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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
April 15, 2026

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority (“Pace”), met in open session on Wednesday, April 15, 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 9:31 a.m.

Roll Call

Directors physically present: Canning, Carr, Guerin, Marcucci, McLeod, Noak, and Chairman Kwasneski.

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

Directors absent: Arfa and Wells.

Director Arfa arrived at the meeting in person at 9:33 a.m.

Director Wells arrived at the meeting in person at 9:45 a.m.

SBD #26-23 – Resolution approving the open session meeting minutes of March 18, 2026.

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

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*

Public Comment

None.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Kwasneski reported that he and Executive Director Melinda Metzger, along with CTA and Metra leadership, continue to work with the Governor's Office on the transition to the Northern Illinois Transit Authority ("NITA") Act legislation, including determining how the service boards will interact with the NITA Board. Pace looks forward to a smooth transition.

Chairman Kwasneski highlighted the ReVision update on today's agenda. He stressed the importance of the Pace Board hearing this update and how ReVision will align with the NITA transition, keeping in mind that ReVision implementation will happen after new board appointments to Pace, CTA, Metra and NITA are made by September. The new Pace Board and NITA Board will determine Pace service planning in the future. CTA and Metra are working on similar long-term service plans.

Directors' Reports

Director Carr reported that he and Colette Thomas Gordon, Chief Internal Auditor, met with Christine Torres and Hollis Hanson-Pollock from Crowe, LLP, Pace's external auditors. They discussed audits currently in progress. Crowe is scheduled to attend the June 2026 Pace Board meeting to present the full results of the external audit.

Director Smith reported on her meeting with Melinda, Lindsey Umek, and Scott Hennings, the Executive Director of the McHenry County Department of Transportation, to discuss the contract award for McHenry County paratransit service and the paratransit call center of several counties. The purpose of the meeting was to understand the future flexibility that the contract provides Pace in adapting to changes to the ReVision plan over the course of the ten-year contract. Director Smith stated her support for the contract after this productive discussion.

Executive Director's Report

Melinda recognized Earth Day and our shared responsibility to live sustainably. Public transit plays a vital role in improving air quality and offering alternatives to single occupancy vehicles.

Melinda reported that she, Mayor Alpogianis of Niles, and Illinois State Senator Villivalam held an event to announce that the Niles Free Bus is back, which will help connect Pace fixed routes and the greater Niles community. Service on Routes 410, 411, and 412 were reinstated on April 1st with smaller 14-passenger vehicles, which are a better fit for the streets of Niles.

Melinda reported that Pace met with Illinois State Senator Seth Lewis and several agencies who serve people with disabilities including Aspire, Little Friends, Parents Alliance Employment Project, Ray Graham Association, AutonomyWorks, workNet DuPage, and Addison Public

Library. It was a good meeting that gave Pace the opportunity to have a dialog with stakeholders on the available programs people can use to travel to their jobs and how Pace can better serve our riders with disabilities. Pace looks forward to having an ongoing dialog on this topic.

Melinda reported that Pace is adding service enhancements with the June service pick to improve span and frequency on Routes 330, 331, 364, 381, 383, 501, 550, 554, 850, 851, and 855. The service enhancements will add over 60,000 annual vehicles hours and require 44 additional operators. Pace's goal is to add 60,000 hours of service every quarter.

Melinda reported that Pace is launching two additional VanGo sites within the next month. A new VanGo at the Geneva Metra Station will offer connections between the Union Pacific West line and General Mills, Smithfield, and the Kirk Road Industrial Corridor. A new VanGo at the Pingree Road Metra Station in Crystal Lake will offer connections between the Union Pacific Northwest line and Styker, Snap-on Tools, and Mercy Health. Pace also introduced VanGo locations in Joliet and University Park in 2026. VanGo has been extremely innovative and beneficial in addressing first and last mile transportation needs. Pace looks forward to implementing more VanGo service.

Melinda reported that 47 new hybrid buses will enter Pace's fleet next month and will be placed at Heritage, North Shore, and Northwest divisions. The hybrid buses will replace diesel buses that have reached the end of their useful lives (at least 12 years with approximately 500,000 miles).

Melinda reported that the RTA Board is considering a \$132.2 million budget amendment to fund rider-facing improvements mandated by the NITA Act. The funds would be divided between the operating agencies as follows: \$64 million for CTA, \$22 million for Metra, \$14 million for Pace, and \$37 million for RTA or NITA. Pace would use the funds to implement Saturday and Sunday service at the collar county garage divisions, which Pace has never had the money to do previously. Pace is seeking to offer a consistent service schedule between weekdays and weekends across the service area to make service more convenient and appealing, and to make people want to use transit. In the past, when Pace has made weekday and weekend service consistent, ridership has grown.

