pace
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Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority
550 West Algonquin Road
Arlington Heights, Illinois
Minutes of the Open Session Meeting of the Pace Board of Directors
September 16, 2026

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority ("Pace"), met in open session on Wednesday, September 16, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace corporate headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois, pursuant to notice.

Lead Director Smith led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Lead Director Smith called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

Roll Call

Directors physically present: Dahl, Hickey, Hoskins, Montgomery, Noak, Ortiz, Pileski, Tamley, Wells, and Lead Director Smith.

Director Dahl moved, and Director Pileski seconded a motion, to allow Director Jenkins to attend via Zoom. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. Director Jenkins joined the meeting via Zoom immediately following the vote.

Directors absent: None.

Introductions

Director Dahl introduced himself as the Kane County representative on the Pace Board and the NITA Board, appointed by the Kane County Board and Chair Pierog. Director Dahl stated that he is a lifelong resident of Kane County and a 27-year staff member of Painters District Council No. 30 in Aurora, which represents painters, drywall finishers, and glazers. Director Dahl served as President of the Fox Valley Building Trades, which represents construction unions in Kane and Kendall Counties. Director Dahl served on the Kane County Board of Directors from 2015-2018 and holds an MPA. He said it was an honor and a privilege to work with his fellow board members and staff to provide quality, reliable, safe, and accessible transportation for all.

Erin Smith, ***Lead Director***
Brian W. Dahl Matthew Hickey Rory E. Hoskins Natasha E. Jenkins Luis Montgomery
John D. Noak Rosa Y. Ortiz David Pileski Karen Tamley Terry R. Wells
Board of Directors
Melinda J. Metzger, ***Executive Director***

Director Hickey introduced himself as the Lake County representative on the Pace Board. Director Hickey is a long-time community volunteer and former Village of Libertyville Trustee with a degree in urban planning and over a decade of experience in community development lending and investing. He values the role that transit plays in economic development and strong communities and wants to be involved during a consequential time for transit in northern Illinois. He promises to listen carefully, ask good questions, and help connect policy, finance, operations, and community needs in a way that supports good decisions. Director Hickey thanked the Lake County Board and Chair Hart for appointing him and thanked the past board members of Pace. Director Hickey takes to heart that the work begins in the garage, and that the work is about the rider who depends on Pace to get to where they need to go, and the employee that makes the trip possible. It is the Board's responsibility to give riders and employees a system worthy of their trust that is reliable, safe, well-managed, and built to serve the region now and in the long term.

Director Hoskins introduced himself as the West Suburban Cook County representative on the Pace Board and the NITA Board, appointed by Cook County President Preckwinkle. Director Hoskins is an attorney and has served as the Mayor of Forest Park since 2019. He holds a master's degree in social work, with experience as a caseworker for families impacted by DCFS and as a psychiatric clinician. Director Hoskins has worked in economic development at the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, and in private sector relocation and expansion. He now works with the Illinois Department of Insurance. Forest Park is one of the most transit-impacted communities in the region, with the CTA Blue Line ending at the Forest Park Station, adjacent to Metra serving as a hub for Pace routes. Director Hoskins advocated for NITA reforms after a tragic mass shooting occurred in Forest Park on a CTA Blue Line train in 2024. He looks forward to playing a part in the intended reforms of the NITA Act, including implementing transit ambassadors and safety improvements.

Director Montgomery introduced himself as the North Suburban Cook County representative on the Pace Board and the NITA Board, appointed by Cook County President Preckwinkle. He believes in transit as a backbone for economic development and success. He was born in Colombia and moved to Chicago as a child where he frequently rode CTA buses and trains., He is now a resident of Arlington Heights and takes Metra trains downtown. Professionally, Director Montgomery is a civil engineer, working for MacKay civil engineering and land surveying firm as Transport Market Sector Lead, and holds a master's degree in public policy. Director Montgomery looks forward to intertwining his engineering skills into public policy and helping transit-oriented development come to fruition.

