



Approved September 8, 2021

550 W. Algonquin Road  
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60005  
847.364.8130  
[PaceBus.com](http://PaceBus.com)

**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 Planning Committee  
June 22, 2021**

The Planning Committee of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority, met virtually in public session on Tuesday, June 22, 2021 at 12:00 p.m. pursuant to notice.

Chairman Canning called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.

**Roll Call**

Directors virtually present: Directors Soto and Chairman Canning.

Director Smith joined the meeting at 12:07 a.m.

No Directors were absent.

Staff virtually present:

Rocky Donahue, Executive Director  
Melinda Metzger, General Manager/Chief Operating Officer  
Erik Llewellyn, Chief Planning Officer  
David Tomzik, Planning Program Manager  
Ryan Ruehle, Priority Project Management Office  
James Garner, Department Manager, Research and Analysis  
Charlotte Obodzinski, Department Manager, Priority Project Management Office  
Linda Swedlund, Manager, Executive Administration  
Karen Kase, Board Secretary

**Approval of Minutes**

Director Soto moved, and Chairman Canning seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Open Session Planning Committee meeting of April 7, 2021. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

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**

Chairman Canning stated that this meeting is being held in compliance with the Governor's most recent Executive Order allowing the meeting to take place virtually.

### **Public Comment**

No public comment.

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

Erik Llewellyn reported on post COVID-19 service restoration planning. Much of our service restoration planning efforts have been focused on determining service needs for the 2021-2022 school year. Pace asked school districts to provide information on their operating plan, the projected start and end date for the new school year, any bell time adjustments planned, projected enrollment numbers and any other pertinent changes that we should be aware of. Most school districts have indicated that they will be resuming full in-person learning in the fall and that the bell times would be the same as they were pre-COVID; however, some districts indicated that bell times will be different this upcoming school year.

During the pandemic, one of the challenges that Pace faced was keeping passenger loads to levels no higher than 15-20 riders per trip. Many of the supplemental trips or modified trips that Pace typically operates to schools require additional operators and buses. Social distancing would increase the number of buses and operators needed to operate this additional service.

With the reopening of the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois on June 11, Pace no longer has any capacity limits on its vehicles; however, as required by federal mandate, masks must continue to be worn on all vehicles through September 13.

Pace's overall post COVID-19 service strategy is to build back better which means that some service that was provided prior to the pandemic may not resume or may not return in the same form. To determine which routes or services to consider bringing back, Pace looked at several factors such as school service needs, pre-COVID ridership activity and performance, existing ridership trends, support for the future service network, Title VI considerations, and resource availability, especially operators.

Prior to the pandemic, most of the routes that will be resuming service in August were meeting all their performance measures. Pace performance measures include the following: productivity or passengers per revenue hour, operating subsidy per rider, farebox recovery ratio and operating subsidy per vehicle mile. This was one of the key considerations for the resumption of service.

Metra's ridership is still down about 85% from pre-pandemic levels which means that the demand for Pace commuter service is still low. Additionally, with a potential permanent increase in remote working in the future, it is expected that there will be less demand for peak only

service in the future. As a result, the resumption of commuter routes was not considered at this time.

As part of the development of the Driving Innovation plan, increasing overall systemwide ridership in a cost-efficient manner was identified as a goal that Pace should pursue. To achieve this, there would need to be a greater emphasis placed on investing Pace's limited resources in routes and services that are ridership oriented.

Consistent with the requirements under the Federal Transit Administration, all major service changes for Pace's fixed route services are subject to a Title VI Equity Analysis as Pace is a recipient of federal funding. When a Title VI impact is identified, Pace must provide information on how it will avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impacts associated with these changes as well as the justification for proceeding with the service changes. Of the 98 routes that Pace suspended or reduced during the pandemic, only 13 of those routes had Title VI impacts. Starting in August, 7 of the 13 routes that had been previously identified as having a Title VI impact, will resume full service.

Finally, Pace considered whether there are resources available to resume service. One of the biggest challenges facing not just Pace but the transit industry as a whole, is a shortage of operators.

Melinda Metzger stated we will reach out to our sister agencies to learn if they are advocating through Congress to roll back the mandatory mask mandate from September 13 to August 1. This will alleviate difficulties for drivers enforcing the mask mandate with students. Rocky stated that we have brought this up to APTA.

Director Soto asked if students will still be given the option to continue e-learning rather than return to in person learning and in the fall. Erik replied that most schools are offering both modes of learning.

Director Smith commented that grade schoolers are required to wear masks in school, but high schoolers are not since they are eligible for vaccination.

