



**Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Northern Illinois Transit Authority
(successor in interest to the Regional Transportation Authority)
550 West Algonquin Road
Arlington Heights, Illinois
Minutes of the Open Session Meeting of the Pace Board of Directors
May 20, 2026**

The Board of Directors of Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority (“Pace”), met in open session on Wednesday, May 20, 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 9:32 a.m.

Roll Call

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

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

Directors absent: Carr.

Director Carr arrived at the meeting in person at 9:49 a.m.

SBD #26-29 – Resolution approving the open session meeting minutes of April 15, 2026.

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

Public Comment

None.

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 reported on Pace's participation in community events throughout the service area. A few weeks ago, Pace participated in a Route 66 100th anniversary baseball game at the Old Joliet Prison. He invited board members to join Pace staff at the upcoming Elgin Pride Parade, the Aurora Pride Parade, and the Chicago Disability Pride Parade. Pace will hold summer picnics at each garage division this summer to celebrate employees and their great work.

Chairman Kwasneski reported that Pace continues to work with the Governor's Office on the NITA transition and the changing functions of the service boards. As a result, there are some adjustments to how Pace typically procures buses. Today, the Pace Board will authorize a smaller number of vehicles than usual to obtain the vehicles that are needed now, anticipating that the new NITA Board will provide direction and authorize bus stock for the whole region in the future. Chairman Kwasneski reported on how many electric bus companies have gone out of business or have been acquired over the last five years. Pace is still waiting for an order of electric buses made in 2021. This is an industry-wide issue bigger than Pace, which warranted APTA to create a task force to determine ways to help electric bus companies. Parts suppliers are not able to stay in business, which affects the supply chain. Chairman Kwasneski encouraged Directors to review APTA's report on fleet electrification.

Directors' Reports

Director Arfa invited Directors to attend Chicago's Disability Pride Parade in July and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities digital accessibility event to celebrate Global Accessibility Awareness Day.

Director Marcucci reported on working with DuPage County Board Member Brian Krajewski to expedite a bus shelter removal to accommodate an ongoing redevelopment project in downtown Downers Grove. DuPage County Board Member Krajewski and Director Marcucci praised Pace staff for their responsiveness. Director Marcucci commented that this is a great example of how the Pace Board represents communities and counties and helps the Pace Chairman, appointing authorities, and counties get things done.

Director Schielke reported on a Kane County Chronicle article that mistakenly reported that population growth in Batavia had slowed down. He invited the reporter to visit the new senior living communities and subdivisions that have been built since 2022, bringing 900+ residents to the city. He is proud that the Pace staff and Board are serving a real need in Kane County for dial-a-ride service, which is extremely popular and utilized by new residents. He hopes that any new Pace board members understand the importance of dial-a-ride and advocate for the program.

Director Soto reported that she, Executive Director Melinda Metzger, and Erik Llewellyn attended a Lake County Public Works and Transportation Committee meeting to provide an update on Pace's ReVision study. Director Soto reported on a great discussion about recent service expansions in Lake County. The Lake County Public Works and Transportation

Committee members asked good questions about the policies and procedures that need to be determined by the new NITA Board and were grateful for the information that Pace provided about the NITA Act. Director Soto emphasized that the Pace Board needs to help shepherd the process to make sure that suburban input is heard to execute the legislation successfully.

Executive Director's Report

Melinda recognized Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and the diverse perspectives that strengthen our workforce and the communities we serve. Melinda appreciated the Directors' reports praising the work of staff.

Melinda reported that this summer, Pace will be displaying Route 66 logos on all Heritage Division buses to recognize the garage's location on this historic roadway for the Route 66 centennial.

Melinda recognized Pace's budget department led by Maggie Schilling and Melanie Castle for receiving a distinguished budget presentation and excellence in financial reporting award from the Government Finance Officers Association for Pace's 2026 budget document. Pace received special recognition for performance measures.

Melinda reported that Pace was recognized by the American Council of Engineering Companies of Illinois for the work with Globetrotters Engineering Corporation on Pace's ADA Transfer Facility at the Northwest Transportation Center. This is a great example of how Pace takes care of riders. Pace is in the process of building another ADA Transfer Facility in Calumet City.

Director Carr arrived at the meeting in person at 9:49 a.m.

Melinda reported that Pace has partnered with CTA and CDOT on a pilot promotion where registered Ventra riders receive a \$5 credit for Divvy bikes and scooters if they purchase a Pace-CTA 30-day pass.

Melinda reported that earlier this month, Pace started to deploy the first group of new hybrid electric buses, starting with local routes in Joliet. Pace will continue to introduce more hybrid electric buses to the region's fleet later this year.

