



**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 18, 2026**

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority (“Pace”), met in open session on Wednesday, March 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 9:33 a.m.

### **Roll Call**

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

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

Directors absent: Carr and Schielke.

**SBD #26-17 – Resolution** approving the open session meeting minutes of February 18, 2026.

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

### **Public Comment**

Mike Archey, a DuPage County citizen, transit user, and low carbon solution provider apologized for breaching decorum at last month’s Board of Directors meeting. He asked that the Board ensure complete objective evaluation of bus technology options before finalizing

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*

procurements. He formally requested a meeting with board leadership and senior staff to present opportunities that his company offers to save Pace millions of dollars.

Director Schielke arrived at the meeting in person at 9:38 a.m.

Jean Johnson, on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind, Chicago Chapter Advocacy Committee, commented on the profound impact that the flexibility and timeliness of the TAP and RAP programs have had for the independent travel of the community of people with disabilities. TAP and RAP help bridge public transit gaps, and they provide stable transit to and from jobs and for daily self-care activities. Riders understand that rides had to be cut last year due to budget shortfalls, but advocacy committee members believed that the new funding under the NITA Act would allow TAP and RAP rides to be restored. The 30-ride limit is being maintained, and riders are not aware of plans to increase the number of rides. Riders appreciate all the support that Pace has given to the community of people with disabilities by offering TAP and RAP.

Director Carr arrived at the meeting in person at 9:40 a.m.

Debbie Pittman, on behalf of the Progress Center for Independent Living and concerned citizens of paratransit, commented that TAP and RAP are crucial programs that allow paratransit riders to have independent lives in the same way as everyone else. She asked that Pace strongly consider adding more monthly rides to TAP and RAP, especially since the community was led to believe that the ride limit was going to increase in January.

Chairman Kwasneski commented that TAP and RAP are some of the best service additions because they give the community of people with disabilities the flexibility to travel as anybody would travel. RTA has been dictating the parameters of the program and Pace has provided a cost analysis to RTA to identify how many more monthly trips can be offered while remaining within budget. Costs go up when TAP and RAP usage increases, but at the same time costs go down for traditional ADA paratransit service, which is more expensive to operate on a per trip basis. He believes Pace and RTA need to be cognizant of people who have jobs having enough TAP and RAP rides for the entire month. It is a challenging financial issue that the new NITA board will have to evaluate.

Executive Director Melinda Metzger commented that Pace is very much in favor of continuing the TAP and RAP programs and increasing the monthly ride limits. At their regularly scheduled board of directors meeting tomorrow, the RTA Board will discuss increasing the ride limit from 30 to 40 rides. Pace supports that increase and believes it will help riders maintain a regular work schedule. It is important that concerned riders attend tomorrow's RTA board meeting to express support for lifting the monthly ride cap.

Director Wells arrived at the meeting in person at 9:44 a.m.

## **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Kwasneski recognized Pace staff for Transit Employee Appreciation Day and appreciated staff working diligently to make transit the best it can be for riders.

Chairman Kwasneski reported on attending a press conference with Governor Pritzker at CSL Behring, a pharmaceutical company in Bradley, IL. The company is retaining its 1200 current positions and expanding to create an additional 300 jobs over the next three years. Pace has been working with the Governor's Office and Senator Joyce on providing transportation options from the University Park Metra Station to CSL Behring for anyone travelling to work at the facility. The service to CSL Behring is like Pace's partnerships with Amazon and UPS. The Governor's Office reached out to Pace and asked for service so the company can attract additional workers from the Chicagoland area. It is good to see an investment in Illinois and Pace looks forward to working with CSL Behring.

Chairman Kwasneski thanked Congressman Garcia and Congressman Krishnamoorthi for their community project funding grant awards to Pace. He thanked President Preckwinkle for Pace's Invest in Cook grant for the Northwest Cook On Demand expansion.

## **Directors' Reports**

Director Arfa thanked Jean Johnson and Debbie Pittman for coming to today's meeting to share their comments. It is very important that Pace continues to hear what the community of people with disabilities needs. For Transit Employee Appreciation Day, Director Arfa thanked Pace staff and senior leadership for their hard work and commitment to providing important accessible services across the region. She is glad there is a day to celebrate their work.

Director Canning thanked Jean Johnson and Debbie Pittman for their comments. He reported that the Pace board members who served as hearing officers in the fall for budget season were impressed by the number of people who attended the hearings to talk about TAP and RAP. It is important for board members to hear first-hand accounts about how TAP and RAP allow people to get to work and run businesses and to live their lives. He encouraged them to attend the RTA board meeting tomorrow. The Pace Board understands the importance of RAP and TAP and why riders are asking for more monthly rides but asked that they make sure RTA knows about it too.

Director Canning thanked transit workers for all they do every day. Director Canning reported that he and Director McLeod attended the Northwest Cook County On Demand service expansion ribbon cutting held in Rolling Meadows. Director Canning said it may have been Pace's most well-attended event with approximately 90 people in attendance including the Cook County President, several Cook County Commissioners, and members of the Illinois House and Senate. Many attendees wanted to express their gratitude for realizing a longtime dream to expand On Demand service in northwest Cook County. Director Canning reported that he and Director Smith attended a press conference with Congressman Krishnamoorthi to thank him for

an \$840,000 grant for transit signal priority (“TSP”) equipment along Golf Road, expanding TSP to non-Pulse routes. Director Canning complimented Pace staff on doing a great job organizing and running events, and appreciated how the creativity of staff reflects so well on Pace.

