



**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
March 19, 2025**

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority (“Pace”), met in open session on Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace corporate headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois, pursuant to notice.

Acting Chairman Marcucci led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Acting Chairman Marcucci called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

Roll Call

Directors physically present: Arfa, Canning, Carr, Guerin, McLeod, Schielke, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Acting Chairman Marcucci.

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

Directors absent: Chairman Kwasneski.

Director Marcucci announced that he is serving as the Acting Chairman while Chairman Kwasneski is in Springfield advocating for Pace and for regional transportation funding.

SBD #25-20 – Resolution approving the open session meeting minutes of February 19, 2025.

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

Public Comment

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**

Scott Fedro, an ADA paratransit rider, thanked Pace for implementing the RAP program. He said it works so well that he has not been on a bus since the program went into effect. The program has helped him take care of his dad and accompany him to medical appointments. He reported issues using the Pace subsidy to pay for Uber when travelling from the Barrington Road station.

Chairman's Report

Acting Chairman Marcucci thanked Chairman Kwasneski for his efforts travelling across the region to meet with people on behalf of the Pace board, service, and constituents. He also highlighted the ReVision presentation on today's agenda. He is pleased with the comprehensive research that went into this project and current progress. He complimented consultant Jarrett Walker + Associates, LLC ("JWA") for listening to feedback from the Pace board, riders, and elected officials. He thanked JWA for the opportunity to attend a briefing on ReVision.

Directors' Reports

Director Arfa thanked Mr. Fedro for taking the time to attend today's meeting to share his experiences, saying that Pace relies on feedback to improve service. Director Arfa wished everyone a happy Women's History Month, saying that women are under-represented in transportation and are fortunate to have Melinda Metzger as our Executive Director. Director Arfa recognized Pace's female board members, staff, and bus operators.

Director Canning reported that the Pace Planning & Infrastructure Committee met a couple weeks ago to preview today's ReVision presentation. He asked board members to pay attention to how the network has been modified based on board and public input and to consider what is best for the region when providing feedback for the draft network plan. He said that the Planning & Infrastructure Committee did a nice job discussing the pros and cons of ridership versus coverage to provide a unified recommendation. Director Canning also reported on meeting with Vern Squires, a former Pace board member who served for 29 years and who is concerned about consolidation legislation. Former Director Squires believes that Cook County mayors have a history of bringing value to suburban bus service and hopes the General Assembly will do the right thing.

As the Pace Board Audit Liaison, Director Carr reported on meeting with Pace staff to discuss the 2024 Internal Audit Plan. He also reported on meeting with Crowe LLP, Pace's external auditors, regarding 2024 financial statements, a National Transit Database report, internal controls, and grant accountability. The external audit will be finished in May 2025.

Director Guerin complimented Director Canning for chairing a productive Planning & Infrastructure Committee meeting and JWA for an excellent presentation. He said that the Pace board is well-equipped to make the complex decision on ridership versus coverage for the region.

Director Noak reported that he attended a Metropolitan Mayors Caucus meeting yesterday with the Labor Alliance for Public Transportation, which is behind a new “United We Move Illinois” public transit reform bill (SB-1938). He thought it was a productive conversation that brought parties together and shed light on some issues. He thinks there is room to compromise and find reasonable accommodations for everyone. He hopes we can continue a dialog on this issue.

Director Schielke reported on attending the same meeting as Director Noak, saying it was productive. Director Schielke also reported receiving a request from Cook County residents to implement bus service from the Geneva train station to a new Tesla dealership opening in Batavia. He advised that there is no convenient connection to existing buses, so the best option would be Uber.

Director Smith recognized Women’s History Month, commenting that we need more women running for elected office at all levels of government and that if that occurs, you will see equal representation of women at leadership levels. She is proud of the female leaders of Pace. She reported that Congressman Bill Foster will be in McHenry County on March 21 to celebrate McHenry County’s \$1 million community project funding grant for electric paratransit vehicles.

Director Soto echoed Director Arfa’s and Director Smith’s comments on Women’s History Month, saying she is particularly proud of the leadership of Pace Executive Director Melinda Metzger. Director Soto reported on a groundbreaking for Phase 1 North Division Electrification in Waukegan, which will be Pace’s first garage to operate an all-electric bus fleet. She invited everyone to attend. She looks forward to the discussion on the ReVision presentation and thanked Director Canning for his leadership on the Planning & Infrastructure Committee.

