



**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  
February 18, 2026**

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority (“Pace”), met in open session on Wednesday, February 18, 2026 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: Arfa, Canning, Carr, Guerin, Marcucci, McLeod, Schielke, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Chairman Kwasneski.

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

Directors absent: None.

**SBD #26-10 – Resolution** approving the open session meeting minutes of January 21, 2026.

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

### **Public Comment**

Michael Archey, a DuPage County resident, transit user, and renewable natural gas advocate asked that the Board defer authorization of the purchase of 36 hybrid buses until a transparent comparison of emission and cost is conducted between hybrid buses and CNG buses using renewable natural gas.

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*

**Chairman's Report**

Chairman Kwasneski extended his condolences to the family of Civil Rights icon Reverend Jesse Jackson who passed away recently. He reported that Pace had always gotten along well with him.

Chairman Kwasneski reported that Pace, Metra, and CTA attended a NITA transition meeting with the Governor's office. The service boards had helpful conversations about how to prepare for the NITA Act going into effect June 1 and for new board member appointments by September 30. The Governor's Office outlined their expectations from the service boards.

Chairman Kwasneski reported that the University Park Van Go ribbon cutting was a great event and very well-attended locally by elected officials, including Senator Patrick Joyce, Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, University Park Mayor Roudez, and Richton Park Village President Reinbold. Pace has more Van Go services planned across the region.

Chairman Kwasneski shared his excitement that Pace is bringing back the Wrigley Field Express service for Cubs games. Pace has been operating the Soldier Field Express for Bears games and is looking at bringing back Chicago White Sox service as well. Pace receives many compliments about the services, saving people from dealing with parking and traffic.

Chairman Kwasneski thanked Director Marcucci for serving as the Acting Chairman in his place at last month's Board of Directors meeting.

**Directors' Reports**

Director Arfa recognized the death of Jesse Jackson, saying he was a champion for everyone and there are countless examples of how he supported disability issues. She reported that last week, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities launched a report on disability data in partnership with the Chicago Department of Public Health as part of the Healthy Chicago Survey. The report is a great tool and includes four years of data on the types of disabilities and the number of people with disabilities in every Chicago neighborhood. The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities hopes to use the data to identify transportation access needs, barriers, and opportunities to work together. Director Arfa would love to see the survey and data be expanded across the region.

Director McLeod reported on attending a career day at a Hoffman Estates junior high to speak about municipal jobs. Pace representatives also attended to discuss Pace careers. He joined in mourning the passing of Reverend Jesse Jackson, who he said was a giant in American history.

Director Schielke reported on dynamic growth in Kane County. Hundreds of new houses are being built on the western edge of the county and in cities along the Fox River. Over 800 new houses have been built in Batavia since 2022. This could have a great impact on Pace services.

Director Wells extended his thoughts and prayers to the family of Reverend Jesse Jackson, saying that he was a national treasure. He reported on attending the Van Go ribbon cutting event

at University Park, which was very well-attended by local officials. He commented that University Park is a unique community as the last stop on the Metra Electric line, the home of Governors State University, and straddles Cook and Will Counties. University Park has experienced significant growth over the last couple years but is transit-starved. He and the Village of University Park are excited about Van Go making a big difference to people who need first mile/last mile transportation for their jobs. Van Go is another tool in the Pace tool box, and advances Pace's ReVision network revitalization initiative to expand into under-served areas.

Chairman Kwasneski commended University Park for proactively advocating for transit service and having so many local officials attend the event to support the service. He observed that most of the village is rural, and it is unfortunate that there is a far walk between Metra Electric and Governors State. Senator Joyce was excited about Pace expanding further and Van Go improving job access in south suburban towns. Chairman Kwasneski said that he discussed with Mayor Roudez the importance of University Park promoting the Van Go service.

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

Melinda Metzger thanked operations and maintenance staff for their professionalism and dependability operating service in extremely cold conditions. Melinda reported on her experience riding buses and that it was great to see riders being so grateful for a safe, warm ride on Pace.

