

**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
July 16, 2025**

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority (“Pace”), met in open session on Wednesday, July 16, 2025 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: Canning, Carr, Guerin, Marcucci, McLeod, Smith, Wells, and Chairman Kwasneski.

Director Guerin moved, and Director McLeod seconded, a motion to allow Directors Hastings, Noak, Schielke, and Soto to attend via Zoom. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. Directors Hastings, Schielke, and Soto joined the meeting via Zoom immediately following the vote. Director Noak did not join the meeting.

Directors absent: Arfa and Noak.

SBD #25-53 – Resolution approving the open session meeting minutes of June 18, 2025.

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

Public Comment

ADA paratransit rider Andy O’Malley shared a negative experience when they received a surprise email at the end of May. The email said that their enrollment in the Rideshare Access Program (“RAP”) was revoked due to suspected fraud. Andy denied misusing their account.

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*

Andy explained that they sent multiple emails and made multiple phone calls to Pace but received no response. Andy continued to use Uber out of desperation to keep their job despite receiving no resolution or response from Pace. Without the RAP subsidy, Andy was spending approximately \$250 per week on transportation and, as a result, incurred \$1,200 in debt. Andy could not pay their rent and utility bills and put off doctor appointments waiting for the issue to be resolved. Andy reached out to Access Living for help. Pace then reached out to Andy this Monday when Andy was offered the option to appeal their RAP eligibility. Pace staff explained that Andy's account was flagged from a 2024 audit due to having a different name than when they originally registered for RAP. Andy is transgender and reported changing their name on their Uber account to prevent issues with inconsistent registration information; however, the 2024 audit did not match the name on their account in 2025. Andy agrees that the program should be audited to ensure that people do not take advantage of the program but lamented that their issue could have been resolved with a two-minute phone call if anyone had been willing to listen or respond to complaints. Andy said if these problems are happening to them, then they are most likely happening to other riders as well. Andy praised RAP, saying it helped them be more independent, attend every medical appointment, travel easily to pick up prescriptions, and get a job, which was not possible before RAP. Medical appointments are hard to get to if you have complex medical conditions and see specialists located across northern Illinois, which would require many transfers on traditional ADA paratransit service. Andy now relies on RAP and the program has been lifechanging. They said that this program is so important as it allows people with disabilities to have as normal a life as possible.

Chairman Kwasneski apologized for the inconvenience that Andy experienced. He said RAP is great because it gives the disabled community more autonomy to go where they want to go when they want without the scheduling constraints of traditional ADA paratransit service. The subsidy programs have been so successful that the RTA wants to scale the programs back to reduce costs, and this may push more riders toward traditional ADA paratransit service, which is more costly to operate. He asked for the help of ADA paratransit riders to advocate for the importance of the subsidy programs. If RTA and Pace institute a cap on the number of RAP and Taxi Access Program ("TAP") rides per month, it cannot be an arbitrary number and should account for people who use RAP and TAP to travel to work every day and for medical appointments. He asked Pace to review audit procedures and double check for actual fraud versus potential fraud before revoking a rider from RAP.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Kwasneski congratulated the Pace Board members representing Cook County for being recently reappointed to the Pace Board. He said the reappointments reflected the confidence that their appointing authorities have in them.

Chairman Kwasneski reported that he and Executive Director Melinda Metzger are meeting with legislators independently every week. He reported that House members are hearing Pace's concerns about the most recent bill, how operations will not be able to function properly if we do not fund transit now, and how programs could potentially be slowed down or delayed by years. It

is an unfortunate consequence that nobody wants and legislators need to consider. He encouraged Pace Board members to have conversations with their legislators as well.

Chairman Kwasneski reported that in June, the RTA called for each of the service boards to develop two budgets: one incorporating service cuts, and one continuing to operate service status quo. RTA is forming an ad hoc committee of its board and leadership to discuss the funding shortfall and how we move forward. RTA Chairman Dillard asked Chairman Kwasneski and Melinda to participate in that committee. Not knowing when the legislature will pass a funding bill and how long we need to manage our current funding is a challenge and a moving target. Funding relief could come in October or January or in spring 2026. One of the complicating factors is the revenue source. At the end of the last legislative session in May, the Senate passed a bill that the House did not advance due to the revenue sources. We all know that any tax will rub someone the wrong way, but the legislature must come to a consensus to fund the transit system going forward. Pace will continue to meet with legislators throughout the summer.

Directors' Reports

Director Canning thanked Lindsey Umek and the Operations Team for a fantastic job providing ten shuttle buses throughout the Village of Wilmette to the lakefront for the Fourth of July fireworks as well as twenty shuttle buses to return people to the staging area. The district approached Director Canning about restarting the service after it was suspended during the pandemic. Director Canning said that observing the operation where staff gave out directions, timed roundtrips, and coordinated with the police department and other jurisdictions made him very proud as a director. It was great to see people of all generations happy boarding a bus and excited about its convenience. Director Canning thanked the Cook County Board for reappointing all Pace Board members representing Cook County to continue the good work for their districts.

Director Carr congratulated all of the Pace directors who were reappointed to the Board. He thinks it is great to keep a board that works well and makes good decisions together.

Director Guerin reported on the importance of dial-a-ride service to the residents of the Village of River Grove. The service is not a luxury; it is a necessity, taking people to dialysis and doctors' appointments. He thanked Pace Vanpool Representative Lavenia Friend for assisting the Village when a bus malfunctioned and for sending out a new bus so quickly. He is thankful for the hard work of Pace staff, which starts at the top with Melinda.

Director McLeod congratulated the Pace Board members who were reappointed to the Board. He also reported that he and Director Noak are part of the Suburban Mayors Coalition for Fair Transit, which is working on an alternative proposal to the current transit bill. The legislature has asked municipalities and councils of government what they are for if they are against the bill. The Coalition for Fair Transit aims to work that out with other mayors and will be distributing a survey to mayors soon. Chairman Kwasneski thinks that the mayors' input will really help as members of the House are reviewing the bill.

Director Schielke reported his concerns about the service boards' reorganization, the political motivations behind it, funding issues, and the impact of transit issues on political races at the state legislative level in the near term. He reported signing onto the Suburban Mayors Coalition for Fair Transit letter authored by the Mayor of Hanover Park. He is concerned that we are far from resolving all the issues at play in the near term. It may still linger until next summer or the next election. He predicts that this will be a long-term conversation for the Pace Board.

Director Smith congratulated fellow Pace Board members on their reappointments and thanked the Pace Board members who were keeping abreast of the legislation on Pace's behalf.

Director Wells thanked the Cook County Board for reappointing him to the Pace Board. He looks forward to continuing good work with a great team of directors and staff. He reported that he and Melinda met with state legislators about transit funding. The state legislators requested information, and it was great to have Pace's summary of the bill to help legislators understand Pace's concerns.

Executive Director's Report

Melinda congratulated the Pace Board members representing Cook County on being reappointed. She complimented them for their dedication to Pace and public transportation.

Melinda thanked Director Canning for spending five hours on a hot day to support the Pace Operations Team and talk to residents during Pace's Fourth of July shuttle service in the Village of Wilmette. She agreed with Director Canning's gratitude toward the bus operators; they are a good team, and she is proud of what they do every day to take care of passengers.

Melinda thanked Pace staff who worked through a hot day at the Juneteenth celebration at the DuSable Museum of African American History to promote the good service that Pace offers. Pace's vintage 1949 GMC bus, which would have operated through 1960, was a big hit, as always.

Melinda displayed the Mobility On Demand Innovator award that Pace received at the 2025 Trapeze conference for the implementation of Pace's TripCheck PASS-WebCare, which allows group home and workshop managers to monitor and group trips together for residents to move service faster, and Easy Wallet, which allows Ventra fare payment for paratransit and dial-a-ride trips. She thanked the Operations, Paratransit, Paratransit Operations Support, and IT Teams for getting those technologies in place to make transit easier for our customers.

Melinda also displayed a print advertising award and an ambient media (billboards and signage) award that Pace received for the Ride Kind campaign. She thanked the Marketing Department for its hard work, all the employees who were featured in the campaign, and Director Marcucci for supporting the campaign from the beginning. She said that this is one of the best marketing campaigns that Pace has ever done and that Pace will be producing new campaign content soon.

Melinda reported on Pace's annual participation in the Disability Pride Parade downtown to support people with disabilities. Director Arfa is also hosting an event at Malcolm X College to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act and the creation of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

Melinda reported that Pace will hold six public hearings to share information and receive public input regarding the RTA's proposed changes to TAP and RAP. The proposed changes include a fare increase from \$2 to \$3.25, which matches the current ADA paratransit fare, as well as capping the number of trips that a rider can take to no more than 30 per month. Pace will bring the results of the hearings back to the August Board meeting with recommendations. Pace anticipates a lot of interest in those hearings as so many users report that the programs have given them more freedom and changed their lives. Melinda is happy that riders will submit comments because we will have to look at the proposed changes with great consideration; however, the issue is that paratransit is overbudget because more people are riding.

Melinda reported that Pace is coordinating with the CTA and Metra to offer free fares for students on August 18, which is the first day of public school in Chicago and many suburban schools.

Melinda reported that the RTA called for the service boards to develop two budget scenarios for 2026: one which assumes no new funding is available and the second which assumes a temporary stopgap that supports current service levels. Pace staff are also working on a third scenario which assumes that Pace receives the requested investment to implement its ReVision plan. The RTA and staff from all three service boards will start meeting bi-weekly as part of a 2026 budget task force to coordinate budget preparation. An ad hoc committee comprised of the RTA and service board chairs and senior leadership will start convening on July 24. The next few months are critical as we develop the 2026 budget and engage with legislators in the pursuit of a sustainable funding solution. Our ability to provide the essential transit service upon which our region relies depends on us getting the funding that we need. Melinda thanked the Budget and Planning Departments for the hard work ahead and the Pace Board for talking to legislators.

Melinda reported the Regional Day Pass ("RDP") launched last month. Riders can pay \$2.50 above their standard Metra day pass to get unlimited one-day access to Pace fixed routes and CTA buses and trains. The RDP is available only on the Ventra app and was used 161 times since it launched on June 11 through July 10. The RDP is a collaboration between Pace, the CTA, and Metra. The RTA is reimbursing the service boards for the cost of offering RDPs.

Melinda reported that the Pulse Cermak citizens advisory group will meet for the third time tomorrow. Pace's fourth Pulse line will operate along the 14-mile corridor on Cermak Road between the Cicero Pink Line station and Yorktown. The project is now in the environmental review and preliminary design phase where we are evaluating station locations, bus priority treatment to roadways, and potential environmental impacts. Input from the advisory group will contribute greatly to the design of this route, and public engagement events will ensure broad community involvement.

Melinda reported on June ridership. The system provided approximately 2 million rides, a 9.1% increase over June 2024, though there was one more weekday in June 2025. Weekday ridership on I-55 is up 7.7% and Pulse Dempster is up 13.5% over the same time last year. Ridership has grown in all Pace's pilot services since they were implemented.

Melinda reported on recruitment. Pace hosted 171 prospective bus operators and extended 48 offers during the two Hire-on-the-Spot events held at Pace headquarters and South Campus. Pace continues to hire to reach full staffing.

Melinda reported that suburban service is favorable to budget through May. Sales tax performance is a contributing factor to this condition, coming in \$4.5 million above the budgeted figures through the first quarter of 2025. ADA paratransit is \$10.8 million unfavorable to budget due to growth in the ADA services that we are offering.

Chairman Kwasneski asked how ridership of the hourly local service on Pulse corridors compares to the ridership of rapid transit Pulse routes over time to determine if Pulse brought in new riders or if existing local riders moved over to Pulse.

Items removed from the Consent Agenda

None.

Approval of Consent Agenda

SBD #25-54 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Element Fleet Corporation for fleet vehicle management services for Pace Vanpool and non-revenue vehicles in an amount not to exceed \$6,440,499.81.

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

Action Items

SBD #25-55 – Ordinance authorizing Change Order No. 1 to Contract No. 234378 with Jarrett Walker & Associates, LLC for consulting services for a network revitalization and systemwide restructuring initiative. The change order extends the Contract for nine months and increases the Contract total from \$1,058,707.25 to \$1,310,015.31, an increase of \$251,308.06.

Dimitre Guenov, Associate Planner, presented on how the change order will add available grant funds and extend the Contract to provide additional resources to support the desired level of public outreach and to address additional hours needed for analysis on various service and budget scenarios as part of the regional transit funding discussions. Director Canning asked how

the Pace Board can help Jarrett Walker in the next phase, and Melinda asked the Pace Planning Committee to review and discuss Jarrett Walker's recommendations on cutting service if there is insufficient money in the system. Director Smith commented that indecision costs money. The cost of the General Assembly not passing legislation to invest in public transit for the region has resulted in Pace developing multiple budgets and extending contracts to do scenario planning.

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

SBD #25-56 – Ordinance authorizing Pace's Executive Director to make the Route 330, 331, 755, 850, 851 and 855 pilot service expansion changes permanent, effective on or after July 17, 2025.

Dimitre Guenov reported that as a result of the service pilots, Route 330 ridership increased 22.1%, Route 331 ridership increased 29.8%, and Route 755 increased 11.1%. Routes 850, 851, and 855 saw a complete schedule overhaul that included new stop patterns, updated running times, more consistent frequency, and more limited stop service, which resulted in reduced large passenger loads on certain trips and a 6.4% increase in ridership. A discussion ensued:

- Chairman Kwasneski brought up the overcrowding and standing passengers on some bus-on-shoulder trips after service was reduced during Covid, which is not great for interstate routes. He applauded staff for watching the complicated trends and creating a better schedule so that people can travel downtown safely and in the comfort that we promoted.
- Chairman Kwasneski responded to a general critique of why Pace is adding service when also considering service cuts. This is the complicated reality that all the service boards are facing. We are trying to operate as normally as possible with the uncertainty of what will happen in the next year regarding the future of funding the region's transit. There is a good possibility that the legislature is going to move forward with some new funding sources and that Pace will be fully funded. We cannot stop operations to the detriment of the riders that we work so hard to obtain, as it costs a lot more to get riders back than it does to keep the riders we have.
- Director Marcucci shared that one of his constituents complained to him about the proposed new taxes and revenue streams that are being contemplated for public transit, saying why should everyone pay new taxes to provide a service that only some people utilize. Director Marcucci acknowledged that we are all worried about taxes but explained that we need public transportation to get people to work, to their medical appointments, to school, and to other important essential places. Public transportation also removes tens of thousands of cars off the expressways and from parking lots. Even if you never ride a bus, public transportation does provide a service to everyone. It makes our economy work, it makes our society work, it makes our culture work, and it is part of our lives.
- Director Guerin is thankful for the service enhancements to Routes 330 and 331, saying that Manheim/LaGrange Road is a very important and heavily travelled corridor that gives people access to education, the airport, and local businesses.

- Director Schielke commented on significant population growth happening in the northwest corner of Kane County and the southwest corner of McHenry County. The mayor of Hampshire credits connecting I-90 to Route 47 as a major factor that started driving more people to the area. He suggested expanding the bus-on-shoulder program out to the Kane-McHenry border to serve the growing activity in that part of the region.

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

SBD #25-57 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Gillig, LLC for the purchase of 27 40-foot fixed route battery-electric buses in an amount not to exceed \$39,484,854.00.

Lindsey Umek, Chief Operating Officer, presented. A discussion ensued:

- Chairman Kwasneski commended Pace staff for being prepared and having a clear plan to move forward on zero emissions goals. He asked when the buses will go in service. Lindsey explained that it will take about eight months. The grant stipulates that buses must be a 2026 model, and Pace's order will get on the production line in the first quarter of 2026.
- Chairman Kwasneski asked about the status of Pace's 2021 order of electric buses with Proterra, which went out of business and was purchased by Phoenix. He said everybody needs to understand that there not enough bus manufacturers of electric vehicles in the U.S. to meet the demand. This is such a dire issue that APTA has worked with the Biden administration and bus manufacturers on ways to keep companies in business to be able to supply the electric bus fleets that everyone in the country has been trying to purchase. This is a compounding issue that also affects the businesses of bus parts suppliers. Melinda explained that Pace has an inspector at the Phoenix plant this week to get an update. She agreed, saying that unless there is funding for electric vehicles, there might not be enough demand to keep companies afloat, and we do not know what funding will be available in the future from the federal government. The uncertainty is tough because it delays Pace ordering more buses, which means we keep older buses on the street longer and pay more to maintain them. Pace does have a home for this order of 27 electric buses at outdoor charging pantographs at our garages throughout the region. We are building the infrastructure to safely accommodate both electric and battery-electric buses. We do not know exactly which direction the industry is going. The positive thing about this procurement is that Pace is fitting into Gillig's production line at the perfect time and receiving a quick turnaround. Also, Pace is working with Gillig on a separate procurement of hybrid buses, which will be the same vehicle but a different engine.
- Chairman Kwasneski brought up how the state legislature mandated that all future vehicle purchases by government agencies must be electric starting in 2026 and how Pace worked diligently to carve out exceptions based on the readiness of the electric grid and the availability of bus manufacturers and whether they could realistically supply buses. He applauded Pace staff for their advocacy and foresight on the legislation. He suggested that APTA's reports on electrification and the industry will be helpful references for future discussions with legislators. It is important to note that every transit industry across

the county is contending with the availability of electric buses, not just Pace.

- Director Marcucci commented on the availability of federal funding for electric fleet transition. He worries about Pace making commitments that we cannot keep in terms of paying for electric buses and the electrification of garages without knowing that we have the funding to proceed. Melinda explained that Pace is not executing electrification projects until we know that funding is locked in. Lindsey added that Pace is being conservative in our approach. Hybrid vehicles and engine repowers on older vehicles are helping Pace transition without overcommitting while keeping service on the street.
- Director Soto asked when electric buses will start operating out of North Division. Melinda and Lindsey explained that the construction of the North Division outdoor charging pad and pantograph will be completed by Fall 2025 and will accommodate 12 electric vehicles. Pace will receive electric buses in the first half of 2026. The first 12 buses will go to North Division, and the rest will be spread around the region in garages where we have the power for electric buses and have temporary outside storage available.
- Director Guerin applauded Pace for securing electric vehicles and asked about the expected battery range because technology is changing so fast. Lindsey explained that the Gillig bus running out of Pace Southwest right now has a 444 kilowatt battery, and the new buses will have a 686 kilowatt battery with a quoted range of 250 miles.

Director Canning moved, and Director McLeod seconded, a motion to approve the Ordinance.

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

All directors voted aye.

SBD #25-58 – Ordinance authorizing the negotiated acquisition of battery-electric buses in 2025-2026 through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process pursuant to Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority's Regulations Governing Public Bidding.

Jane Swider, Chief Procurement Officer, presented.

- Chairman Kwasneski, Melinda, and Jane discussed how Pace is working jointly with the CTA on the standard specifications of the vehicles. Pace and the CTA can customize their own technical add-ons later.
- Chairman Kwasneski and Director Canning asked how many vehicles would be ordered. Jane reported that the minimum is five and the maximum is still being determined. It will be a five-year contract against which Pace can place orders, and which will be structured to allow for annual adjustments if more funding is secured. Chairman Kwasneski pointed out that a high maximum number of vehicles would allow other transit companies to potentially request to jump on this procurement. Whether or not Pace and the CTA buy 500 buses, there may be an opportunity to still sell 500 buses to a variety of transit agencies over time. Manufacturers will see this procurement as a benefit because it would allow them and their suppliers to plan ahead. Jane referenced the APTA report that the Chairman brought up earlier, which outlines how transit agencies can help transit vehicle manufacturers in terms of joint procurements and standardizations because public bidding is a long process. Chairman Kwasneski reiterated that the APTA report will substantiate the manufacturers' concerns and reveal that it is not only an issue for Pace but also an

issue for every transit agency across the country. We have to make sure that electric buses will be available if we order them.

- Director Canning asked when Pace would come back to the Board with the results of the bid. Jane reported that best case scenario is February 2026.

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

Issues/Discussion/Reports

Chairman Kwasneski encouraged Directors to review the May 2025 budget reports and financial statements contained in their packets and to reach out to staff with questions.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Director Smith moved, and Director Wells seconded, the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote; all Directors voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, August 20, 2025 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace corporate headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Elissa Ledvort
Board Secretary, Board of Directors