Executive Director’s Report

Melinda Metzger acknowledged Women’s History Month and the many women who have helped shape the transportation industry. Pace employs women at all levels of the agency who operate, maintain, and support service. Melinda thanked Directors Arfa, Smith, and Soto for their exceptional leadership and their tremendous impact on transit in the region. Pace is holding a donation drive for Deborah’s Place, a nonprofit that supports women experiencing homelessness.

Melinda reported that Pace recognized Transit Employee Appreciation Day by having management staff go out to transit terminals to personally thank bus operators for keeping buses rolling and serving the public. She asked passengers to thank their operators, and management thanked passengers for riding Pace buses. It was a great morning out in the field.

Melinda acknowledged National Procurement Month and the hard work of Chief Procurement Officer, Jane Swider, and her team. In 2024, Pace had 990 procurements totaling \$291 million.

Melinda introduced 20 recipients of the annual Pacesetter Award. Employees from departments across the agency are nominated by their managers for going above and beyond for Pace.

Melinda reported that she, Director Smith, and Director Schielke will attend an event this Friday for the recently awarded \$1 million community project funding grant for five electric paratransit vehicles for McHenry County. She thanked Congressman Foster for being so supportive of Pace by awarding this grant and another community project funding grant for the Bolingbrook Park-n-Ride expansion. Congressman Foster knows that when you invest in Pace, Pace will get the job done.

Melinda reported that she and Director Soto will attend a groundbreaking event in Waukegan for Phase 1 North Division Electrification, including the construction of an outside platform for 12 electric buses as we rehabilitate the existing garage to become Pace's first fully electric garage.

Melinda reported that the Illinois General Assembly is back in session, and conversations about the fiscal cliff are critically important for Pace and the future of regional transit. Pace is meeting with legislators to highlight the different ways that Pace provides value to the region. Melinda also testified before the Illinois House Appropriations Committee on Public Safety and Infrastructure to discuss the complexity of Pace's service area and how Pace has different innovative programs to meet the unique needs of the 274 communities we serve. These efforts at customizing service have resulted in the continued rebound of Pace ridership, including ADA paratransit which is well above 2019 pre-pandemic levels. She reinforced Pace's dependability; when we say we are going to do something, we do it. Pace is worthy of investment.

Melinda reported that she will attend RTA's board meeting next week to discuss the impact of the fiscal cliff on the region if no new sustainable funding is secured. The region would see a reduction in service by 40%. For Pace, that means the elimination of weekend and late-night service, decreased frequency on many routes, and the elimination of ADA paratransit service on the weekend. Pace will continue working alongside regional partners to secure funding necessary to maintain and enhance transit service. In April, Pace will support RTA's regionwide campaign, urging residents, businesses, and community leaders to contact their elected officials and voice their support for transit funding.

Melinda reported on the I-290 expressway and I-88 bus study in partnership with IDOT as it seeks to improve those corridors. The first steering committee meeting took place on Friday. Pace is looking at the possibility of extending bus service from Forest Park to Oak Brook and possibly farther if I-88 gets funding to renovate that roadway with bus-on-shoulder service after I-290 is rebuilt. Pace has proven we are successful at getting ridership when our service is faster than a car.

Melinda reported that February 2025 systemwide ridership was 1.7 million riders. Melinda noted that although February 2025 ridership had one less weekday than February 2024, which typically results in a 4% decrease in ridership, we are still matching last year's figures.

Melinda reported that since the last meeting, Pace interviewed 222 prospective candidates and extended offers to 55 during "Hire-on-the-Spot" events. She stated that the more drivers we have, the more service we can put on the road. Pace has been expanding popular services as we get closer to pre-pandemic levels. Pace reintroduced 81 trips for bus-on-shoulder service out of Heritage Division.

Melinda reported on the preliminary budget performance for January 2025. Suburban service is \$3.6 million negative to budget, and ADA paratransit service is \$257,000 unfavorable to budget. January figures are typically not a good predictor for the rest of the year's budget performance.

Melinda reported that ReVision is a once in a generation opportunity to realign suburban transit service with the way people travel today. The next phase of the project is to develop a draft network plan. With sustainable funding, Pace can implement the ReVision plan, enhance frequency, and create a more connected transit network.