Melinda reported that Pace will host celebrations at each operating division for Black History Month. Pace will also host a panel discussion with employees to share how their experiences have shaped the work they do every day. Melinda is proud of the diverse team at Pace and the input they provide the agency so that we can better serve our customers. She explained that as a public transit agency, Pace plays a unique role in connecting communities across the region. She commented that every service operated and every investment made has the potential to improve access for all. Black History Month provides an opportunity to recommit to advancing equity through the work we do every day.

Melinda recognized the passing of Reverend Jesse Jackson, who was a historic and influential voice in the fight for civil rights and social justice. His decades of advocacy touched our communities and the nation. Melinda shared her personal connection to the Reverend and passed her condolences on to his loved ones.

Melinda reported on Pace honoring the legacy of Rosa Parks during transit equity day, which is observed each year on her birthday. Transit agencies across the country reaffirm the belief that reliable, affordable transit connects people to jobs, education, and essential services, which strengthens communities and fosters economic growth. Pace reserved a seat for Rosa Parks on one bus per Division at the front where it belongs.

Melinda reported on a great University Park Van Go ribbon cutting with a lot of representation from local leaders. Pace is hopeful that the new Van Go service will generate good ridership and

provide a great option to get people to work. People can take the van to their work location, refuel it, and take it back to the Metra station during the evening. Pace will maintain the vehicles.

Melinda reported that Pace continues to work closely with regional partners on the NITA Act transition to ensure a smooth and orderly shift into the new governance structure. Pace senior leadership is serving on every working group committee, ensuring that Pace's passengers are represented as the system is realigned. There are five working groups for budget, fares, land use, service, and rider information. The working groups report their information and findings to a sixth, leadership working group. Melinda reported that Chairman Kwasneski and herself met with the Governor's Office with CTA and Metra to discuss next steps in the NITA Act transition. They will keep the Pace Board updated as the process progresses and key milestones are reached.

Melinda reported that the new funding brought in under the NITA Act provides stability to the transit system and allows Pace to continue service enhancements that expand transit access and strengthen connections across the region. In March, Pace will implement pilot service changes on six routes, which reflects Pace's ongoing commitment to meeting the evolving needs of our riders. These changes represent an additional 47,000 vehicle hours, over 350 new trips systemwide, and \$3.8 million in new service annually, which is included in the 2026 operating budget. It is reassuring that where Pace makes investments in service, it continues to experience ridership growth.

Melinda reported that yesterday, the Village of Niles and Pace reached an agreement to operate the Niles Free Bus again. Pace appreciates the continuation of a long-standing service. Melinda thanked the Mayor of Niles for his efforts, as well as Senator Villivalam, Senator Murphy, and Representative Michael Kelly who worked on this agreement. The Niles Free Bus should resume operations by early April. Before operations resume, Pace will supply Niles the equipment for the service and Niles will train drivers and maintenance staff.

Melinda reported on the return of express bus service to Soldier Field and Wrigley Field, which is a major expansion to Pace's overall family of services. Pace is seeing people return to its service and has the manpower to bring back the Wrigley Field Express. Pace will continue to look at opportunities to run more service on weekends.

Melinda reported on an upcoming ribbon cutting for the expansion of the Arlington Heights – Rolling Meadows On Demand service, made possible by last year's \$180,000 in funding from Cook County Invest in Cook grant. This expansion will double the size of the current service zone and will include major destinations such as Harper College and the Palatine Metra station. Cook County has long supported Pace services, and Pace is grateful for the continued investment that helps keep people connected to jobs, schools, and essential services.

Melinda provided an update on the ReVision network revitalization initiative. After this board meeting, the Pace Planning & Infrastructure Committee will convene to discuss the draft network plan, which has been developed based on public feedback, Board and stakeholder input, and consideration of the NITA Act funding mechanism. If the committee gives approval to move

forward with the latest draft, a full ReVision presentation will be made to the Pace Board in April. The additional funding that Pace receives through the NITA Act legislation allows Pace to increase service. Pace service increases will be coordinated with NITA's service plan, which will be developed by their new board of directors. The Pace ReVision plan will provide NITA with information about Pace's vision for the suburban system.

Melinda reported that in January, Pace provided approximately 6.5 million rides. System ridership was down approximately 6%, largely due to extreme cold weather. In addition, there was one less weekday which could swing monthly ridership by about 4%. Despite this, Pace continues to see ridership growth on fixed routes where pilot service improvements occurred. Pace saw an increase of 21% on nine pilots that were put into place in 2025.