Melinda reported that she will testify before the Illinois House Appropriations Public Safety and Infrastructure Committee regarding Pace's 2026 budget and capital priorities. Her testimony will highlight what the sustainable funding provided by the General Assembly makes possible, including service additions that Pace is implementing for fixed route, On Demand, and Vanpool.

Melinda reported that in March, the Pace system provided 1.91 million rides, which is over 70% of 2019 pre-Covid ridership levels. Pace express bus service on I-55 and I-90, as well as Pulse routes, continue to experience ridership growth with average weekday ridership up 15%. Pace is observing good ridership increases on routes with recent service enhancements.

Melinda reported that Pace held eight Hire-on-the-Spot events in April at Pace Headquarters and South Campus in Markham, which resulted in 65 offers. Pace also hosted an event at River Division in Elgin and Heritage Division in Joliet to attract new drivers from other areas.

Melinda reported that Pace suburban service and ADA paratransit service are favorable to budget. Staff are continuing to monitor fuel expenses given the volatility of the market. This week, diesel fuel was \$4.20 per gallon compared to the \$2.67 per gallon that Pace had budgeted.

Melinda previewed items on today's agenda and thanked Directors Guerin, Smith, Soto, Wells, and Canning of the Planning & Infrastructure Committee ("Committee") for their invaluable input, interest, and support during committee meetings to discuss ReVision.

Director Marcucci and Melinda discussed the expensive cost of the infrastructure to support zero-emission electric buses compared to hybrid buses, which do not require infrastructure upgrades, but are not zero-emissions. Hybrid buses use a combination of diesel fuel and electric battery power and can be geocoded to operate all-electric in residential areas to reduce pollution.

Approval of Consent Agenda

SBD #26-24 – Ordinance authorizing Change Order No. 2 to Contract No. 234179 with GIRO INC./LE GROUPE EN INFORMATIQUE ET RECHERCHE OPERATIONNELLE for HASTUS software maintenance and support services. The change order extends the Contract for one year and increases the Contract total from \$527,188.00 to \$717,584.00, an increase of \$190,396.00.

SBD #26-25 – Ordinance authorizing Change Order No. 2 to Contract No. 233305 with Metropolitan Fire Protection, Inc. for scheduled inspections, testing, maintenance, and authorized repairs of the water-based fire protection system at Pace facilities. The change order increases the Contract total from \$498,355.00 to \$671,612.00, an increase of \$173,257.00.

SBD #26-26 – Ordinance authorizing Change Order No. 2 to Contract No. 232926 with The Segal Company (Midwest), Inc. for group health and welfare benefit and budget consulting services. The change order increases the Contract total from \$590,150.00 to \$723,275.00, an increase of \$133,125.00.

Director Noak 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.

Action Items

SBD #26-27 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to First Transit, Inc. for paratransit transportation and Northern Mobility Management Call Center services in McHenry County in an amount not to exceed \$82,995,591.18.

Lindsey Umek, Chief Operating Officer, presented. The contract will cover ADA paratransit for McHenry County, call center services for Lake, northwest Cook, and McHenry counties, the MCRide countywide dial-a-ride, and three fixed routes that operate during peak times.

Director Canning inquired about the annual cost of the call center doubling. Lindsey Umek explained that when the contract was previously awarded in 2016, the call center received 16,000 reservation calls and today receives 30,000. Lindsey Umek reviewed positions included in the contract to cover the increased workload and noted that hourly staff rates have not been adjusted since pre-Covid. Pace continues to consolidate call centers to help riders cross county boundaries.

Director Smith thanked Lindsey Umek for answering questions during the meeting with McHenry County officials explaining the cost-of-living adjustment over the course of the ten-year contract, which helped clarify the difference between the original contract and new contract values.

Director McLeod moved, and Director Smith 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 #26-28 – Ordinance adopting Pace’s 2026 Internal Audit Plan.

Colette Thomas Gordon, Chief Internal Auditor, presented. She thanked Director Carr, Pace Audit Board Liaison, for his work. Chairman Kwasneski congratulated the Pace Internal Audit team for working well with Pace departments to anticipate and prepare for external audits and FTA audits, which have always gone well.

Director Wells moved, and Director Guerin 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.