Melinda reported on how Pace is continuing to strengthen the system for riders and put more service on the street with each 2026 ride pick now that funding has been secured through the NITA Act legislation. In June, Pace will add 60,000 hours of service to key corridors throughout the region. Pace is also in the process of developing more rush hour service in Crystal Lake in McHenry County on Route 806 to Fox Lake and Route 808 to Harvard.

Melinda reported that on April 22, Pace provided testimony before the Illinois House Appropriations Public Safety and Infrastructure Committee to discuss the need for more service in the suburbs, ReVision and Pace's network restructuring initiative plans, and Pace's efforts

with the Governor's Office to work through the NITA Act transition. It was a good opportunity to meet with legislators who passed the NITA legislation. Melinda and Chairman Kwasneski plan to return to Springfield next week to further discuss the NITA transition.

Melinda reported that the NITA Act will go into effect on June 1, 2026 and reviewed several actions that will occur as a result. In May, RTA will consider a 2026 budget amendment, mostly to add funds to ramp up public transportation security, but which will also allow Pace to open satellite city garages on weekends. The Governor's Office, the six county board chairs, and the Mayor of the City of Chicago will appoint board members to the new NITA Board with terms beginning September 1. The RTA board will continue to operate during the transition period until September 1.

Melinda reported that the annual budget process may move one month earlier due to deadlines outlined in the NITA Act. At their July or August board meeting, RTA will consider adoption of the 2027-2031 funding amounts, which will allow the service boards to proceed with setting their budgets. Pace will discuss its budget proposal with board members in August and on September 18, the service boards will submit their operating budgets to NITA.

Melinda reported on ridership. In April 2026, the system carried 1.79 million riders, which represents 70% of 2019 pre-Covid levels. However, there are increasing issues with fare evasion and Ventra mobile validators, which are older equipment not functioning properly. As a result, Pace is losing ridership data and does not feel confident in the today's report. In response, Pace is working with Ventra on replacing mobile validator equipment, addressing associated supply chain issues, creating a new "pay your fare share" campaign, and requiring operators to manually log if a rider does not pay. Those steps will allow Pace to get a better idea on the current extent of fare evasion. Director Wells inquired about the percentage of Pace's fare evasion; Pace estimates that 1% of Pace riders do not pay their fare. CTA believes that their fare evasion percentage is much higher than Pace's. Fare evasion is an ongoing issue that transit agencies nationwide are trying to address. Pace is making an effort to get better data on which routes are having problems.

Chairman Kwasneski asked how transit agencies should respond to customers not paying fares. Melinda explained that having law enforcement police the system and enforce fare policies would help. Pace's policy is that we do not want operators at risk over a \$2 fare. Operators are instructed to call in fare issues to dispatch supervisors, who will address it. During the Covid pandemic, the federal government prohibited people who were not wearing masks to ride public transit, and Pace frequently reported mask issues to local police. Chairman Kwasneski pointed out that after 2030, ridership numbers will be crucial to the new distribution of dollars to the service boards. The more clarity that Pace has on its actual ridership, the more that Pace will receive the funding it deserves. It is unclear if the new NITA Board will revisit the funding distribution formula periodically.

Melinda reported that Pace hosted ten Hire-on-the-Spot events at headquarters and South Campus, drew 422 candidates, and extended offers to 90 candidates. Chairman Kwasneski asked

how many drivers Pace still needs, acknowledging that Pace continues to catch up on the employee deficit but falls behind again as we add new service. Melinda reported that Pace needs 147 more drivers, has 116 drivers in training, and has 68 drivers in the hiring process. The issue is that not all trainees complete the required training process.

Melinda reported that both fixed route service and ADA paratransit are currently favorable to budget. Fuel is still overbudget, as Pace budgeted \$2.67 per gallon of diesel fuel and is paying \$4.72 per gallon. If that continues, Pace will end the year overbudget by approximately \$4 million, which will be paid with any underbudget operating funding.

Director Canning and Melinda discussed the new 2027 budget timeline, when service boards will present their budgets to the NITA Board, and when Pace board members will present Pace's budget to the county boards. The NITA Board will hold at least one public hearing on the operating and capital budgets, as the NITA Act legislation only requires one hearing. At their November 19 board meeting, the NITA Board will consider the regional budgets for adoption.

Director Schielke asked about the remaining terms for current RTA and service board directors. Melinda reported that current directors will serve through August 31. New NITA and service board appointments will begin September 1.