Melinda reported on Pace continuing to focus on recruitment to get more buses out on the street. Since the last meeting, Pace hosted eight Hire-on-the-Spot events at Pace headquarters and South Campus attended by 204 interested candidates. Pace extended 65 offers.

Melinda reported that suburban service is favorable to budget. ADA service is unfavorable to budget, but this will be addressed when the RTA disperses additional funding required after the year end closes on their books.

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

None.

### **Approval of Consent Agenda**

**SBD #26-11 – Ordinance** authorizing Change Order No. 4 to Contract No. 234535 with Cummins, Inc. and Change Order No. 3 to Contract No. 234536 with Interstate Power Systems, Inc. for the repair of engines and transmissions. Those change orders increase the combined total of both Contracts from \$4,034,126.40 to \$5,384,126.40, an increase of \$1,350,000.00.

Director Marcucci moved, and Director McLeod 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.

For this vote, there was a technological audio issue that prevented Director Hastings and Director Noak from being heard to those present in the boardroom; however, both Director Hastings and Director Noak's votes were audible over the livestream.

### **Action Items**

**SBD #26-12 – Ordinance** authorizing the award of a contract to Gillig LLC for the purchase of 36 40-foot hybrid electric buses in an amount not to exceed \$46,753,236.00.

Lindsey Umek, Chief Operating Officer, presented. The buses will be placed at West Division. Pace is utilizing a State of Washington cooperative contract, which provides favorable pricing and terms. This generation of hybrids provides enhanced geofencing technology, allowing Pace to program vehicles to operate solely on battery power within pre-determined zones. Hybrid buses will allow Pace to replace vehicles beyond their useful life with vehicles that are better for the environment as Pace continues its transition to a zero-emission fleet. A phased transition allows Pace to continue progress on Project Zero while navigating challenges with bus manufacturers and obtaining the funding to upgrade facilities. These challenges are not unique to Pace, as peers across the country are taking a similar approach to transition their fleets.

Director Wells asked about the number of hybrid buses currently in Pace's fleet. Lindsey reported on two hybrid buses in service in Highland Park; 47 hybrid buses have arrived but are not yet in service while 33 more hybrid buses are expected in June. This contract award today will provide an additional 36 hybrid buses.

Director Smith asked about the support facilities required for compressed natural gas. Melinda reported on Pace's only CNG garage at South Division, which was the first facility that used an alternative to diesel. CNG has infrastructure requirements to compress gasoline and put it into specialized CNG-only buses. CNG was a great step towards reduced emission technology, but the whole transit industry is moving away from CNG and towards electric. North Division will be Pace's first all-electric facility and will give Pace more information about transitioning all the garages into all-electric facilities. Part of the problem is that Pace's fleet is aging, and Pace cannot delay replacing aging vehicles. Hybrid buses can be put into service now with no infrastructure requirements as a logical step towards zero emissions goals while Pace continues to build out electric facilities. Enhanced geofencing capabilities allow hybrid buses to run in electric mode so diesel fumes are not emitted in residential areas, and hybrid buses can change back to diesel mode on expressways or larger streets to recharge the batteries. The board of directors of Pace, RTA, and presumably NITA have or will approve the transition to electric fleets.

Chairman Kwasneski commented that he relies on the expertise of staff to determine what bus technologies to utilize in the pursuit of a zero-emission fleet.

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

For this vote, there was an audio issue that prevented Director Hastings and Director Noak from being heard to those present in the boardroom; however both Director Hastings and Director Noak's votes were audible over the livestream.

**SBD #26-13 – Ordinance** amending the 2026 Suburban Capital Budget (Capital Budget Amendment #1). This amendment adds federal Low-No funding in the amount of \$39,780,000

and reprogrammed state Paygo funding in the amount of \$7,020,000 for the purchase of 36 forty-foot hybrid buses to replace diesel buses that have met their useful life. This amendment results in an increase of \$46,800,000 to the 2026 Suburban Capital Budget, from \$76,084,531 to \$122,884,531.

