



**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
January 17, 2024**

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority, met in open session on Wednesday, January 17, 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: Arfa, Canning, Carr, Guerin, Marcucci, Schielke, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Chairman Kwasneski.

Directors absent: None.

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

SBD #24-01 – Resolution approving the open session meeting minutes of December 20, 2023.

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

Public Comment

None.

Chairman’s Report

Chairman Kwasneski reported on upcoming Pace events. Pace’s first electric bus will launch on January 19 on Route 381 along 95th Street. On January 24, Pace will hold a graduation ceremony

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*

for the Pace subsidized CDL program at South Suburban College. Pace will hold graduation ceremonies at community colleges with Pace CDL programs throughout the region.

Chairman Kwasneski invited Directors to join him and Melinda in Springfield in February; Pace, the RTA, the CTA, and Metra are planning a breakfast for legislators to discuss transit needs.

Directors' Reports

Director Marcucci reported on the marketing presentation on today's agenda. It is an overview of the last year, Pace's goals and objectives for 2024, and a preview of creative ad concepts.

Director Schielke reported on the rapid population growth in Kane County, particularly senior living communities. He stressed the importance of Dial-A-Ride service for seniors.

As the Chairman of South Suburban College, Director Wells applauded Melinda and staff for developing a creative and innovative program as a solution to the driver shortage. He reported that the CDL program serves as a good recruiting tool, getting students on campus to learn about everything the college has to offer. He invited all to the CDL graduation ceremony.

Executive Director's Report

Melinda Metzger commended the operating staff for making sure riders were safe during frigid weather and snow. Melinda met with operators out in the field on Friday.

Melinda commended Pace staff Lorri Newson, Wanda Quijano, Charles Aikerson, Jessica Rybarczyk, Niko Gyori, Rodney Evans, and John Ward for their efforts on an event that Pace sponsored at the DuSable Museum of African American History, which included a Pace CNG bus on display with a Rosa Parks storyteller on board. Pace had a hiring table at the event.

Melinda reviewed the 2023 annual report and 2023 accomplishments, saying Pace's ability to be nimble and respond to evolving travel patterns has been a key strength, driving innovative service enhancements, powerful collaborations and partnerships, and progress on Project Zero. In 2023, Pace launched Pulse Dempster which continues to build strong ridership, expanded On Demand and VanGo, introduced Pace Connect, added mobility options for ADA paratransit riders, enhanced technology including Trapeze improvements, integrated On Demand, Van Go, and Pace Connect into the Transit App, continued excellence in safety resulting in APTA's Gold Standard Award in 2023, and continued expanding recruitment efforts through partnerships with local community colleges. In the face of numerous challenges, Pace has continued to thrive thanks to the dedication, resilience, and innovation of our team. Melinda extended her deepest gratitude to central support staff and to operations staff on the frontline who keep services running and passengers safe. Melinda thanked the Board, saying their guidance and support has been instrumental to Pace's success and ability to innovate.

Melinda reported that on January 4, she and Doug Sullivan attended a press conference with U.S. Representative Delia Ramirez about waiting for Congress to approve the FY2024 Appropriations Bill. The bill would provide \$840,000 for TSP at 30 intersections along Harlem Avenue, one of

Cook County's busiest corridors. On January 11, Melinda met with State Representative Mary Beth Canty, who is a former member of the RTA board and a big supporter of public transportation. Melinda will provide information on Pace's upcoming trip to Springfield for any Directors who are interested in attending.

Melinda reported that on February 19, Pace will implement free fares on fixed route for ADA certified riders. CTA will follow at a later date.

Melinda reported that Pace extended 23 offers to candidates at Hire on the Spot events since the last board meeting. Eleven more events are planned at local colleges in the first half of 2024. She invited all Directors to the CDL graduation ceremony at South Suburban College on January 24.

Melinda reported that December 2023 ridership is up 15.1% over December 2022. For the last two months, Pace's average weekday ridership has reached 70% of pre-pandemic levels. Pulse Milwaukee average weekday ridership has reached 90% of pre-pandemic levels. Pulse Dempster average weekday ridership is 30% over last month. Average ADA weekday ridership is 4.2% over 2019, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Pace has been able to handle the increasing demand for ADA service by bringing TNCs into our network. All ridership trends are encouraging.

Director Canning asked how ridership is projected to trend throughout 2024. Melinda said Pace does not know if ridership is increasing as a result of reducing the cost of the monthly pass and adding more pass types, if that has spurred regular riders to use their passes more, or if the ridership increases represent new riders. Pace wants to drive up ridership numbers more by putting more service out there and reducing headways, which is only possible with more drivers. Pulse has proven that if you provide more frequent, reliable service, people will take it.