Director Noak arrived at the meeting in person at 9:52 a.m.

Director Carr reported that as the Pace Board’s Audit Liaison, Pace’s external auditors, Crowe LLC, are meeting with him to discuss financial information. So far everything in the audit looks good. He will provide an update on that meeting with Crowe LLC next month. He thanked the entire Pace staff, especially Chief Internal Auditor Colette Thomas Gordon, for doing an amazing job.

Director Marcucci could not agree more with Jean Johnson and Debbie Pittman’s comments about TAP and RAP and how important it is that the Pace Board hear riders’ perspectives. Director Marcucci was amazed to learn while serving as a hearing officer in the fall, about how reducing the ride limits on TAP and RAP had a big impact on riders’ lives. The Americans with Disabilities Act calls for bringing the community of people with disabilities into society. It is clear that with only 30 TAP and RAP rides per month, someone could lose their job. He does not think 40 rides will be enough but believes it is an important step in the right direction now, and we can discuss additional rides later. TAP and RAP ride limits have been on his radar for several months and the Pace Board will continue to work on this issue on riders’ behalf.

Director McLeod commented that the folks who use the TAP and RAP programs are much more effective advocates than Pace staff, as they are the people who are intimately affected. It is so important that riders share their stories with the RTA Board. He thanked all Pace employees for their hard work, saying that the Pace Board gets a lot of credit that belongs to the staff who do the work on the ground. He reported that the Northwest Cook County On Demand expansion, which included more suburbs and Harper College, is a great improvement. He complimented Commissioner Trevor on making the service expansion her crusade and accomplishing her goal.

Director Noak reported that TAP and RAP are great programs that Pace staff have created and wishes programs like these existed when he was growing up with parents who had mobility disability issues. The Pace Board would love to see the programs become more available and will hopefully get that support from the RTA Board and the new NITA Board. He reported on the annual Will County Pathway to Professions career event, hosted in Romeoville. He thanked Pace for being one of the nearly 100 different employers that participated and for doing a great job.

Director Schielke reported on participating in Kane County DOT meetings to discuss widening I-88 from Route 59 in DuPage County to Route 47 in western Kane County and incorporating bus on shoulder service. He reported on some new mayors getting elected to office in Kane County that do not support new housing developments and favor slowing or stopping growth in their towns. He reported that Governor Pritzker has introduced a proposal in which the State of Illinois may take over zoning control from municipalities. Cities have been divided concerning that idea.

Mayors' groups across the region have been meeting to discuss the implications and are planning trips to Springfield to advocate.

Director Smith reiterated her strong support for expanding TAP and RAP and encouraged riders to be vocal about the ride limits with RTA. She extended her deep appreciation for Pace's outstanding staff. She thanked the staff who put together Pace events and ribbon cuttings, saying she is humbled by how easy they make the hard work look.

Director Soto recalled how she thought that the TAP and RAP ride reduction from 8 per day to 30 per month was drastic and questioned RTA how they arrived at that number. RTA is responsible for financial oversight, and it was clear that 30 trips was a financial decision that did not consider the quality of life of riders and ADA requirements. She agreed with Director Marcucci that 40 rides are not enough but is a good place to start. It is important that RTA hear and understand comments from riders and know that the fare increase is not the issue. She fully supports the TAP and RAP expansion. The transition of the RTA Board becoming the NITA Board means that priorities might change and more time and consideration may be given to these issues. Director Soto recognized the great work of the staff who put on ribbon cutting events and also commented that she was impressed with the behind the scenes work running the garages with the mechanics and dispatchers.

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

Melinda thanked board members for recognizing Transit Employee Appreciation Day, saying that the excellent work of staff ensures that service remains safe, reliable, and responsive. Pace staff make the hard work look easy. Pace receives dozens of commendations every day.

Melinda recognized Pace's twenty-six 2025 Pacesetter Award recipients. Employees are nominated by managers for going above and beyond for riders, for their superb work ethic and leadership skills, and for being dependable, motivated, innovative, helpful, and professional.

Melinda reported that Pace hosted a Black History Month discussion with employee panelists sharing how their experiences have shaped their work providing transit and opportunity for the region. Pace employees also donated seven warehouse-sized pallets worth of clothing for Wings, a local not-for-profit serving people whose lives have been disrupted by domestic violence. Wings reported that they had never seen an organization donate so much. The overwhelming response highlights Pace's commitment to service and community.

Melinda recognized how Pace's diverse workforce has helped shape the agency over the past 40 years. From when Melinda started her career to today, she is proud of how many women are now in various leadership roles throughout all levels of public transportation, including Director Arfa, Director Smith, and Director Soto on the Pace Board of Directors.