Director Noak introduced himself as the Will County representative on the Pace Board and the NITA Board; he thanked the Will County Board and County Executive Bertino-Tarrant for giving him the opportunity to serve Pace again, being first appointed in 2022. Director Noak is the current Chair of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and has served on the CMAP Board for many years working on initiatives throughout the region with colleagues representing all areas within the greater Chicagoland metropolitan area. Director Noak serves on the Transportation Committee for the U.S. Conference of Mayors and on the U.S. National League of Cities where topics on transit are often discussed. Director Noak complimented his colleagues on the Pace

Board and the NITA Board, saying they represent the best of the region. He has confidence that the Pace Board and the NITA Board will accomplish fantastic things together as they move forward.

Director Ortiz introduced herself as the representative of the northeastern Illinois region on the Pace Board and the NITA Board, appointed by Governor Pritzker. Director Ortiz seeks to improve the quality of life for Pace employees and the people we serve. For many people, Pace is the one reliable method that they can count on to get to places where they can get services. She is excited to look at opportunities for the region to thrive economically and benefit everyone. Director Ortiz holds a master's degree in urban planning and has a background in architecture. She has 25 years of experience in transportation, housing, economic and community development, as well as in nonprofit, corporate, and government sectors. Director Ortiz has worked with municipalities throughout the region through CMAP, is involved with national organizations, and has worked internationally in Denmark, Mexico, England, and China. Her experiences have helped her learn how cities connect with one another and how the Chicago region is competitive globally. She looks forward to working with her colleagues.

Director Pileski introduced himself as the DuPage County representative on the Pace Board and the NITA Board. He thanked the DuPage County Board and Chair Conroy for their support and appointment. He reported that for him, public transit is a passion, inspiring him to pursue an undergraduate degree in urban planning. Director Pileski reported that transit and the opportunities it provides are personal to his family. His great-grandfather moved to the Chicago region to work on the train lines, and his father found a second career as a bus operator. Director Pileski serves on several regional and state boards, including the Firefighters' Pension Investment Board. Director Pileski looks forward to working on connecting communities together and building upon the success and momentum that Pace has already built.

Director Tamley introduced herself as the City of Chicago representative on the Pace Board, appointed by Mayor Johnson. Director Tamley is the CEO of Access Living, a nonprofit that serves people with all types of disabilities to live a more independent life. Director Tamley served as the Commissioner for the Chicago Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities ("MOPD") under Mayors Daley, Emmanuel, and Lightfoot. Director Tamley previously served on the Pace Board from 2008-2020 when the RTA Act designated a seat for the MOPD Commissioner. Director Tamley stated that she has used a wheelchair all her life and is an active public transit user. She stated that her husband also previously served on the CTA Board. Director Tamley previously served on the RTA ADA Advisory Committee, on the U.S. Access Board that developed federal standards on public transit accessibility, and on CMAP's PART committee in 2023 to develop the foundation for structural governance changes established by the NITA Act. She is excited to serve on the Pace Board again to ensure that public transit is accessible, efficient, clean, and safe for Chicagoans with disabilities.

Director Wells introduced himself as the Cook County representative on the Pace Board. Director Wells has served as the Mayor of Phoenix for 34 years, serves as the Chairman of the South Suburban College Board, and is the past President of the South Suburban Mayors and

Managers Association, still serving on its Executive Committee and Transportation Committee. Director Wells has served on the Pace Board since 2005, was Chairman of the former Audit Committee, and sat on the Pace Planning & Infrastructure Committee with Lead Director Smith, which guided the development of Pace's ReVision system restructuring initiative. Director Wells said that exceptional things have been accomplished at Pace; he is particularly proud of the Pace paratransit program, expanding TAP and RAP, incorporating technology, and introducing hybrid and electric buses into the fleet. He is proud to have served on an excellent Board in the past and looks forward to working with his new colleagues. He complimented the transit expertise of Executive Director Melinda Metzger and said that the quality of staff, operators, mechanics, and customer service will be reflected well on the Board.