Director Canning asked how many operators we need to hire. Melinda explained that as Pace is hiring new drivers, we have a population of drivers who are retiring, which presents challenges. Pace also understands that the split shifts, which are scheduled during morning rush hour and afternoon rush hour, are difficult. Melinda would like to make more straight runs so drivers work one 8-hour shift instead of two 4 hour split shifts with a long break in between, and so Pace is not underutilizing drivers or asking drivers to perform overtime. Furthermore, travel patterns have changed since Covid. People are not on strict office schedules every day and want to see more midday service. Pace needs to accommodate that. Pace needs 200 drivers to keep up with the service we provide now, but we would really like 400 more drivers to provide more service and create better shifts.

Chairman Kwasneski inquired about modifications to I-55 and I-90 service, which was reduced and combined with other trips/routes during Covid due to lack of operators, not lack of riders, and then had issues with overcrowding. Melinda explained that we need 18 more operators at Heritage Garage. It takes 8 weeks to get drivers out into service once they are hired. Pace is also looking at 45 ft. buses – bigger equipment will give more capacity to one driver. Chairman Kwasneski wants to make sure we do not lose ridership once we have built it up to ensure that we are a viable alternative to personal cars.

Director Wells asked if Pace tested our electric bus in the subzero temperatures this week. Melinda reported that the vehicle performed okay. Like with diesel buses, Pace brought the electric bus inside to warm it up before sending it out into service. Electric vehicles need to be

charged and stored outside, so heating the bus up inside makes the process labor intensive. Chairman Kwasneski pointed out that Pace is charging outside because our facilities cannot accommodate charging inside yet, eventually they will. We need to update our garages to accept electric vehicles. Director Soto inquired about the heater and Melinda explained that every electric bus will have a 5-gallon diesel tank on it to heat the bus. Heaters drain an electric battery, so diesel heaters are the norm for buses in cold weather climates.

Items removed from the Consent Agenda

None.

Approval of Consent Agenda

SBD #24-02 – Ordinance authorizing the filing and execution of 2024 grant applications and agreements with Pace’s funding agencies.

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

Action Items

SBD #24-03 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to All City Environmental Services, Inc. for the removal of non-hazardous special waste at 10 Pace facilities in an amount not to exceed \$1,106,817.63.

Jane Swider, Chief Procurement Officer, presented. Chairman Kwasneski asked about the frequency of removal. Melinda responded that the frequency varies depending on the number of buses used at the garage, but that waste is removed about every other month at each garage. Jane added that removal services are available as needed.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Wells seconded a motion to approve the Ordinance. The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Arfa, 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 pilot expansion of the Arlington Heights-Rolling Meadows On Demand to include portions of Mount Prospect and eastern Arlington Heights. Chairman Kwasneski and Director Soto praised the flexibility of On Demand service and believe it may play a significant role in the future. Expanding On Demand would allow Pace to reduce underperforming fixed routes and make high performing fixed routes frequent express service. They look forward to the recommendations in the ReVision network revitalization study. Melinda explained that Pace is not waiting for ReVision and will expand

when we have the manpower and equipment to do so. Director Arfa confirmed that the new On Demand expansion uses accessible vehicles and connects to new fixed route 697 to Harper College via the Northwest Transportation Center. Director Canning confirmed that this On Demand operates 12 hours per day, serving 20 riders per day, and uses 2 contracted operators, each performing 6-hour shifts. A discussion ensued about driver shifts and adding more frequency and more drivers to fixed route services to spread shifts throughout the day in a way that is better for drivers. Melinda stated that historically, the peaks of transit have been in a.m. and p.m. and there was no work to perform midday, which is why there are split shifts. Every transit agency in the U.S. is figuring out how to adjust shifts to meet new travel patterns.

Doug Sullivan, Manager of External Relations, presented Pace's 2024 Marketing Plan.

- Director Arfa suggested including the history of ADA paratransit in Pace's 40th Anniversary campaign. Pace's efforts to offer a variety of services for riders with disabilities is a good story to tell. She praised the idea of working with artists on creative bus benches and wants to include artists with disabilities.
- Chairman Kwasneski and Director Soto asked Pace to provide ad content to elected officials and municipal/county governments on Pace services that benefit residents for their newsletters and social media platforms.
- Director Marcucci supports advertising Pace job vacancies, saying the lack of drivers is holding back the growth of Pace's programs. He praised the proposed "Ride Kind" campaign, saying it supports frontline workers out in the community and personalizes the function of driving a bus, which may help attract CDL holders.
- Director Wells inquired about bus wraps. Installation is completed in one day but lead time on wrap production is about 6 weeks. Wraps can last for years and are sold in 3 month increments to advertisers. Director Marcucci wanted to make sure that Pace removes wraps once the purchased ad period ends and does not leave wraps up if that ad space is not sold. Melinda confirmed yes, and added that Pace uses any free ad space to advertise Pace's own job openings and services.
- Director Soto and Director Marcucci praised the pop-up museum idea, saying it's a good opportunity to promote Pace services and recruit employees.

Chairman Kwasneski encouraged Directors to review the November 2023 budget reports and financial statements contained in their packets. There being no further business, Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion and second to adjourn the Pace Board of Directors meeting.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Guerin seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, February 21, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. at 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois.