Pace began asking drivers to record when passengers are refusing to pay fares, which showed that in June, riders did not pay approximately 15.5% of cash fares owed. Pace has installed an advertising campaign inside buses stating, “fares required” and “pay your fare share.” Finally, Pace is working with the Cook County Sheriff’s Office and Illinois State Police to focus on routes where fare evasion is most prevalent and ascertain if they will assist Pace in combating it.

Melinda reported that Pace hosted eight Hire-on-the-Spot events at Pace HQ and South Campus in Markham, which drew 242 interested candidates and resulted in 45 job offers. Right now, Pace has 106 drivers in training and 36 candidates in the hiring process. Pace will continue to hire as it puts out more service.

Melinda reported that fixed route and ADA paratransit service are favorable to budget. Staff continue to monitor fuel expenses given the volatility of the market. This week, diesel fuel was \$2.97 per gallon compared to the \$2.67 per gallon budgeted and down from last month at \$3.53 per gallon. Pace has money to cover fuel being overbudget at year’s end.

Director Schielke cited the multiple senior living communities in Batavia and how many feel more comfortable paying with cash rather than using credit cards or apps due to concerns about fraud, crime, and identify theft. He asked if Pace would continue to accept cash fares. Melinda reported that Pace has been thoughtful about serving new and older generations. Call centers are important so that seniors and people with disabilities can talk to representatives who can provide assistance and answer questions. At the same time, Pace will continue to offer technology options for ADA paratransit, dial a ride, and On Demand services such as the ability to cancel trips, and someday the ability to schedule trips. Both options are important for Pace and riders.

Action Items

SBD #26-52 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Chandler Services, Inc., a contract to Interstate Power Systems, Inc., and a contract to Cummins, Inc. for non-warranty repair of Cummins engines and/or Allison transmissions in a combined total amount not to exceed \$8,400,000.00.

Lindsey Umek, Chief Operating Officer reported that this procurement was issued as an invitation for bid with multiple awards being recommended to authorized contractors. As repair work is needed, Pace will review each vendor’s technical ability and the amount of time needed to complete each repair, as well as cost, to determine which vendor will be assigned the work. This approach will minimize vehicle downtime and keep Pace’s aging fleet in a state of good

repair.

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

SBD #26-53 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Transdev Services, Inc. for Regional Mobility Management Call Center services in an amount not to exceed \$190,370,949.20.

Lindsey Umek reported on the contract for essential call-taking, scheduling, and dispatching services to allocate 3.3 million trips annually among various contractors, TNCs, and taxis across the region, which includes DuPage County, Kane County, South and West Cook County, Will County, and the City of Chicago. Director Canning asked for more information about the evaluation process. Lindsey Umek discussed the evaluation committee comprised of operations personnel and technology-oriented staff assembled by Procurement to evaluate proposals against specific criteria. The contract was awarded to the best rated proposer.

Director Canning asked if there was discussion within the bids as to what role Artificial Intelligence (AI) would play in providing call center services in the future. Lindsey Umek reported that AI is on Pace's radar, however it is important to understand that the call center is integrated into a complex paratransit system, run by multiple carriers across a huge region. Pace would run an AI service pilot parallel to what the call center does to make sure AI could support call center operations before incorporating AI into the system.

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

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 Smith moved, and Director Schielke seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. All directors voted aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Reconvene

Chairman Kwasneski reconvened the open session of the Pace Board of Directors meeting at 10:26 a.m.

Directors physically present: Canning, Carr, Guerin, Marcucci, Schielke, Smith, Soto, and Chairman Kwasneski.

Directors virtually present: Noak.

Directors absent: Arfa, Hastings, McLeod, and Wells.

SBD #26-54 – Resolution approving the closed session meeting minutes of June 17, 2026.

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

SBD #25-55 – Resolution approving a merit increase of 5% for the Executive Director for the year 2025.

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

Issues/Discussion/Reports

Staff encouraged Directors to review the May 2026 budget reports and financial statements contained in their packets, and to reach out to staff with questions.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Director Marcucci moved, and Director Guerin seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote; all Directors voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 10:28 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, August 19, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace corporate headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Elissa Ledvort
Board Secretary, Board of Directors