Acting Chairman Marcucci congratulated the 2025 Pacesetters for consistently working hard, saying they deserve the recognition, particularly workers out in the field. He said that recognizing good work benefits the entire organization.

Items removed from the Consent Agenda

None.

Approval of Consent Agenda

SBD #25-21 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to vCloud Tech, Inc. for subscription licenses for Commvault backup and recovery software in an amount not to exceed \$588,860.41.

SBD #25-22 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to AskReply, Inc. d/b/a B2Gnow for web-based contract management and prevailing wage tracking software and support in an amount not to exceed \$600,628.04.

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

Action Items

SBD #25-23 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to 72 Hour LLC d/b/a National Auto Fleet Group for the purchase of 125 minivans in an amount not to exceed \$6,067,500.00.

Lindsey Umek, Chief Operating Officer, presented and responded to questions:

- Director Canning asked why is Pace ordering 125 vans. Lindsey explained that the Minnesota contract onto which Pace is piggybacking specified the 125 number. There are 175 minivans currently in Pace's Vanpool fleet, and 70% of them have 80,000 miles.
- Acting Chairman Marucci asked how Pace discovered this piggybacking opportunity. Lindsey credited the Procurement and Vanpool departments researching state contracts.
- Acting Chairman Marcucci asked for details about maintaining the vehicles. Lindsey explained that the vehicles initially are under warranty and will be serviced by the dealer. Vanpool riders can take vans to pre-authorized shops throughout the region for

maintenance and repairs.

- Director Wells asked for the make and model of the new vehicles. Lindsey explained that the new vans are Honda Odysseys. The vans currently in service are Dodge Caravans. Melinda added that Dodge vehicles are now made in Canada. The only Buy America options are Honda and Toyota because vehicles of those car manufacturers are assembled in the U.S.

Director Soto moved, and Director Schielke seconded, a motion to approve the Ordinance.

The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Directors Arfa, Canning, Carr, Guerin, Hastings, McLeod, Noak, Schielke, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Acting Chairman Marcucci.

All directors voted aye.

Issues/Discussion/Reports

Daniel Costantino, Principal Consultant for JWA, provided an update on the ReVision Systemwide Restructuring Initiative. Last month, Daniel presented on the public input received on ReVision concepts, which imagines what Pace could with funding sufficient to increase service by 50%, which is what Pace can handle without adding new operating divisions. Public input was split roughly 50/50 in favor of the ridership concept versus the coverage concept. Since then, Pace's Planning & Infrastructure Committee provided input on policy direction for the draft plan. JWA will proceed with a draft network design based on board input today.

Daniel provided key context. There is far less investment in suburban transit in the RTA region than in peer regions. There has been a lot of population growth in the region since Pace was formed 40 years ago; growth has been stronger in the outer suburbs. The service that has historically existed will not determine the future; ReVision will re-examine Pace's network and respond to actual conditions on the ground. ReVision could result in big changes to the network.

Daniel presented the short-term and the medium-term parts of the draft plan. The short-term scenario is what changes Pace can make with the level of funding and service operated today (plus 10 concept). The medium-term scenario is what changes Pace can make by the time we achieve 50% funding growth (plus 50 concepts). Pace will use the short-term scenario as a base and build from there to implement the medium-term plan. The medium-term plan will require the hiring of additional operators, supervisors, support staff, and potentially more vehicles and may take several years to implement.

Daniel discussed the pros and cons of the short-term plan. We cannot make massive changes, but we can make a lot of small changes that would help people locally by making service easier to learn and use, more consistent across the region, and longer and faster on weekends while continuing to serve the same areas as today. However, how much change is worth going through? Service changes that do not involve new funding require taking service away from somewhere to move or shift that funding and service somewhere else. So even if you make changes that positively impact many people, you are likely to negatively impact somebody who relies on the service as it is today. Board members are more likely to hear from people who are

negatively impacted than from people who were positively impacted. However, the bigger the changes we make, the more positive impact we can generate.

Daniel used the Elgin area as a case study to illustrate the types of short-term changes that Pace might be able to make before medium-term growth. The draft network has more direct routes, more frequent service, more two-way service, and fewer one-way routes with complex deviations. When you serve people more frequently and more directly, people spend less time on the bus and less time waiting, which gets people to where they are going faster. However, service today is organized, so a lot of people have a bus stop very near their front door. Making routes more direct would require many people to walk farther to reach the nearest bus stop, even if the service is more convenient than before and even if the same number of people are near the service. Pace would serve the same population within a half mile as today, just in a different way.