Kris Skogsbakken, Department Manager of Capital Grants, presented.

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

For this vote, there was an audio issue that prevented Director Hastings and Director Noak from being heard to those present in the boardroom; however, both Director Hastings and Director Noak's votes were audible over the livestream.

**SBD #26-14 – Ordinance** authorizing the Executive Director of Pace to execute a First Amendment to Industrial Multi-Tenant Lease Agreement to extend the term of the lease for 76-92 N. Lively Boulevard, Suite No. 86, Elk Grove Village, IL, to February 28, 2030 with an option to renew the lease for an additional two-year term to February 29, 2032.

Josh Berger, Department Manager of Capital Infrastructure, presented.

Director Schielke 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.

For this vote, there was an audio issue that prevented Director Hastings and Director Noak from being heard to those present in the boardroom; however, both Director Hastings and Director Noak's votes were audible over the livestream.

Director Canning left the meeting at 10:17 a.m. He returned to the meeting at 10:19 a.m.

## **Issues/Discussion/Reports**

### March Service Changes

Erik Llewellyn, Chief Planning Officer, reported on the following service pilots to be implemented for the upcoming March pick:

- **Route 213** which operates along Green Bay Rd. between the Howard CTA Station and the Highland Park Metra Station – expanded hours of service on weekdays and weekends.

- **Route 315** which operates along Austin Blvd. between Lake St. and the CTA Green Line Austin Station in Chicago, and between Central Ave. and 38<sup>th</sup> St. in Cicero – extension of the route four miles to the CTA Orange Line, which will result in this route becoming a significant feeder for the Orange Line. The route extension will coincide with CTA’s planned enhancements to the Orange Line.
- **Route 349** which operates along Western Ave. between 79<sup>th</sup> St. in Chicago and the Harvey Transit Center – expanded hours of service and increased frequency on weekdays and weekends. The route expansion will prepare it for being a future Pulse corridor.
- **Route 350** which operates along Sibley Blvd. between the Harvey Transit Center and the Illinois-Indiana state line – expanded hours and increased frequency on weekends.
- **Route 507** which operates along Plainfield Rd. between the Joliet Transit Center and the Louis Joliet Mall – expanded hours and increased frequency on weekdays.
- **Route 755** – a bus on shoulder route departing from the Plainfield park-n-ride that operates along I-55 to the City of Chicago – addition of one new weekday inbound trip to address increased demand.

Director Canning asked for clarification on whether the 22 operators required to implement the service changes were current employees or needed to be recruited. He also compared the number of operators to the total change in annual vehicle hours and asked if the service changes would require drivers to work overtime. Melinda explained that some operators will be new employees and others will be existing operators taking on additional work. Erik further explained that when new trips are added, they are worked in to accommodate not only the new service, but also existing work. The goal is for all drivers to work within a regular 40-hour work week. Director Canning asked about the \$3.7 million total annual gross cost and what percentage of that is labor cost. Melinda reported that labor is the driver of cost of service - about 70%.

Director Smith complimented Pace staff for constantly examining current rider needs and readjusting. It would be easy to get complacent and just keep the same routes in place, but Pace staff constantly think of ways to innovate and improve. She looks forward to innovating in McHenry County in the coming years.

Chairman Kwasneski asked that Pace inform local legislators about service expansions and enhancements in their constituency, saying that the Governor’s Office was very interested in new service and how it is communicated. Melinda discussed how Pace will inform legislators, non-riders, and current riders.

Director Schielke left the meeting at 10:29 a.m. He returned to the meeting at 10:31 a.m.

## **Adjournment**

Chairman Kwasneski 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 Soto moved, and Director Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. All directors voted aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:32 a.m.

### **Reconvene**

Chairman Kwasneski reconvened the open session of the Pace Board of Directors meeting at 11:02 a.m.

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

Directors virtually present: Hastings and Noak.

Directors absent: None.

**SBD #26-15 – Resolution** approving the closed session meeting minutes of December 10, 2025.

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

**SBD #26-16 – Ordinance** approving action on Richard Pryor, Jr. v. Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority and Lashann Williams; 2024 L 007467.

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

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Director Schielke moved, and Director Soto seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote; all Directors voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, March 18, 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