



**Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority  
550 West Algonquin Road  
Arlington Heights, Illinois  
Minutes of the Open Session Planning Committee Meeting  
of the Pace Board of Directors  
February 12, 2021**

The Planning Committee of the Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority, met virtually on Friday, February 12, 2021 at 12:00 p.m. pursuant to notice.

Chairman Canning called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

**Roll Call**

Directors virtually present: Smith, Soto, and Chairman Canning.

Staff virtually present:

Rocky Donahue, Executive Director  
Melinda Metzger, General Manager/Chief Operating Officer  
Erik Llewellyn, Acting Department Manager, Service Planning and Scheduling  
David Tomzik, Department Manager, Strategic and Capital Planning  
Ryan Ruehle, Rapid Transit Corridor Planner, Strategic and Capital Planning  
James Garner, Department Manager, Research and Analysis  
Charlotte Obodzinski, Department Manager, Priority Project Management Office  
Linda Swedlund, Manager, Executive Administration  
Karen Kase, Board Secretary

Director Canning stated that this meeting is being conducted virtually in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order.

Director Canning introduced and welcomed new Committee Member, Erin Smith. Director Smith joined Pace as Director representing McHenry County. She served as the Lakewood Village President from May 2009 through April 2017.

Director Smith stated she is excited about the innovation that she sees within Pace and looks forward to being a part of that. Director Smith stated she also served on the McHenry Council

Richard A. Kwasneski, *Chairman*

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

*Board of Directors*

Rocky Donahue, *Executive Director*

Executive Committee, Chicago Metropolitan Mayors Caucus' Executive Committee and within that, she led the Mayors Taskforce within Chicago's ADA25 Committee and then was involved with the Chicago Community Trust Disability Fund Advisory Board. The work at Pace is very well aligned with the work she has done related to disability justice and inclusion since leaving office.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Director Soto moved, and Director Canning seconded a motion to approve the Minutes of the August 6, 2020 meeting. The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Smith, Soto, and Chairman Canning. All Directors voted Aye.

### **Public Comment**

No public comment.

### **Issues/Discussions/Reports**

Charlotte Obodzinski reported on the status of the PPMO office. She advised that a contract is underway. Existing procedures, project schedules, and budgets are being collected to begin to dissect where improvements can be made. The Priority Project Management Office will also be handling the Rapid Transit program. We are working on 294 as well as planning the Pulse Halsted line and engineering on the Dempster line.

Chairman Canning asked how the Board will be updated as processes ramp up.

Charlotte responded that the Planning Committee meetings and the Infrastructure Committee meetings are critical platforms for updating the Board. Additionally, e-Builder is a system being implemented for project reporting. Progress reports can be run that could be shared throughout the organization and with the Board.

Ryan Ruehle provided an update on Driving Innovation, Pace's strategic vision plan. The Driving Innovation plan has been completely revised over this past year to better reflect some of the major changes Pace has seen in 2020. It will be shared with our partner agencies for review in March, then by a public release later in the spring. The plan features 20 major planning initiatives organized into three main categories: Programs, Policies & Frameworks; Service & Infrastructure; and Technology & Insight.

Charlotte reported on the status of Pulse lines. Design documents for the Pulse Dempster line are nearly complete and vertical markers and shelters are being procured. It is anticipated to break ground late spring or early summer of 2021 with a 12-month construction schedule. The Pulse Halsted line is planned as part of a larger project being done in concert with the CTA. An advanced conceptual design is currently underway. We have been working with CDOT and IDOT to obtain more intense bus priority treatments such as segments of bus only lanes.

Groundbreaking on Pulse Halsted is anticipated closer 2024. The Pulse 95th Street line, is anticipated to begin an advanced conceptual design in 2021.

Ryan Ruehle reported on the status of Pace express services. The Tri-State study under contract through partnership with the RTA, who is sponsoring the study, is approximately three quarters of the way completed. For this, we are using a travel market study and modeling results to develop several bus service concepts, site locations for passenger facilities and bus stations may potentially be constructed. Regarding I-55 and I-290 studies, we are currently ironing out the final grant agreements and we expect to start both projects later this year. The I-55 study will address feasibility of developing an in-line expressway station along I-55 underneath the Harlem Avenue bridge which would connect the future Pulse Harlem Line and stations on the bridge itself. The I-290 study is similar to the Tri-State study where we evaluate transit markets and potential station sites and allow us to coordinate with IDOT as a future design plan.

Chairman Canning asked if network revitalization is consistent with pre-COVID rightsizing, but now with a pivot due to what has gone on during the pandemic.

Ryan stated this was one of the original initiatives identified with the first version of the plan and we are looking at a partnership with service planning.

Director Soto asked about external meetings with partners, specifically who the partners are and how those meetings will be executed.

Ryan replied the partner agencies are CTA, CMAP, Metra, RTA, IDOT, and the Tollway. The meetings, whether in person or virtual, would be coordinated with our external relations group.