Daniel summarized the general guidance given by the Planning & Infrastructure Committee on development of the short-term draft plan. Pace is seeking to serve the same areas but not necessarily committing to serving the same streets and stops. Where possible, Pace will change routes to be more direct, offering more two-way service and less one-way loops. Wherever practical, Pace will remove confusing deviations off the main route that happen a few times a day and make trips longer. Where possible, Pace will consolidate overlapping infrequent routes into more frequent service. If any of that generates savings, Pace will use savings to increase service on weekends and plan for more consistent service hours across the region.

Director Smith said Elgin serves as an excellent example of illustrating the tradeoffs of implementing short-term changes, with the positive outcome being the increased access to opportunity and the negative outcome being losing a bus stop outside your door. She recommended that when presenting draft concepts to the public, it would be helpful to give people an idea of what they will lose and specifically how much farther they would be walking to a bus stop. She acknowledged that some routes have a history of operating a certain way that may no longer be rooted in facts and ridership. It would be helpful to call out some of that historical context when presenting network changes to the public.

Daniel reported that Pace needs to decide how to direct growth in the medium-term part of the plan – invest in ridership or coverage? Daniel pointed out that more frequent routes that run every 15 minutes and serve dense areas tend to generate the highest ridership per dollars spent. When you provide fixed routes at lower frequencies that run once an hour, like a lot of Pace's routes today, you expect less ridership because it requires more waiting. Not many people have an hour to wait before they need to go. Door-to-door On Demand service is beneficial, but it has inherently less capacity to support high ridership. The more demand and ridership increases, the more wait times increase because you cannot serve more people in an hour.

Daniel reviewed the consequences of maximizing ridership, which means investing in frequency so that as many routes as possible come every 15 minutes or less. It focuses on the types of areas that Pace has historically focused on – the inner suburbs, older town centers developed at higher

densities, big regional malls, major medical centers, and some satellite cities developed during the streetcar era. There is continued investment in Pace's most productive corridors, most of which are planned to become Pulse routes. We cannot predict ridership, but we can measure access to opportunity or the number of places someone can reach within a reasonable amount of time (one hour). The ridership concept slightly reduces the number of people near service today, but it generates a much higher level of access to opportunity than the coverage concept.

Daniel reviewed the consequences of maximizing coverage, which means investing in service that goes to new areas that are not served today, which is most of the suburbs. Pace is only reaching 42% of the suburban population within a half mile right now. To expand coverage, we have to stretch how far Pace routes can go. That means focusing less on frequency and more on On Demand zones and infrequent routes that operate once an hour. We can measure its impact by how many more people are within a reasonable distance of a bus stop. The coverage concept increases the number of people within a half mile of transit in the suburbs from 42% to 56%. However, it only increases access to opportunity by 30% compared to over 80% in the ridership concept.

Daniel asked the Board to provide direction on how to design the draft plan and how much to invest in ridership and coverage. He said that there is no right or wrong answer. It depends on how much you value either increasing access to opportunity or increasing people near transit. For the medium-term plan, the Planning & Infrastructure Committee recommended investing 60-70% of new service to increase coverage and 30-40% of new service to maximize ridership. That would result in a 30-50% increase in access to jobs and about 50% of the suburban population closer to transit. He said you will see service investments in all parts of the region but slightly more investment in the collar counties where there has been the most population growth.

Director Soto said that the Lake County and McHenry County population growth over 40 years is staggering compared to suburban Cook County. The increase has never been fully acknowledged; that is why Pace has been underfunded for years and has major coverage issues. Lake County is suburbanized and no longer rural. The farms have been gone for years. Lake County is not a bedroom community either; it is home to major employers, new hospitals, and manufacturing businesses. She said On Demand programs in Lake County have been highly successful and agrees with eliminating or streamlining some routes to run more frequently.

Director McLeod agreed with Director Soto, saying that suburban areas once called country towns like Palatine or Schaumburg are now large thriving cities. He thinks Pace will see more ridership if there is more coverage in those areas. Right now, some residents in collar counties do not even consider Pace as an option because there is limited or no service. He said Pace is lacking coverage and should provide service to the people that are being taxed to pay for it.

