



**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  
December 10, 2025**

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority (“Pace”), met in open session on Wednesday, December 10, 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 9:32 a.m.

**Roll Call**

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

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

Directors absent: Hastings.

**SBD #25-96 – Resolution** approving the open session meeting minutes of November 12, 2025.

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

**Public Comment**

None.

Director Hastings arrived at the meeting in person at 9:34 a.m.

**Chairman's Report**

Chairman Kwasneski reported on the launch of a new VanGo in Joliet, which people can utilize for first mile and last mile travel between the train station and industrial railroad hubs and warehouses. Pace received good local press on the launch event last week, which was attended by himself, Illinois State Representative Walsh, Joliet Mayor D'Arcy, Director Noak, Executive Director Melinda Metzger, and Pace staff. VanGo has been successful in other parts of the region. Pace staff continue to look at Van Go expansion opportunities.

Chairman Kwasneski reported on the upcoming ribbon cutting for the electric bus charging depot at North Division. This is another exciting Rebuild Illinois capital project award from 2019 that Pace completed. Pace is substantially complete on a number of Rebuild Illinois projects, which is a testament to Pace's fiscal responsibility and stewardship of taxpayer money, using funds to complete projects on time. The North Division electric bus charging depot completion is something Pace can point out to the legislature as an example of Pace's fiscal responsibility and completing projects on time.

Chairman Kwasneski wished the Board, staff, and the public a good and safe happy holiday.

**Directors' Reports**

Director Arfa wished Sally Williams well upon her retirement from Pace and thanked her for years on the frontlines providing service for people with disabilities. Director Arfa wished everyone Happy Holidays and safe travel to wherever you celebrate.

Director Canning extended his best wishes to the Pace Board, employees, and riders for a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year.

Director Carr wished staff and friends of Pace a very merry holiday.

Director Guerin thanked Pace staff for a successful 2025 and that he looks forward to 2026.

Director Hastings wished everyone a Merry Christmas and he is looking forward to a great year in 2026.

Director Marcucci wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Director McLeod said it was a great year for Pace and congratulated Director Noak on being elected Chair of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. He wished Garland Armstrong, former Pace ADA Advisory Committee member, a happy birthday.

Director Noak thanked Pace staff for putting together an excellent launch event for the new Joliet VanGo, which demonstrated the success of partnerships. He thanked Pace's partners at Will County and the City of Joliet, and state legislators who attended the event. He reported on presenting Pace's 2026 budget to the Will County Board yesterday, which was well-received and

generated good questions from county board members. He thanked Pace staff for helping him prepare for the event and Pace Community Relations Representative Beth Gonzalez for attending. He thanked Pace staff for doing a fantastic job in 2025 and that he looks forward to 2026.

Director Schielke reported on presenting Pace's 2026 budget to the Kane County Board. Several board members told him afterwards how pleased they are with Pace, Pace personnel, and how various issues have been resolved. They were grateful that Pace has made a concerted effort to expand into rural areas of the county, which are not expected to remain rural in the future. A phenomenal amount of new housing (thousands of units) is proposed to be built in western Kane County. The county is appreciative that Pace, stakeholders, and tollway officials are strategizing about how to add another lane on Interstate 88 from North Aurora to Sugar Grove, which might be needed soon. Director Schielke congratulated Pace staff on doing a great job in 2025. He wished everybody a joyous holiday season and looks forward to continuing progress in the coming year.

Director Smith thanked Sally Williams for her years of service upon her retirement from Pace. Director Smith thanked all Pace staff for a year of achievement and hard work, saying one of the greatest gifts to celebrate as we close out the year is the funding now available for public transportation in the region. Director Smith wished Happy Holidays to all.

Director Soto invited all to a ribbon-cutting celebrating the completion of the North Division Phase 1 electrification project. She thanked the Pace staff and Board for many things that were accomplished in Lake County this year, including great work at the Great Lakes Naval Station. She wished everyone Happy Holidays and outstanding transit to all.