Director Jenkins introduced herself as the City of Chicago representative on the Pace Board and the NITA Board, appointed by Mayor Johnson. Director Jenkins has 14 years of experience in labor and employment law and is currently a senior staff attorney at Clark Hill PLC. Director Jenkins has a background in transportation law as a former attorney for CTA and United Airlines, where she specialized in making sure organization workforces were safe and efficient. Director Jenkins is the past President of the Cook County Bar Association, which supports advocacy for African American lawyers and judges. Director Jenkins is a former RTA board member, serving during the past two years and resolving the $700 million budget deficit. Now that the regional transit system is infused with new funds and has a new Board in place, she looks forward to working with the Pace team to move transit forward.

Lead Director Smith introduced herself as the McHenry County representative on the Pace Board, appointed by the McHenry County Board and Chairman Buehler. She stated that this is her third appointment to Pace and she is proud to serve in a role that converges her government work with her passion for serving the disability community. Director Smith is the former Village President of Lakewood and a lifelong resident of McHenry County. She is committed to regional transit, as half of her family resides in McHenry County, half reside in Chicago, and she takes Metra to work. Director Smith holds a deep belief that affordable, accessible, reliable, and sustainable public transit is one of the most essential services that government provides in this region. Director Smith has held leadership positions with the McHenry County Council of Governments and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, led a group of mayors to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ADA, and has served on the Advisory Board of the Chicago Community Trust Disability Fund. She holds an MBA and has led compensation and benefits for organizations of all sizes. Director Smith is pleased to hear the diversity of backgrounds on the Pace Board to represent the region.

SBD #26-73 – **Resolution** approving the open session meeting minutes of August 19, 2026.

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

Public Comment

Jennifer Clark, Vice Chair of the Lake County Board, commented on this exciting moment in the evolution of mass transit in the region with the NITA Act taking effect September 1, 2026. She said this is a once in a generation opportunity to improve public transit for all our residents. She thanked all Pace Directors for their service and looks forward to seeing everything they do.

Christian Figueroa, a frequent Pace rider, commented on bus stop environments. He asked what can be done to advocate for more coordination with IDOT on crosswalks and pedestrian access along bus corridors, to ensure that people who ride Pace can safely cross streets without feeling the need to run to avoid speeding traffic. He reports that it is complicated to add crosswalks along state IDOT roads, and the guidelines that determine where crosswalks are warranted do not sufficiently address crosswalks for public transit. Mr. Figueroa also advocated for working with IDOT on bus lanes for bus rapid transit, because he has observed Pace Pulse buses moving with traffic during rush hour and not flashing by.

Lead Director's Report

Lead Director Smith reiterated how much she looks forward to working with her new colleagues, and echoed Director Wells's compliment on Pace's outstanding staff. She said Pace is incredibly lucky to be led by Melinda, and a sign of a great leader is developing an amazing, talented, and committed group of employees.

Directors' Reports

Director Dahl acknowledged, thanked, and congratulated Jeffery Schielke, his predecessor representing Kane County on the Pace Board, who did an outstanding job making public transit available and accessible on behalf of Kane County communities for 24 years. Director Dahl thanked the Kane County Board and Chair Pierog for their support, acknowledged Heidi Files from KDOT in attendance, and reported Kane County's interest in getting bus on shoulder service along I-88.

Director Hickey thanked Linda Soto, his predecessor serving Lake County on the Pace Board, for her 13 years of dedicated service to the region. He extended his thanks and appreciation to Melinda for the time she spent onboarding him to Pace.

Director Hoskins reported that Pace is engaged in his local community, with several government employees and elected officials collaborating with Pace on Pulse lines. Director Hoskins thanked Melinda and staff for onboarding him to Pace. Director Hoskins reported meeting with Cook County Commissioner Trevor, who shared her insights on Pace. He is excited for the opportunity to serve on the Pace Board, continue the progress already made, and contribute his insights.