Ryan stated that in addition to the plan, there is an executive summary listing initiatives and goals which has been updated slightly. Other "summaries" of the plan can be constructed depending on the group who will review it and provide input, such as local governments, civic groups, and the Chicago Metropolitan Mayors Caucus.

Director Soto inquired about funding from Springfield.

Rocky stated all the reports we have gotten show the government's budget presentation for next week is status quo as it relates to transit. It is unknown if it will be status quo as it relates to motor field tags for local governments or municipalities. As it relates to our funding specifically, we are told we are being held harmless from last year.

The governor is planning to propose no cut to transit. The budget is based on getting at least \$3.5 billion from the federal government, which if the president's \$1.9 trillion stimulus package were to pass as-is, Illinois would get that money.

Director Smith asked where the McHenry County restructure initiative falls into the plan.

Melinda Metzger stated that as McHenry County is an ongoing improvement process, it is included in countywide services all over, not just in McHenry.

The post COVID-19 service restructuring planning would be more common on a countywide basis. McHenry would prefer to see more of a Dial-a-ride or On Demand type of system. We are hearing that from Lake County as well. While this is strategic, it will be more of an immediate service planning project.

Erik Llewellyn provided the Committee with an update on Pace's recent post COVID-19 service restoration planning efforts.

It is estimated that many employees will resume working on-site post-COVID. However, compared to pre-COVID levels when 7.5% of employees worked remotely, there will likely be twice (15%) as many employees working remotely in some capacity post-COVID.

Alternative service models such as partnerships with Transportation Network Companies or TNC's, such as Uber and Lyft, are also being explored. These alternative services may allow Pace to provide more consistent service throughout the day in areas where there is a need for service but where traditional all day fixed route service may not be as productive.

As discussed at the last Committee meeting, there are numerous grade schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities that are served by Pace fixed route service throughout the six-county area. However, on some fixed routes, Pace provides supplemental service or modified service during the school year when demand for service to schools is higher.

In general, most public schools started the 2020-2021 school year off with remote learning while many parochial schools offered some form of in person instruction. During the school year, school districts changed their plans based on the evolving pandemic and on guidance from federal, state, and local officials. Currently, most schools are offering some form of remote learning and may continue to do so for the remainder of the school year.

The process for determining the service needs for the 2021-2022 school year will begin in March. Service planners will determine what adjustments, if any, can be made. Any changes that are needed are usually completed by the middle of May. Changes that are made to coincide with the start of the upcoming school year are typically implemented in early to mid-August.

It is still not known how the pandemic will impact the 2021-2022 school year and if COVID prevention measures, such as social distancing, will still be required when the new school year begins.

Pace also suspended or reduced service on several routes that directly serve schools or have supplemental or modified trips that serve schools. A number of these routes may need to be reinstated or trips brought back if schools reopen and service is needed. While Pace's 2021 budget is balanced, adding additional service in 2021 may impact future budgets.

Erik reported on the Fair Transit South Cook Pilot.

The primary goals of the pilot are to provide more affordable and convenient transit options for residents on the south side of Chicago and in communities in the south suburbs.

The initial phase included Cook County, in partnership with Metra, implementing a 50% reduction in fares on the Metra Electric District and the Metra Rock Island District to encourage greater use of Metra in the south suburbs and on the south side of Chicago.

The second phase, which began on January 4, 2021, included Cook County partnering with Pace to enhance bus service in the south suburbs. Cook County funded an expansion of service on Pace Route 352 Halsted to provide additional travel opportunities during the pilot project.

The focus of the Route 352 improvements was on trips operating between the CTA Red Line 95th/Dan Ryan Station and the Pace Chicago Heights Terminal.

Since the implementation of this service, initial ridership estimates over the first few weeks in January indicate that there is an average of 2,060 weekday riders using Route 352. Also, most of the trips on this route now have loads that are consistently below Pace's social distancing target which has reduced our need to send out extra buses.

For this project, since COVID has substantially impacted ridership, we are currently tracking changes in ridership on a month-to-month basis. When compared to weekday ridership in December, January weekday ridership was roughly flat. However, it should be noted that we typically see a seasonal reduction in ridership between December and January.

Overall systemwide weekday ridership in January was down about 7% while ridership at South Division, which operates Route 352, was down about 7.5%. Route 352 outperformed the historical, system and garage ridership trends even though the initial ridership numbers indicate that ridership was flat. While it is still too early to gauge how ridership may change on this route, we find the initial numbers promising. We will continue to monitor ridership on this route.

### **Next Meeting Date**

The tentative date for the next Pace Planning Committee meeting is Wednesday, April 7, 2021 at 12:00 p.m., it has yet to be determined whether the meeting will be live or virtual.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chairman Canning asked for a motion and a second to adjourn the meeting.

Director Soto moved, and Director Smith seconded a motion to adjourn the Pace Planning Committee meeting. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Planning Committee will be held on Wednesday, April 7, 2021 at 12:00 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Kase".

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Karen Kase  
Secretary, Board of Directors