Charlotte Obodzinski reported on the status of Pulse projects.

Milwaukee Line - TSP is installed and operating.

Dempster Line – The civil construction package was approved at the May board meeting, our Construction and Infrastructure department is working with the contractor to get the necessary paperwork in order and a notice to proceed should be issued shortly. Work is underway with the contractors for the vertical markers and shelters. Schedule information for the construction work will be shared as soon as the civil contractor is given the notice to proceed.

Halsted Line - Work continues the environmental review and advanced conceptual design of the Halsted line in conjunction with the CTA. Based on feedback from CDOT and IDOT additional traffic analysis is being scoped. It is anticipated that this work will wrap up at the end of the year.

95<sup>th</sup> Street Line - Staff applied for funding from Cook County as part of the Invest in Cook grant program to perform NEPA analysis and advanced conceptual design. We anticipate that we will be notified of the availability of the grant funding this summer, with the intent to begin this work in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of this year.

Pace staff has applied for CMAQ and STP funding for both the Halsted and 95<sup>th</sup> Street projects. We will keep the committee apprised of any grant awards as they are announced by CMAP.

Dave Tomzik stated the preliminary program should be awarded in October.

Chairman Canning asked if we are experiencing difficulties with supplies and elevated material costs while constructing the Pulse lines. Charlotte stated we are, but we are managing the issues and making changes accordingly.

Ryan Ruehle reported on the RTA and Pace tri-state market and facilities feasibility study. The contract which is through RTA ends this month, and our consultant team has submitted their final deliverables. Our next step is to reach the communities and our external partners coordinating station locations and service concepts which is planned for the end of this summer. An on-line survey was developed for Pace's website for this purpose.

Ryan stated we used pre-COVID and 2019 data in our market assessment that was part of the study which yielded promising results. We intend to rerun numbers while coming out of the pandemic. The RTA has a simulation of ridership projections for different routes that have been proposed.

Chairman Canning asked for a ballpark figure of the cost of a station. Ryan indicated a loose estimate of the cost for the entire program is over \$100 million.

Ryan Ruehle reported on Pace's Driving Innovation plan. He stated the initial plan is finished and a link has been sent to the Board of Directors for their review. IT is also posted on the Pace Website for the public to view and provide their comments via an email. Ryan showed a visual presentation beginning with a timeline of major events going forward with the Plan—events include the public comment period ending August 20, completion of revisions and a marketing campaign will begin in September, and the Plan is to be adopted by the Pace Board of Directors at the September 15, 2021 board meeting.

Ryan reported that some updates were previously made to the plan based on feedback from our agency partners earlier in the year. The five highest-priority initiatives discussed in the plan have been moved into their own category called Agency Priority Initiatives.

Ryan acknowledged Director Soto and others' comments on battery electric buses made at the Board of Directors' meeting last week. He pointed out this is now the first initiative within this new group of the plan.

A marketing campaign is being developed for this fall that will include a plan brochure, digital presentations to external audiences, and other marketing avenues. External partner meetings will be held on an as-needed basis as an opportunity to alert them to the priority initiatives— Network Revitalization and Service Restructuring, and Service Standards Framework.

Director Canning asked if the Directors will be needed for the meetings with external partners. Rocky stated we would request the Directors to be included in the meetings with the county board chairmen and mayors and managers groups.

Director Soto asked if counties' future needs will be discussed in detail during the meetings with the county chairs and possibly the DOT. She gave the example that Lake County's Partners for Economic Development organization has already brought up trying to get land donated and/or money put up by new employers coming into tri-state Parkway to supply a possible transfer station, or a garage. Ryan stated that this would be the time to discuss future needs which could be addressed with our consultants moving forward.

Director Smith commented that there are other stakeholders that we want to include in the conversations—the county Department of Transportation, county economic development corporations, and county colleges to name a few.

Director Canning suggested circulating to the Planning Committee a list of stakeholder targets, meeting plans, and timetables for input and additional inclusion.

### **Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting of the Planning Committee will be on Tuesday, August 31, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at Pace Headquarters, 550 W. Algonquin Rd., Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Prior to adjournment of the meeting, Director Soto stated Metra is extending invitations to visit the railyard in Chicago. Director Soto asked if Directors Canning and Smith would like to attend. Rocky suggested Chairman Kwasneski would like to attend as well. There is no date set for this Metra visit at this time, but a date between July 15 and 24 is preferred.

### **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. The meeting adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

---

Karen Kase  
Secretary, Board of Directors

*Elissa Gedrot*