Director Montgomery thanked Melinda and staff for educating him about Pace and for providing a copy of "Human Transit" by Jarrett Walker as a resource. Director Montgomery met with mayors and managers from around north suburban Cook County who are committed to bringing

Pace service back to communities affected by Covid service cuts. He looks forward to working with staff on bringing some services back.

Director Noak reported that he is excited to work with the new Pace Board, which traditionally works well together. He recognized outgoing Pace Chairman Rick Kwasneski for his 24 years of service establishing a foundation that Pace can build upon today. He thanked former Pace Director Chris Canning for reaching out before today's meeting; it is nice that former Pace board members are still available as a resource because Pace creates an environment where people want to continue working together. He looks forward to continuing the great work that Pace has done evolving transit throughout the region.

Director Ortiz recognizes the importance of ADA paratransit service and is interested in learning more about where service exists and how we serve. She is excited about sustainability and continuing to think through Pace's work on hybrid buses and electrifying the fleet. She looks forward to getting to know staff and working with everyone.

Director Tamley echoed Director Wells's comments recognizing Pace's past board members Director Canning, Director Schielke, and Chairman Kwasneski. She looks forward to working together with the new Pace Board on common goals. Director Tamley acknowledged Rachel Arfa, the current Commissioner for the MOPD, and her six years of service on the Pace Board representing riders with disabilities throughout the region; Director Tamley will take up where she left off on serving the disability community. Director Tamley thanked Melinda for her work and complimented Pace staff for Pace board meetings being well-organized and well-run.

Director Wells thanked the Cook County Board and President Preckwinkle for reappointing him to the Pace Board. Director Wells reported that it has been great to collaborate with his counterparts on the CTA and Metra Boards over the last several months through NITA Ad Hoc Committee meetings; understanding the concerns of each service board will enhance Pace's efforts. Director Wells thanked his former colleagues on the Pace Board, saying it was a great team that got along very well and was able to accomplish a lot. He recognized Director Canning for reaching out to him today; even though former Pace Directors are no longer serving on the Board, their hearts will always be with Pace, and he thanked them for their years of service.

Executive Director's Report

Melinda thanked Directors for their kind comments about the previous Board, Pace, and staff. She reported that new Directors are stepping into a great organization and believes they will be proud of what Pace does every day. Pace wants to do a good job for riders and the public.

Melinda reported that Pace is proud to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month and the many contributions of our Hispanic employees, riders, and community partners, who play a vital role in shaping the fabric of our region. Their voices and experiences enrich our organization and help us better serve the diverse suburban communities that depend on public transit every day.

Melinda welcomed the new Board of Directors and thanked them for their willingness to serve at such an important moment for public transit in northeastern Illinois. This Board brings an impressive and varied background to Pace, which will serve riders and communities well for years to come. Pace looks forward to working closely with each Director.

Melinda reported that Pace enters the NITA era from a position of strength with experienced staff, a clear service mission, deep community relationships, and the same innovative spirit that has guided our work for decades. Pace's core mission will remain unchanged: providing reliable transportation for people who depend on it. Pace has strengthened mobility across the suburbs, advanced major service improvements, invested in new facilities and technology, expanded innovative options such as On Demand, Van Go, Pulse bus rapid transit, bus on shoulder, and I-90 flex lane service, and helped make public transit more accessible and responsive. As Pace's role evolves within the NITA framework, Pace will continue to bring that same creativity, practical problem-solving, and willingness to innovate to the regional table with NITA and the service boards. The Pace Board's input and leadership are essential for Pace's continued success. Pace staff stand ready to build upon our successes. Pace will do a great job together for the Board.

Melinda reported that Pace Suburban Bus is the 13th largest all-bus agency in the country, the second largest paratransit system in the country behind only New York City, and has one of the largest Vanpool programs in the country. Pace is recognized in the industry for its innovative approach to providing transportation. On any given day Pace has up to 2,500 vehicles on the street operating on over 100 routes and has more daily boardings than Midway Airport. Pace's family of services includes fixed route, paratransit, On Demand, Vanpool, and Pulse bus rapid transit. Pace's service area covers 3,600 square miles of suburban, urban, and in some cases rural areas across 274 communities in Cook, Will, DuPage, Kane, Lake, and McHenry counties, which is an area equivalent to the area of 15 City of Chicago's. There are different ways to move people throughout the region and Pace must address each community differently to meet their transit needs.