Director Arfa confirmed that the mapping analysis does account for people's proximity to Metra and CTA. Melinda added that Metra and CTA were part of the steering committee.

Director Smith pointed out that people who do not have service today are still paying for service that they cannot access. She shared an example of a McHenry County resident at the poverty level who is unemployed and found a good job with benefits 40 minutes away. He does not own a car, and his only public transportation option would have taken him four hours each way. This is an example of someone who could have been lifted out of poverty and provide for his family if he had public transportation access and would have been willing to wait an hour for a bus.

Director Smith thinks 70% coverage and 30% ridership is a good spot to land. She pointed out that the McHenry County Council of Governments advocated for the coverage model, but not in all areas of the county. Based on resident feedback and a deep understanding of their needs, they mapped out what parts of the county need more coverage and what parts of the county need investment in ridership. She said Pace needs to recognize the uniqueness of each community and listen and respond to their unique needs.

Acting Chairman Marcucci highlighted earlier ReVision presentations that compared the per capita funding of the RTA region to other major metropolitan areas of the country, showing that Illinois has historically underfunded public transportation. He said that population has grown, but funding has not changed in any significant way. If Pace were funded in line with its peers, a lot of issues that the service board is experiencing today would be mitigated, and we would be able to provide a lot more service. The Chicago area has been struggling to maintain its commercial and manufacturing base for decades. One of the ways to attract capital investment from employers is to ensure that employees can get to their workplace. He said everyone deserves a job and a good income. We need to build the middle class, which has been declining for 40 years. We need to help people who want to work, who take pride in their work, and who want to put their kids through college and advance toward the American dream. One of the core components of that is investing in public transit. He hopes the public and the legislature will protect it.

Director Soto thanked Acting Director Marcucci for his comments and added that transportation helps people access education. She stated that community colleges are more important than ever.

Daniel reviewed the next steps for developing a draft plan. Over the next month, JWA will work with Pace planning staff on drawing new versions of maps and then will spend the following few months analyzing the maps. After that, Pace will go out for public comment again on the draft plan to get reactions so that the Pace board can decide on the degree to which Pace will implement the draft plan or make changes before the plan is made final.

Director Smith sought confirmation from fellow board members that the board agrees to make a strong recommendation to lean 60-70% towards coverage. She said this is a critical milestone where the board is giving JWA direction to develop the draft plan and wants to make sure the board is aligned to prevent costly and time-consuming second guesses later in the process.

Director Noak agreed with the ratio of coverage and ridership, leaning in the direction toward coverage, acknowledging that the specifics still need to be worked out.

Director Wells agreed with Director Smith and Director Soto on leaning 60-70% toward coverage, saying we desperately need it.

Daniel thanked the board for the useful direction, which is consistent with the feedback from the Planning & Infrastructure Committee. JWA will move forward accordingly. He added that even if JWA follows this recommendation precisely, positive and negative feedback during the public comment period on the draft plan may prompt the board to shift the coverage and ridership investments again at the final stage.

Acting Director Marcucci praised Daniel and JWA for doing a great job incorporating public input. He believes the project is based on well-founded research. He pointed out that we can only make these service changes and investments with more funding that is equal to Pace's peers in other states, which is not too much to ask.

Adjournment

Acting Chairman Marcucci asked for a motion to adjourn into closed session for the purposes of discussing closed session minutes (2-C-21) and pending litigation (2-C-11). Director Schielke moved and Director McLeod seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. All directors voted aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:58 a.m.

Reconvene

Acting Chairman Marcucci reconvened the open session of the Pace Board of Directors meeting at 11:22 a.m.

Directors physically present: Arfa, Canning, Carr, Guerin, McLeod, Schielke, Smith, Soto Wells, and Acting Chairman Marcucci.

Directors virtually present: Hastings and Noak.

Directors absent: Chairman Kwasneski.

SBD #25-24 – Resolution approving the closed session meeting minutes of February 19, 2025.

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

Adjournment

There being no further business, Acting Chairman Marcucci asked for a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Director Schielke moved and Director McLeod seconded the motion. The

motion passed with a unanimous vote; all Directors voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 11:23 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, April 16, 2025 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace corporate headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Elissa Ledvort
Board Secretary, Board of Directors