Director Wells asked how many hybrid buses are operating in Joliet. Melinda reported that 23 of Pace's 47 hybrid buses are in service in Joliet. Chairman Kwasneski asked how many more buses Pace expects to receive. Melinda reported that 33 hybrid buses are scheduled to be delivered this summer and will be spread throughout the region. Pace is also expecting some electric buses, which will operate out of North Division because that is the only location able to accept them. At this point, most divisions can accept a couple electric buses and park them outside, but they cannot be stored inside buildings.

Director Carr left the meeting at 10:03 a.m.

Approval of Consent Agenda

SBD #26-30 – Ordinance authorizing Change Order No. 2 to Contract No. 234206 with W.W. Grainger, Inc. for maintenance, repair, and operations products for all Pace facilities. The change order increases the Contract total from \$870,263.46 to \$1,520,263.46, an increase of \$650,000.00.

SBD #26-31 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to BCM Law, P.C. for legal services for workers' compensation matters in an amount not to exceed \$975,000.00.

SBD #26-32 – Ordinance authorizing Change Order No. 4 to Contract No. 233744 with Davis Bancorp, Inc. for revenue counting services and armored car services for the transportation of revenue collection equipment for all Pace locations and contract carriers. The change order extends the Contract for seven months and increases the Contract total from \$1,818,643.00 to

\$2,024,882.00, an increase of \$206,239.00.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Smith 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.

Director Carr returned to the meeting in person at 10:07 a.m.

Action Items

SBD #26-33 – Ordinance amending the 2026 Suburban Capital Budget (Capital Budget Amendment #2). This amendment adds federal Community Project Funding in the amount of \$2,460,190.00 for a queue jump bus lane and Transit Signal Priority projects. This amendment decreases federal Section 5339 funding by \$260,011.00 to match final federal apportionments. This amendment increases federal Section 5307 funding by \$2,340,791.00 to match final federal apportionments and will be budgeted for paratransit vehicle purchases, improvements to support facilities, and security systems/cameras. This amendment results in an increase of \$4,540,970.00 to the 2026 Suburban Capital Budget, from \$122,884,531.00 to \$127,425,501.00.

Kris Skogsbakken, Department Manager of Capital Grants, presented. Chairman Kwasneski asked what percentage of fixed routes use TSP technology. Melinda reported that TSP is installed at about 150 intersections and Pace is in the process installing TSP at 100 more intersections. She reported on Pace's pilot project with IDOT to utilize TSP on IDOT infrastructure instead of Pace installing its own separate TSP equipment on IDOT boxes. Director Canning pointed out that Pace currently has only 30 TSP devices installed along Golf Road, a major thoroughfare, illustrating there is a lot of potential to expand. Director Wells asked if TSP requires agreements with municipalities or IDOT. Melinda reported it is a case-by-case basis, but right now primarily a collaboration with IDOT.

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.

SBD #26-34 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Computer Aid, Inc. for managed services for applications, database support, and security monitoring in an amount not to exceed \$28,822,308.65.

Scott Kinsella, Chief Information Officer, presented.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Guerin 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 #26-35 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Motor Coach Industries, Inc. for the purchase of up to 30 45-foot over-the-road coaches in an amount not to exceed \$33,765,000.00 and the initial purchase of 13 of those coaches for a total cost of \$14,631,500.00. Any future purchase of additional coaches will be authorized under a separate ordinance.

Lindsey Umek, Chief Operating Officer, presented. Chairman Kwasneski reported that Pace has been working with the Governor's Office on procurements and board agendas during the NITA transition. The State supports Pace procuring the equipment and services that are needed now, while allowing the new board flexibility depending on the direction that the region takes in the future and what technology is available. Lindsey reported that the new coaches are longer than the current 40-foot fleet, which will allow Pace to increase seating capacity as demand for I-55 bus on shoulder service continues to grow.

Director Schielke moved, and Director Wells 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 #26-36 – Ordinance authorizing the award of a contract to Gillig, LLC for the purchase of up to 250 35-foot and 40-foot hybrid electric low-floor transit buses in an amount not to exceed \$321,813,500.00 and the initial purchase of eight of those buses for a total cost of \$10,281,232.00. Any future purchase of additional buses will be authorized under a separate ordinance.

Lindsey Umek reported that this procurement addresses legislative changes while also keeping buses on the street so that Pace can provide service, thus ensuring that Pace keeps its fleet replacement on schedule and preparing for future resource needs under ReVision and the zero emissions transition. The contract includes language that allows CTA to purchase buses as well.