Director Wells said it has been a challenging year for Pace, but 2026 looks good. Pace will be able to expand service with no staff cuts and no service cuts. He looks forward to what a productive 2026 will bring for transit in the Chicago area.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Melinda began her report thanking operations and maintenance personnel for their snow plowing efforts to ensure that buses ran on time. Winter weather has arrived and we must not forget how hard it is to be working out in the field.

Melinda provided board members with copies of the end-of-year booklet, which highlights Pace's accomplishments in 2025. The 2025 accomplishments include funding awards for low and zero emission vehicles; continued service expansions for fixed route, On Demand, and dial-a-ride programs; and continued infrastructure investments, such as opening the first ADA paratransit transfer facility in Schaumburg and completing Phase 1 North Division electrification, which will pave the way for the garage to become fully electric. Most importantly, Pace is very pleased that a transit funding bill was passed. There will be a lot of work ahead in 2026, but the new funding will allow Pace to continue great programs for years to

come. Melinda is proud of the success of the agency and is extremely thankful for the continued hard work of staff serving our passengers. Pace's accomplishments in 2025 would not have occurred without staff doing more with less than in prior years.

Melinda reported that the FTA has awarded Pace the largest low and no emissions grant we have ever received in the amount of \$39,780,000, for the purchase of hybrid electric vehicles. Board members were able to view Pace's first hybrid bus at the last board meeting. Pace is beginning to receive those vehicles and is putting them into service.

Melinda thanked board members for doing an excellent job presenting Pace's 2026 budget to the region's county boards.

Melinda provided copies of the revised final 2026 budget to board members. Melinda thanked Maggie Schilling, Melanie Castle, and the budget team for their tremendous work. They developed three budgets in one budget season: a budget holding service and operations steady, a cut scenario, and a revised budget to meet new budget marks from RTA after the state legislature passed Senate Bill 2111, which provided more funding to the regional transit system.

Melinda thanked Chairman Kwasneski, Director Noak, and state and local officials for attending the Joliet VanGo launch event, and thanked staff for putting together a great event quickly. Pace is marketing the new Joliet service. Joliet is Pace's sixth VanGo location and will help an area of Will County that fixed route buses do not currently serve. New VanGo locations are planned in Geneva, Forest Park, Olympia Fields, Naperville, and Crystal Lake. Those new VanGo planned locations will be rolled out in phases.

Director Noak joined the meeting in person at 9:48 a.m.

Melinda reported on Pace service improvements. All Pace service changes begin as pilots to ensure that the enhancements being made are productive and warrant permanent investments. Since the start of various pilots in 2024, Pace has implemented more frequent expanded weekend service on 22 routes over 46 service changes. In 2025, these service changes were focused on high ridership corridors, resulting in \$9.4 million in additional service being implemented, including 116,000 more vehicle hours and 68 additional bus operators being hired. More new service is planned for the March and June 2026 picks when bus operators pick their runs. Most of that new service will be invested in high-ridership areas. Pace's concern is that much of the new transit bill funding distribution is based on ridership. If Pace does not get new services running and ridership up, Pace will not receive funding to invest in service in other areas throughout the region.

Melinda reported that Pace reached a major milestone on Project Zero with the completion of the North Division Phase 1 electrification, including the construction of a bus charging depot consisting of ten pedestal chargers and two overhead pantograph chargers. Those chargers will allow North Division to charge 12 electric vehicles outside during Phase 2 work, during which the division will be retrofitted to convert the entire North Division fleet to fully electric buses. A

grand opening is planned for December 22. Pace is scheduled to receive electric vehicles in the first and second quarters of 2026. Pace has two electric vehicles in the fleet right now; one is being moved to North Division so maintenance staff and operators can start training to put new electric vehicles into service.

Melinda reported that in November, the Pace system provided 1.83 million rides. Ridership is lower than expected because there is one less weekday in November than last year, and we are experiencing more inclement weather earlier in the season than the year prior. In 2025 through November, the Pace system provided 22.1 million rides, a 4.2% systemwide increase over last year, and 73.1% of 2019 ridership levels through the same time period. Pace is continuing to monitor trends after the implementation of the RTA ADA Action Plan in October, which limited rides on TAP and RAP from 8 rides per day to 30 rides per month. November estimates indicate that there is a shift back to traditional ADA paratransit service, as that average weekday ridership is up 5.5% over 2024.

Chairman Kwasneski asked about the impact that the RTA ADA Action Plan for TAP and RAP is having on ridership and the budget. Pace is meeting with RTA to discuss the plan's impact. Melinda discussed several factors to consider. RTA sets funding marks for ADA services, so it is their call to decide what service Pace operates. Traditional ADA paratransit service is more expensive on a per ride basis, about \$70 per trip to operate, compared to \$30 per trip on TAP and RAP; however, TAP and RAP are used more often as they are more convenient. Consequently, if riders use TAP and RAP at double the rate as traditional ADA paratransit, the net result is about the same from a budget perspective. Pace projects that there is enough money in the 2026 budget to increase the number of monthly trips on TAP and RAP above 30 trips per month and is discussing that topic with RTA.

Melinda reported on recruitment. Pace hosted 98 prospective bus operators and extended offers to 34 individuals. Pace is 5% below full staffing levels and will continue massive hiring efforts to implement new service in 2026.

Melinda reported that suburban service is favorable to budget and ADA paratransit is unfavorable to budget. However, once RTA passes the 2025 budget amendments, ADA paratransit will be back within budget.

Melinda recognized the retirement of Sally Williams, Regional Manager of Paratransit and Vanpool, after 22 years of service. Sally Williams began her career at Pace in December 2003 to start Pace's first regionwide dial-a-ride program in DuPage County. Over her career, Sally Williams oversaw all collar counties implementing systemwide dial-a-ride programs, as well as the transition from Pace ADA and CTA ADA into a regionwide ADA paratransit service in 2006. Sally Williams was invaluable in meeting the challenges of the pandemic, switching to single rides, and getting RAP up and running. During her tenure at Pace, Sally Williams has been a hard worker, an incredible asset, and has had a tremendous impact on the agency.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Chairman Kwasneski congratulated Sally Williams on her retirement. ADA paratransit is a demanding field. Each change over the course of her tenure came with a challenge, and she helped Pace overcome each challenge and succeed.

Melinda thanked the Board for their support and interest during a tough year. There was a lot happening with the counties and legislators, and everyone got to work and did an outstanding job. Pace is lucky to have a cohesive Board that gets the job done. She invited Board members to attend Pace holiday parties at all divisions throughout the region.

Director Arfa thanked Melinda for her incredible leadership during an unpredictable year. We started 2025 not knowing where we were going to end the year as an agency. Because of Melinda and staff's hard work, Pace was able to get to where it is today.

Director Arfa is interested to see what the data shows regarding how ADA riders are adapting to the RTA ADA Action Plan, and if new ridership patterns will emerge. For example, are people using RAP and TAP in the first half of the month and relying more on traditional ADA paratransit in the second half of the month?

Director Wells and Melinda discussed the logistics of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of North Division Electrification. Phase 1 installed the infrastructure to charge and store 12 electric buses outside, while Phase 2 will renovate the existing facility and install the building infrastructure to bring 60 electric buses inside the facility. The timing will work out great to allow Pace to phase in electric buses into the fleet. It takes a long time to get buses, but when they get here, Pace will be ready.

### **Items removed from the Consent Agenda**

None.

### **Approval of Consent Agenda**

**SBD #25-97 – Ordinance** authorizing the award of a contract to Motorola Solutions, Inc. for the purchase and installation of bi-directional amplifiers in an amount not to exceed \$236,724.00.

**SBD #25-98 – Ordinance** authorizing the award of a contract to Ross and White Company for the replacement of the vehicle wash systems at Pace Northwest and West Divisions in an amount not to exceed \$1,980,000.00.

**SBD #25-99 – Resolution** honoring Sally Williams, Regional Manager of Paratransit and Vanpool, upon her retirement from Pace after 22 years of dedicated service.

Director Smith 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, Marcucci, McLeod, Noak, Schielke, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Chairman Kwasneski. All directors voted aye.

**Action Items**

**SBD #25-100 – Ordinance** authorizing the award of a contract to McDonagh Demolition, Inc. for the Northwest Division Wheeling building demolition in an amount not to exceed \$1,725,000.00.

Josh Berger, Department Manager of Capital Infrastructure, presented. Director Canning asked how long the demolition will take. Josh explained that the contractor will be given notice to proceed in January, then permits will be obtained, gearing up for a March start, an April abatement, and a midsummer close. Pace will seek a construction contractor as soon as possible. Ideally there will be a few months between the end of demolition and the beginning of construction, with a goal of starting construction during 2027.

Director Marcucci asked if the cost of the new building includes getting everything fully ready for electric vehicles. Josh explained that the infrastructure will be there, but charging equipment, pantographs, and dispensers will need to be added. Director Marcucci is shocked about the cost of electrification and is worried about how Pace will pay for electrification. He stated that electrification is beyond the budgetary capacity of Pace and he is not certain that the federal government will help support electrification projects. He is concerned that Pace will proceed too far with electrification, only to find out the money is not there to complete the process.

Director Noak moved, and Director McLeod 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.

**SBD #25-101 – Ordinance** amending the 2025 Suburban Capital Budget (Amendment #6). This amendment removes Pace positive budget variance (PBV) funding of \$44,000 for the Cermak Road/22nd Street BAT project. This amendment results in a decrease of \$44,000 to the 2025 Suburban Capital Budget, from \$113,304,549 to \$113,260,549.

Maggie Schilling, Chief Financial Officer, presented. The PBV was intended to be used as a match to a \$167,000 Invest in Cook grant. The SB 2111 NITA Act legislation prohibits operating funding from being used to support capital, which up until this time was allowed. RTA has indicated it will cease any movement of PBV going forward because of the new Senate bill. Amendment #6 is the final cleanup of the 2025 Suburban Capital Budget.

Director Marcucci moved, and Director McLeod 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**

Doug Sullivan, External Relations Department Manager, presented the results of the 2025 On Demand and Vanpool Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Director Wells asked about the zones where On Demand operates. Doug explained that riders can travel anywhere within an On Demand zone and which offer connections to fixed routes, train stations, and bus terminals. The zone maps are included in marketing materials.

Director Wells commented that if Pace is advertising a ten-minute pickup window, we need to make sure we honor that. Melinda admitted that ten minutes was an accurate wait time when the service started but is no longer realistic now that On Demand services have grown. On Demand trips can be scheduled a week in advance, so sometimes the service is booked up and unavailable. On Demand service has a daily capacity limit.

Director Marcucci wanted to make it clear to the general public that On Demand programs were originally put in place to fill in and serve areas that have little or no fixed route service. On Demand coverage is very important in DuPage County where some areas do not have enough fixed routes. The DuPage County board says that more coverage is needed and On Demand helps.

Director Canning thanked Doug Sullivan for making the Board aware that the Transit app shows On Demand as an option, along with Pace and CTA fixed routes and Metra. Melinda said the Transit app does a great job tying all services together, including Vanpool and paratransit too.

Chairman Kwasneski asked what percentage of people book On Demand by phone versus online. Doug Sullivan reported that both methods are well used with about a 50-50 split. The Chairman said that On Demand is a fantastic program, especially for pockets of the collar counties that may never have the population density to have fixed route service. Pace should concentrate on those areas in the future.

Chairman Kwasneski commented that at one time, Pace was one of the largest Vanpool operators in the country but does not know if that changed after Covid and with more people working from home. He said that Vanpool is a great program but needs to be better promoted, and the quickest way to do that is through employers. For example, Pace business development staff representing different parts of the region need to identify 20 employers in their area and meet with them regarding the program. County councils of government meetings and municipal newsletters and websites may also be good ways to promote the program. He knows that Vanpool is marketed on an ongoing basis, that staff work very hard, and that they have a lot on their plate; however, he would like to see more results. If Pace wants to grow the program, it needs to set a percent expansion goal. Alternatively, Pace staff could provide updates to the Board on how many companies sign up per month.

Melinda said that Pace would establish Vanpool goals, metrics, and a summary of marketing efforts to determine what is working. The 2025 Vanpool survey gives Pace good information on where to invest in marketing. Pace should target younger people, work sites, and the Hispanic

community, which are all areas of growth for Vanpool. Chairman Kwasneski said that Pace can do all the advertising it wants, but unless employees know about the program and connect with fellow coworkers who are commuting from the same area, the program will not grow.

Director Wells asked where Vanpool sign-ups are throughout the region because he has not seen many Vanpool vans in the south suburbs. Melinda reported that Vanpools are spread throughout the region and will provide a breakdown to the Board.

Director Smith shared that her previous employer worked with Pace to setup a VanGo location at the local Metra station. Their first choice was a dedicated bus route or Vanpool just for the company. However, when cost benefit analysis was performed, it was determined that having a dedicated bus was cost prohibitive, despite being a large employer. She suggested that most large employers belong to county economic development corporations. There is a real opportunity to market to large manufacturers who are really struggling to recruit hourly associates.

Director Canning shared a great example of Pace working with a business owner and a municipality on Vanpool and business development. The owner of two large high-end shopping centers in Wilmette is seeking a way to get employees from the Metra and L station to work in the shopping center locations. Steve Andrews, Pace Community Relations Manager, is in direct contact with the ownership representative about developing a Vanpool program for the different shops. His example is not employer-based per se, but rather location-based. Pace is working with the municipality to park the van in municipal lots.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion to adjourn into closed session for the purposes of discussing closed session minutes (2-C-21), pending litigation (2-C-11), and employment matters (2-C-1). Director Soto moved, and Director Wells seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. All directors voted aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:38 a.m.

### **Reconvene**

Chairman Kwasneski reconvened the open session of the Pace Board of Directors meeting at 11:04 a.m.

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

Directors virtually present: None.

Directors absent: Hastings and Schielke.

**SBD #25-102 – Resolution** approving the closed session meeting minutes of November 12, 2025.

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

**SBD #25-103 – Ordinance** approving that the closed session minutes of March 19, 2025 and June 18, 2025 are available for public inspection; and that the closed session minutes of January 14, 2015, February 11, 2015, March 11, 2015, May 13, 2015, June 10, 2015, September 18, 2019, March 16, 2022, October 18, 2023, March 20, 2024, June 26, 2024, September 18, 2024, November 13, 2024, and September 17, 2025 are not available for public inspection.

Director McLeod moved, and Director Guerin seconded a motion, to approve the Ordinance. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. All directors voted aye.

**SBD #25-104 - Ordinance** approving that the verbatim records of the closed session minutes for December 20, 2023, February 21, 2024, March 20, 2024, and April 17, 2024, which have previously been approved by the Pace Board of Directors and which have been held no less than 18 months after completion of the meeting recorded, be destroyed.

Director McLeod moved, and Director Noak seconded a motion, to approve the Ordinance. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. All directors voted aye.

**SBD #25-105 – Resolution** approving a Third Amended Employment Agreement with the Executive Director.

Director Soto moved, and Director Noak seconded a motion, to approve the Resolution. Director Hastings abstained. All other directors voted aye.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Director Soto moved, and Director Noak seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote; all Directors voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, January 21, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace corporate headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

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Elissa Ledvort  
Board Secretary, Board of Directors