Melinda reported that Pace is excited about the opportunities that the CSL Behring expansion presents to Pace. Pace is ready to help get employees from the Chicago region down to the work

location. Pace held a ribbon cutting last month for a new Van Go service at the University Park Metra Station. Pace will also look at adding a new bus route to that location.

Melinda reported that Pace received two federal 2026 community project funding grants supporting TSP installations on key arterial corridors in suburban Cook County. In February, Pace joined Congressman Garcia to celebrate a \$250,000 grant for TSP along North Avenue in west Cook County, which is one of several TSP projects that Congressman Garcia has supported over the years. On Monday, Pace joined Congressman Krishnamoorthi to celebrate an \$840,000 grant for TSP at 30 locations along Golf Road. Melinda thanked Director Canning and Director Smith for attending that event and thanked the Paratransit Division led by Lindsey Umek for preparing the venue, Doug Sullivan and Maggie Skogsbakken for planning the event, and Taqhi Mohammed for spearheading TSP projects throughout the region.

Melinda reported on the ribbon cutting celebrating the Northwest Cook County On Demand service expansion, made possible with an Invest in Cook grant. Pace's participating municipal partners from Rolling Meadows, Arlington Heights, Palatine, Mount Prospect, and Harper College were there to celebrate the expansion, as well as Cook County President Preckwinkle, Representative Canty, Representative Syed, Representative Grasse, Commissioner Trevor, Commissioner Britton, Commissioner Morrison, and Mayor Sanoica. All attendees were excited to start the service expansion. A second On Demand vehicle is in operation now and Pace is already seeing an increase in ridership.

Melinda reported that Pace is building on the long-term sustainable funding provided through the NITA legislation by advancing a series of pilot projects and service changes designed to improve bus frequency on weekends, late nights, and in high use corridors, and to strengthen connections to CTA, Metra, and other Pace services. Collectively, this new service on the street adds over 50,000 additional service hours on 353 new trips systemwide. This expansion will better align service levels with demonstrated rider demand. These targeted investments reflect Pace's commitment to strengthen regional connectivity, support transit in the suburbs, expand access, and develop a more equitable transit network. Melinda thanked the Pace Board for supporting Pace staff as we continue to put out more new service.

Melinda reported that staff continue to work closely with regional partners through various working groups to support a smooth and orderly transition to NITA. She and the Chairman continue to meet regularly with the Governor's Office as well as Metra and CTA leadership to coordinate next steps in the lead up to the NITA legislation going into effect on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Melinda reported that the system provided approximately 1.7 million rides in February 2026, which represents a ridership increase of 1.4% over February 2025. February 2026 ridership is approximately 71% of 2019 ridership levels and is about 2,000 rides higher than the February 2025 weekday daily average of the previous year.

Melinda reported that Pace continues to see ridership growth on the nine fixed routes in which pilot service improvements were made in 2025. Ridership on those services increased 22% from

53,921 rides in February 2025 to 65,804 rides in February 2026. When Pace invests in more frequent service, late night service, and weekend service, we see results. Pace will continue service expansions because it is good for the system and good for our riders.

Melinda reported that recruitment continues to be a major focus. Pace hosted eight Hire-on-the-Spot events since the last board meeting, drew 212 interested candidates, and extended offers to 66 employees who are in training now.

Given current events in the Middle East, Melinda reported that Pace budgeted for 2026 diesel fuel at \$2.67 per gallon. Right now, Pace is paying \$3.55 per gallon. If the trend continues, Pace expects to exceed the fuel budget by \$5 million. Pace will continue to monitor the effect on the budget. Both suburban service and ADA paratransit are presently within budget.

### **Action Items**

**SBD #26-18 – Resolution** honoring the life and legacy of Reverend Jesse Jackson.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Noak seconded a motion, to approve the Resolution. 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 #26-19 – Resolution** commemorating Transit Employee Appreciation Day.

Director Noak moved, and Director McLeod seconded a motion, to approve the Resolution. 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 #26-20 – Ordinance** authorizing Board Member and Corporate Authority travel and business expenses for February 2026 pursuant to Public Act 099-0604 Local Government Travel Expense Control Act – Richard A. Kwasneski.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Marcucci 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. Chairman Kwasneski abstained. All other directors voted aye.

**SBD #26-21 – Ordinance** authorizing the award of a contract to Gannett Fleming Architects, Inc. for architectural and engineering services at Northwest Division and Fox Valley Division for garage roof replacements and exterior building repairs in an amount not to exceed \$563,267.00.

Josh Berger, Department Manager of Capital Infrastructure, presented.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Soto 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 #26-22 – Ordinance** authorizing Change Order No. 15 to Contract No. 232351 with Path Construction Company for adjustments to the office space and equipment in connection with the construction of the Pace South Campus Acceptance Facility and Office Building. The change order extends the Contract for 161 days to August 31, 2026 and increases the Contract total from \$39,829,838.70 to \$40,674,199.51, an increase of \$844,360.81.

Josh Berger, Department Manager of Capital Infrastructure, presented.

Director Smith moved, and Director Soto 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**

Chairman Kwasneski encouraged Directors to review the January 2026 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 Soto moved, and Director Canning seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote; all Directors voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, April 15, 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