Chairman Kwasneski observed that prices on everything continue to increase significantly, including buses, so it is good that this contract locks in pricing for a period of time for a future board. Director Wells asked how many companies are currently manufacturing buses and how many placed bids on this contract. Director Wells also raised concerns about production time of buses. Lindsey reported that Gillig, Eldorado, and New Flyer are currently manufacturing buses, that Pace received two bids on this contract, and that Pace has had good experiences working with Gillig in the past as Gillig follows through on their commitments.

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.

SBD #26-37 – Ordinance authorizing Change Order No. 2 to Contract No. 235597 with F.H. Paschen, S.N. Nielsen & Associates LLC for the Pace North Division Phase 2 electrification project. The change order increases the Contract total from \$88,375,777.76 to \$92,017,366.59, an increase of \$3,641,588.83.

Josh Berger, Department Manager of Capital Infrastructure, presented on funding needed for plug-in dispensers and stand-alone back-up chargers. He explained that contingency funds were already spent on phased construction to continue operating out of the building during construction, in lieu of spending \$20-24 million to temporarily relocate operations to a leased off-site facility.

Director Canning asked when construction is expected to be completed, accounting for this change order and that the original contract went through October 2027. Josh reported that the facility will be fully complete by the end of 2028. Pace operations working around the construction is difficult, but is preferable when considering the \$20-24 million cost savings.

Director Marcucci asked what percentage of the \$92 million is for electric bus charging infrastructure compared to expenses for building upgrades that needed to be done anyway. Josh reported that each of the 60 buses at North Division requires \$580,000 spent on infrastructure, including sprinklers and electric service. The North Division project is a good example of deferred maintenance and expansions that are needed at all Pace facilities. Josh and Melinda reported that Pace is learning more about the capabilities and performance of the pantographs versus plug-in charging and will apply findings to future garage electrification projects.

Director Marcucci discussed his concerns with the capital cost of electric bus charging infrastructure over the next decade for Pace's 700 bus fleet. Director Canning cited an article about the MBTA transit system in Boston that spent \$400-\$500 million per garage on electrification, which will only continue to get more expensive as time goes on. Director Marcucci complimented staff on their work.

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.

Issues/Discussion/Reports

Erik Llewellyn, Chief Planning Officer, reported on summer pick 2026 pilot projects and service changes. Pace is continuing to make strategic investments to put more service on the street in 2026 and strengthen the system for our riders, now that funding has been secured from the NITA Act legislation. Pace added 50,000 hours of service in March and is now prepared to add an additional 60,000 hours of service for the summer June pick. Enhancements include improved hours of service and frequency on 12 routes across the system including key corridors such as

Mannheim / LaGrange Road, 95th Street, Cicero Avenue, 159th Street, Randall Road, Farnsworth Road, and service connecting Joliet, Aurora, Elgin, and the I-55 bus on shoulder network.

Chairman Kwasneski asked that Pace send letters about the service expansions to county chairs and municipalities, listing the additional service, trips, and dollars invested by district. He wants to make sure Pace is clearly communicating the investment we are making in the region.

Director Arfa reported that she is already observing increased traffic at the museum campus around the future Barack Obama Presidential Center. She asked if Pace is working with the new museum on increasing opportunities to connect people from the city to the south suburbs. Erik reported that some service expansions mentioned today will make connections from the south suburbs to Metra and CTA in the city easier. Melinda reported that fixed route service increases likewise increases ADA paratransit service boundaries and hours.

Director Smith asked about the cost impact of the Route 550 pilot. Erik reported that the removal of the Route 550 route variance allows Pace to add additional trips into the McHenry County area at no additional cost.

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 Marcucci seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. All directors voted aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Reconvene

Chairman Kwasneski reconvened the open session of the Pace Board of Directors meeting at 11:49 a.m.

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

Directors virtually present: None.

Directors absent: Arfa, Carr, Hastings, Noak, and Schielke.

SBD #26-38 – Resolution approving the closed session meeting minutes of February 18, 2026.

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

Director Arfa joined the meeting in person at 11:50 a.m.

SBD #26-39 – Ordinance approving action on John Boland v. Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority and Jeffrey Wardlow; 2024 L 66048.

Director McLeod moved, and Director Canning 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 #26-39 – Ordinance approving action on Carmeel Watson v. Pace, the Suburban Bus Division of the Regional Transportation Authority and Jamal Moore; 2024 L 012352.

Director Canning 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.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Kwasneski asked for a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Director Soto moved, and Director Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote; all Directors voted aye. The meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the Pace Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, June 17, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. at Pace corporate headquarters, 550 West Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Elissa Ledvort
Board Secretary, Board of Directors