Melinda reported that Pace's operating budget is $380.9 million for suburban service, $336.8 million for regional ADA paratransit, and has a five-year capital program of $418.7 million. The Pace system is supported by 40 facilities, 1,000 bus shelters, and a large rolling stock portfolio of over 700 fixed route buses, 1,300 paratransit vehicles, and 400 Vanpool vehicles. Pace has 1,800 employees all over the region, with over 70% unionized, plus an additional 1,600 unionized contract carrier employees that provide paratransit and fixed route service.

Melinda reported that the NITA Act creates a series of requirements across four major work streams: public safety, fares, service planning, and land-use.

Melinda reported that NITA has established a law enforcement task force, led by Cook County Sheriff Dart. Cook County officers have been riding Pace buses since June 1, 2026, helping with fare evasion and associated security concerns. Pace and CTA have also been working with Metra and NITA on an incident reporting app, targeted for implementation in November 2026. Discussions have been taking place about the Transit Ambassador Program, planned to be in place in July 2027.

Melinda reported that as of June 1, 2026, NITA is now responsible for setting fare policy. So far, a pilot was launched in August 2026 that reduces student fares from $1 to 75 cents, eliminates student transfer fees between Pace and CTA, and gives students the ability to use their pass any time-of-day, year-round, and not solely for school. Further, this fall NITA is expanding the Access Pilot, which allows residents of the region who qualify for SNAP to receive a reduced fare.

Melinda reported that the NITA legislation calls for the adoption of service standards as well as a regionwide service plan by December 2027, for implementation in the 2029 budget year. This will require the service boards to submit their service plan proposals to NITA. Also required under the legislation is a study on the regional dial-a-ride program operated by Pace. Pace dial-a-ride service fills gaps in service in the region through partnerships with many communities, who contribute funding for the service.

Melinda reported that the People Over Parking Act is a central transit supportive initiative about land-use. Under this initiative, NITA will introduce parking requirements for new developments near transit stations and high-frequency bus routes. NITA is currently seeking public comments on this initiative through October 9, 2026, on its website.

Melinda reported that IDOT has hired Boston Consulting Group to aid the NITA transition. It will review governance, public safety, budget, and procurement materials, and will cover paratransit, capital planning, and fast-track authority to accelerate delivery of major transit capital projects. Very importantly, the consultant will also study integration of a universal fare instrument.

Melinda reported that the NITA transition is broad and complex. Pace will remain focused on making sure reliable service continues to run while the new regional framework takes shape.

Melinda reported on ReVision, Pace's ongoing network restructuring project, which reimagines the entire system around current travel patterns and future travel needs. The goal is to create a more accessible, equitable, productive, convenient, and connected suburban transit network that provides a strong foundation for regional service planning under NITA. In October, NITA will share information on combining the network restructuring plans for Pace, CTA, and Metra. At Pace's October board meeting, ReVision consultant Jarrett Walker will report on Pace's draft concepts and propose next steps for future public outreach. Melinda encouraged Directors to learn about Jarrett Walker's approach to transit planning in his book, "Human Transit."

Melinda reported on Project Zero, Pace's commitment to operating a zero-emissions fixed route fleet by 2040. This significant long-term modernization effort and operational strategy will prepare Pace's facilities and workforce for new vehicle technologies. Pace has two electric buses in the fleet currently operating on 95th Street between the CTA Red Line and Moraine Valley Community College. Pace has one electric paratransit vehicle in service in Kane County. Pace is awaiting the delivery of 27 new electric battery buses, purchased thanks to funding through an Illinois EPA grant. As Pace bridges the gap between diesel and electric, Pace added 47 electric hybrid buses to the fleet, with another 33 currently on delivery. North Division in Waukegan will be Pace's first fully electric garage. At North Division, Pace has completed installation of 13 electric bus chargers and Phase 2 of the electrification of the division is underway during which an additional 60 electric bus chargers will be installed. Pace is finalizing designs for zero

emission upgrades at River Division in Elgin, with construction expected to begin in spring 2027.