Issues/Discussion/Reports

Daniel Costantino, Vice President of Jarrett Walker and Associates (“JWA”) consultant, provided an update on ReVision, Pace’s systemwide restructuring plan. Melinda prefaced the report explaining that the new NITA legislation aims to enhance regional service coordination through new funding processes, which will now be dictated by NITA regional service standards instead of a funding formula. The ongoing ReVision discussion on frequent ridership-oriented service and hourly coverage-oriented service is especially relevant given that the new NITA service standards favor high ridership services. Therefore, the Committee guided a redesign of

ReVision to emphasize ridership while still improving coverage to ensure compliance with anticipated NITA service standards and funding requirements.

Melinda reported that in the long term, NITA will review and refine Pace's ReVision plan, along with the service plans for CTA and Metra, and integrate all service plans into a single regional plan and coordinated system. The integrated NITA plan will go out to public comment. Based on the extensive input that Pace received from the public and partners, Pace is confident that ReVision is well-positioned to align with NITA's vision. ReVision is a flexible service plan and performance benchmark, designed to remain responsive to new metrics and policies. The ReVision plan presented today is not final.

Daniel Costantino recapped the two-year ReVision project thus far and explained why the plan is being adjusted. In response to public input on ridership and coverage concepts, the Pace Board provided direction to allocate increased funding in Pace 60% towards coverage and 40% towards ridership, and to significantly increase weekend service. This recommendation happened before the new NITA Act established how funding would be distributed, which will be based on service standards that encourage service in busy, dense, and walkable areas with the most high-need populations. Therefore, JWA reached out to the Committee and asked if the Pace Board wanted to adjust the direction of the plan. The Committee advised that Pace should shift the focus of the ReVision plan to approximately 70% of new investment going towards ridership-oriented service and 30% towards coverage-oriented service, but to build a network that responds to the public input received and ensure that Pace is providing growth in every part of the region, particularly those parts that have been historically under-invested.

Daniel Costantino explained that Pace service has been historically deeply underfunded and as a result, the Pace network offers limited coverage and very low frequent service. Today, only 42% of the suburban population live within a half mile of transit, and only 4% of suburban residents live within a half mile of frequent service that runs every 15 minutes or better.

Daniel Costantino stated that the ReVision study shows what the Pace network could look like if it received a 50% increase in funding, or \$150 million annually, resulting in 50% service growth compared to 2024. Service was increased in every part of the region, by 40% above what exists today in Cook County and 60% on average in the collar counties. In Cook County, the new service would make less frequent routes run more frequently. Within collar counties, service upgrades would make hourly routes run every 30 minutes and add new hourly coverage routes and On Demands.

Daniel Costantino presented the new ReVision draft network map for weekdays during the midday. The plan introduces fixed routes on several new corridors in places that have been built out for bus service, and which are long overdue for fixed route service. Total coverage of Pace service increases, but not dramatically, from 42% to 43% of suburban residents within a half-mile of transit. The number of people near frequent service in all parts of the service area improves dramatically, almost tripling the number of residents who live within a half-mile of frequent service, from 4% to 11% of suburban residents.

Daniel Costantino compared the midday map to the peak hours map. Currently, Pace provides more service on weekdays during morning and afternoon rush hours than midday, following historic travel patterns. ReVision proposes adding more midday service so that you do not need to add more peak service to achieve a 50% service increase. As a result, the midday map matches existing peak level service. A world-class transit system provides people with a level of service that they can rely on, with a bus available at the same frequency every day of the week.

Daniel Costantino reported that service coverage on weekends dramatically increases, more than doubling the number of people near transit service from 18% to 39%, which addresses a historical service problem of low or no weekend service in the suburbs.

Public input on whether residents preferred frequent service or coverage service was divided and largely influenced by where people lived, but what was heard universally from all parts of the region was a strong interest in a consistent level of service seven days per week. Pace is moving forward now by using the increase in funding through the RTA budget amendment to open satellite city garages on weekends.

Daniel Costantino shared key findings from the access analysis, which examined every part of the region and identified if people without a car can get to more or fewer places using transit after the Pace network redesign. The analysis found that ReVision would dramatically improve median access within 60 minutes for suburban residents. The analysis also found that access to jobs increases by 78%, to shopping destinations by 69%, and to schools by 61%. This access increase allows people to get to a lot more places than currently, giving people more options and a lot more reasons to use transit.