Melinda reported on the public facing work of Pace's Government Affairs department, working with communities across the region to explain service planning and help with rider education, workforce development, and community engagement. In August 2026, the Pace team attended 82 community outreach events such as job fairs, chamber of commerce events, senior fairs, and back to school events. To date this year, staff have attended 639 events. If there are events that Directors would like Pace staff to attend, please let us know!

Melinda reported on ridership. Based on farebox data, the Pace system provided 2.1 million rides in August 2026, which is Pace's highest monthly ridership in 2026. Pace and CTA are currently seeking certification from the FTA to use automatic passenger counters ("APC") to capture ridership figures instead of using farebox data. All buses have an APC, which is an overhead device located at the front and back doors that registers riders boarding and disembarking. Based on APC data, Pace's August 2026 fixed route ridership is 88% of 2019 pre-Covid levels. While Pace continues to work towards using APC data exclusively, Pace is addressing fare evasion, which represented 16% of cash fares in August 2026. To mitigate this challenge, Pace launched "fare required" messaging on destination signs and "pay your fare share" cards inside buses. Pace is also working with the Cook County Sheriff to have officers ride buses where Pace is experiencing the most fare evasion. Police presence has encouraged people to pay fares.

Melinda reported on Pace's efforts to hire additional staff to support future service enhancements. Pace hosts Hire-on-the-Spot events every Thursday at Pace headquarters and Pace South Campus in Markham. Since the last board meeting, Pace hosted 193 interested candidates that resulted in 43 job offers, after which employees enter Pace training.

Melinda concluded reporting on year-to-date budget. Suburban service is below budget due to labor vacancies that Pace wants to fill and higher than expected sales tax revenue. Pace is excited to invest additional sales tax revenue into service. ADA paratransit is favorable to budget due to the monthly 30-40 ride cap on the Taxi Access Program and the Rideshare Access Program, which are both user-side subsidy programs whereby ADA-certified riders can use either taxis or rideshare companies (Uber and UZURV) to augment the paratransit system. Any ADA paratransit funds not spent by year's end will be placed in the NITA ADA Paratransit Reserve fund.

Action Items

SBD #26-74 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Winter Services, LLC for snow and ice removal services at multiple Pace facilities in an amount not to exceed $694,900.00.

Lindsey Umek, Chief Operating Officer, presented.

Director Wells moved, and Director Hickey seconded a motion, to approve the Ordinance.
The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Dahl, Hickey, Hoskins, Jenkins, Montgomery, Noak, Ortiz, Pileski, Tamley, Wells, and Lead Director Smith.
All directors voted aye.

SBD #26-75 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Bedco Mechanical, Inc. and a contract to Jones Environmental Control, Inc. for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning scheduled inspections, service, maintenance, and authorized repairs at multiple Pace facilities in a combined total amount not to exceed $2,033,785.95.

Josh Berger, Department Manager of Capital Infrastructure, presented.

Director Noak moved, and Director Ortiz seconded a motion, to approve the Ordinance.
The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Dahl, Hickey, Hoskins, Jenkins, Montgomery, Noak, Ortiz, Pileski, Tamley, Wells, and Lead Director Smith.
All directors voted aye.

SBD #26-76 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless for mobile device equipment and cellular service in an amount not to exceed $1,500,000.00.

Jane Swider, Chief Procurement Officer, presented. This cooperative piggyback contract with CTA will provide Pace supportive services for 13.5 months until the State of Illinois, which holds a joint purchase master contract for cellular services that Pace currently utilizes, finalizes their contract. Pace will discuss with CTA and Metra possible future joint procurement.