In conclusion, Daniel Costantino reported that the overall outcomes of the revised draft ReVision plan are big increases in access to destinations (ridership), modest increases in total number of people near transit (coverage), and massive increases in the number of people near transit on weekends. The plan is ready to go out for public comment, but Pace will wait for NITA to be established and provide next steps to coordinate with the other service boards.

Director Arfa commended the more consistent service across all days of the week, which will be helpful for so many people and their ability to travel independently. She was impressed by the difference that a small increase in Sunday service would make for so many.

Director Noak believes that the additional weekend coverage is an excellent addition to the plan. However, the plan does not connect areas that need jobs to emerging areas of job growth and the additional service is predominantly concentrated in Cook County. He specifically pointed out the lack of service improvements in McHenry County. He requested a breakdown of the service changes and increases by individual county. Melinda commented that Pace wants to provide the service that everybody needs and wants, but even a \$150 million increase in funding, as requested and accounted for in the ReVision plan, would not cover every service improvement that Pace would like to make. ReVision is a step forward.

Director Marcucci reported that he was impressed by the initial direction of the ReVision plan to lean towards coverage in the underserved collar counties and is now surprised and concerned that the direction of the plan is changing to favor ridership in Cook County. Specifically, he is concerned that DuPage County, which helps raise the most taxes for the service area and helped encourage the passage of the NITA Act to get more transit funding, initially appears to have a decrease in residents' access to transit, even though on average service and ridership increases across the region. He agreed with Director Noak about reviewing the service changes by county.

Melinda discussed how the new NITA funding mechanisms will work, which favors high ridership and the walkability of communities. If Pace does not orient service towards ridership, Pace will not receive increased funding, which is why the ReVision plan is being reoriented. With that being said, the ReVision plan still ensures that each county will receive a 50% increase in service and funding.

Chairman Kwasneski pointed out that Pace is trying to figure out how to move forward under the NITA Act and get the most funding possible based on what NITA will be evaluating. If Pace can secure more funding by scoring high on ridership, then Pace can collaborate with the counties on how to use the additional funding to implement service that works in each county, provided that Pace builds up ridership now. With many changes happening under NITA, it is important to have voices from the collar counties as part of the conversation. That is why some service board members will also serve on the NITA Board. The collar counties need to be involved.

Director Noak complimented Pace staff for their excellent work and acknowledged that the new ReVision map is trying to accomplish the best possible outcome for the service area given the confines of the NITA legislation. However, he pointed out that in addition to the collar counties, some sections of Cook County, particularly South Cook, also have been historically under-invested in and proportionately are not getting as much investment as we would want to achieve. This is an unintended consequence of the legislation that some areas are still getting left behind.

Director Soto commented on making the decision to redraw the ReVision map, as a member of the Committee. While the NITA Act has good intentions, it should serve as a starting point to discuss regional issues because there is still so much that needs to be addressed. It is good that the new NITA Board will have Pace representation, because they will be responsible for shepherding policy decisions that dictate how future funding will be distributed, which is currently unknown. She believes concerns will be addressed, but Pace representatives on the NITA Board must make their case and use ReVision to paint a picture of other considerations as NITA establishes direction for the region. The NITA Board will have a lot of work to do once created. It is a lot of change, and it will be a process.

Erik Llewellyn, Chief Planning Officer, explained how the NITA Act introduces new metrics to evaluate the service boards that did not exist previously, which dictates how funding will be distributed. For the first few years of the NITA Act being in effect, each of the service boards will be funded at their 2025 levels, and any remaining funding will be distributed based on how

each of the service boards performs based on unlinked passenger trips, passenger miles travelled, vehicle revenue hours, and vehicle revenue miles. The two measures that pertain to ridership are unlinked passenger trips and passenger miles travelled. Going forward, NITA will develop service standards which must include these measures, but how each measure is weighed still has to be determined by NITA. The legislation suggests that the future service standards should address population density, employment density, low-income populations, disabled populations, zero-car households, intersection density, and the presence of sidewalks, which are all measures that lend themselves towards a ridership-oriented network.

Melinda added that she and Erik Llewellyn have been meeting with county officials to update them on the legislation and to explain the measures that will determine future funding. It is important that the collar counties speak up to ensure that they get their share of the funding, because the measures favor ridership and Cook County. Director Marcucci clarified that the presentations to the collar counties emphasized the additional service that the ReVision plan could bring to their areas, but not how average transit access may decrease in favor of more direct routes that increase ridership. Melinda stated that Pace anticipates adjusting the ReVision plan based on public comment received, once NITA determines when the public comment process can begin.