Director Noak moved, and Director Hoskins seconded a motion, to approve the Ordinance.
The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Dahl, Hickey, Hoskins, Jenkins, Montgomery, Noak, Ortiz, Pileski, Tamley, Wells, and Lead Director Smith.
All directors voted aye.

Issues/Discussion/Reports

Erik Llewellyn, Chief Planning Officer, provided an update on the expansion of the NITA Access Pilot Program. The NITA Act shifts responsibility for regional fare policy from the individual service boards to NITA, which now has sole authority over fare setting, fare integration, interagency passes and transfers, fare revenue-sharing agreements, and the implementation of a unified regional fare collection and mobile ticketing system by 2030.

Erik Llewellyn reported that the Access Pilot Program was launched in 2024 to provide reduced Metra fares to SNAP recipients across the six-county region. Because SNAP eligibility is income-based and broadly used by existing administrative partnerships, SNAP provides a strong foundation for an income-based reduced fare program. Since the pilot launch, Access has generated more than 350,000 rides on Metra. Survey data indicates that expanding the Access program to Pace and CTA would significantly increase participation and improve transit affordability for riders most in need. For Pace, it is estimated that 20% of current riders participate in SNAP.

Erik Llewellyn reported that beginning October 1, 2026, the Access Pilot will be expanded to include Pace and CTA. Riders can apply to participate in the program via web, phone, mail, or in person at 62 registration sites. Metra's existing Access permits will be expanded automatically to include CTA and Pace, so current Access riders need not re-enroll. NITA will fully fund administrative expenses associated with the program expansion to cover any lost fare revenue. NITA is considering permanent adoption of the Access Pilot Program as part of the 2027 regional budget.

Director Hickey asked how county partners can help communicate information about the program. Melinda reported that NITA and the service boards appreciate the collaboration and will involve the counties in the marketing plan.

Director Montgomery inquired about riders who may be SNAP eligible but are not enrolled in SNAP, if they would qualify for reduced or free fares? Erik Llewellyn confirmed that NITA and the service boards are reviewing this, as well as upcoming changes to the SNAP program, to make sure that the Access program serves as many eligible riders as possible.

Election of the Chair of the Pace Board of Directors

SBD #26-77 – Ordinance electing a Director appointed pursuant to Section 3A.02(b) of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority Act as Chair of the Board of Directors of Pace.

Director Dahl moved, and Director Noak seconded a motion, to approve the Ordinance. Lead Director Smith nominated Director John D. Noak as Pace's Chair, and Director Wells seconded the nomination.

Lead Director Smith discussed Director Noak's deep understanding of regional needs and vast experience as a public servant working with broad coalitions from different backgrounds. She stated that Director Noak is the current Mayor of Romeville, serves on the CMAP Board and Executive Committee, served on the CMAP PART committee which laid the framework for the NITA legislation, and is the Chair of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. Lead Director Smith believes Director Noak is willing to serve and can meet the high level of expectation and time commitment required of a Chair to meet regularly with staff, attend public ceremonies, and advocate on behalf of regional transit in Springfield. She complimented Director Noak as a thoughtful and collaborative colleague who has demonstrated the ability to work effectively with staff and seek diverse opinions from board members to best represent the region's needs. His institutional knowledge of Pace and dual role on the NITA Board will be vitally important during the NITA transition.

The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Dahl, Hickey, Hoskins, Jenkins, Montgomery, Noak, Ortiz, Pileski, Tamley, Wells, and Lead Director Smith. All directors voted aye.

Chair Noak reported that he firmly believes in collaboration. He pledged to work and engage with

all board members and to take advantage of everyone's skills. He reported that Pace has the right team to build and move forward and that all Pace employees are committed to Pace's success. He complimented NITA Chair Kotarac and is firmly committed to working with NITA to make the transition evolution seamless to create the best transit system for residents and the region.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Lead Director Smith asked for a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Director Hoskins moved, and Director Tamley seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote; all Directors voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, October 21, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace corporate headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

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Elissa Ledvort
Board Secretary, Board of Directors