Daniel Costantino commented on how Pace arrived at the ReVision maps presented today. The Pace Board's original direction was to lean the ReVision plan towards coverage, but that plan did not have a mechanism to capture the new funding criteria created under the NITA Act. JWA and Pace staff consulted with the Committee, who agreed that the best way forward is to reorient the plan towards ridership to better position Pace to secure a reasonable share of new transit funding for suburban needs, so the suburbs are not forgotten or neglected. Inevitably there is tension at play between state directives and what individual board members representing counties and communities are advocating for their constituents. That tension will keep playing out at a regional level as the NITA Act prioritizes more regional coordination and decision-making. There is still so much up in the air that needs to be negotiated as a new board is coming into being and establishing new service standards.

Daniel Costantino pointed out that the ReVision plan guarantees every county a significant service increase, at least a 50% increase over the service that exists today, to ensure growth in every part of the region, particularly those parts that have been historically under-invested. The plan still needs to go out for public comment to learn what might need to change. The Pace Board's input is highly relevant and welcomed.

Director Smith, a member of the Committee, reported that her initial reaction to the redesign of the map towards ridership was negative, especially as the representative of McHenry County, which is the most extreme example of the need for coverage, and which already pays more RTA taxes than it receives in service. However, after carefully reviewing the new map, she was pleasantly surprised by the balanced approach taken to enhance service everywhere in the region and by the significant service increases in McHenry County, which will offer better service than what exists today. She commended the thoughtful analysis of JWA, saying that the breakdown

by county showing where the service increases are, as well as the access analysis, help illustrate the positive impacts. The new map represents a compromise that allows Pace to obtain funding within the new legislation, but also increases coverage. Though the Committee made the decision to redraw the ReVision map, all Pace Directors still need to understand in detail what the ReVision plan means for each of the counties they represent.

Director Smith clarified that while she was pleased to see an increase in frequency on one of McHenry County's most important fixed routes and increases in coverage on Sunday, she has long-term concerns about funding On Demand and dial-a-ride, particularly for counties like McHenry that rely less on fixed routes that generate high ridership and more on coverage service. County level discussions and public hearings will be critical. The general approach to funding under the NITA Act, that funding follows ridership, will always disadvantage the collar counties; this will be a problem that does not go away and needs to be addressed.

Director Noak commented that the ReVision map presented today seems like a reinvestment of the service that already exists. He agreed that expanding weekend service and offering a more consistent frequent schedule are good goals, but we are not planning for or receiving the funding necessary to be visionary, which means extending routes into areas that do not have service today and connecting people that need jobs to areas that have jobs. There are other goals still out there for areas that need investment; we need to continue discussing those goals and need to find a way to achieve them. An increase from serving a very small portion of the suburban population to serving slightly more, while still an increase, does not necessarily accomplish what the general public and the region really want to see in a truly visionary plan.

Chairman Kwasneski commented that transit in the region is in a transitional state. This board could take a position now that might be irrelevant moving forward if different representatives are serving. That is why communication with the counties now is so important. We need to work on ways to provide service in the collar counties, knowing that fixed route is not always the answer.

Melinda commented that Pace has such a large service area and limited resources that there are still parts of the region that have no service. However, Pace has a history of being innovative because it has been historically underfunded, creating VanGo, vanpool, and On Demand to fill needs. Pace is prepared to continue to find innovative ways to bring transit to residents, and Pace wants the collar counties' input on how to do it. The ADA paratransit service area is determined by the fixed route network, so adding more fixed route service expands the ADA service area.

Chairman Kwasneski suggested that there needs to be dedicated funding or a mechanism to ensure that innovative or unique services that cover important service gaps in parts of Cook County and the collar counties are funded. A dedicated distribution of funds for innovative coverage services is the first conversation that should happen once NITA is created.

Director Noak praised the Chairman's idea of asking for a way to set aside funding for innovative growth areas and services. As these issues are formulating and being identified with the start of NITA, it is good to have these dialogues right now so that we understand how the

funding mechanisms impact and implicate the ability to achieve different goals. That is the benefit of having service boards that represent voices from all areas of the region.

Director Canning, who serves as the Chairman of the Committee, thanked fellow Directors for the discussion; this is precisely what the Committee hoped would occur. It became clear during Committee meetings that the full Pace Board needs to hear this presentation and see the maps and the numbers for their respective areas to understand the need to redraw the ReVision map to best position Pace to secure the most funding for suburban service.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Director Noak moved, and Director Smith 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, May 20, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace corporate headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Elissa Ledvort
Board Secretary, Board of Directors