

MOVING FORWARD SPEAKER SERIES

In 2020, Moving Forward's work shifted to address COVID-19, its impact on transit, and on the riders who rely on transit. Moving Forward hosted a Speaker Series on the current state of transportation and mobility, the impacts of COVID-19, and what is next for transit. The Speaker Series featured thought leaders from:

The Brookings Institution
Transportation for America
Tennessee Department of Transportation
Greater Nashville Regional Council
The Office of Mayor John Cooper
WeGo

The Speaker Series revealed that mobility and transit are crucial to an equitable economic recovery - mobility and transit link Middle Tennesseans to education, jobs, food, health care and other basic needs. Investment in transit and transportation now to provide access for all Middle Tennesseans will help the region, its residents, and our economy grow stronger as we recover.

View the Moving Forward Speaker Series at movingforwardmidtn.com.

NASHVILLE/DAVIDSON COUNTY MAYOR JOHN COOPER'S TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Moving Forward participated in engagement opportunities throughout the creation of Mayor Cooper's Transportation Plan, hosting events for Moving Forward members to provide input, and issuing a statement on what the plan should include:

1. Significant commitment to transit as a primary solution to the region's onerous commutes and a focus on access as the key measure of success of transit investments.
2. A clear plan, programs and investment that demonstrate how transit will move efficiently and effectively through downtown Nashville.
3. A clear plan for how Nashville/Davidson County's investment in transit will eventually link to and support regional investments in transit.
4. A clear statement that the transportation plan released at this time is a necessary first step in creating improved mobility options for Nashville/Davidson County and the region, but that more investment will be needed in the future.
5. A commitment to securing dedicated funding for transit and related mobility improvements.

The draft plan was released for comment in October. The proposed plan focused on upgrading the bus system; traffic and modernizing our traffic management system; investing in neighborhood infrastructure - including sidewalks, bikeways, and greenways; improving safety and advancing the Mayor's Vision Zero Action Plan; and the creation of a Nashville Department of Transportation.

Moving Forward's critique of the final draft Transportation Plan addressed two main points: the necessity of dedicated funding and the needed creation of a plan for moving people and goods to, through and around downtown Nashville.

On December 15, 2020, the Mayor's office introduced a resolution of endorsement to the Metro Council for approval of the Metro Nashville Transportation Plan. Moving Forward's leadership issued a letter to Metro Council supporting adoption of the resolution of endorsement, but again emphasizing that the Transportation Plan is a first step and that dedicated funding for transit is critical for meaningful progress.

The resolution of endorsement, including amendments providing additional clarity on a Metro Department of Transportation, West End corridor projects, and additional WeGo Star stops within Davidson County, was adopted by Council on December 15 with a vote of 33 for, 5 opposed, and 1 abstaining.

Moving Forward recommends that implementation of the transportation plan begin immediately by including increased transit funding in Metro's FY22 operating budget. Moving Forward will remain attentive to local funding and other funding strategies and program opportunities to deliver safe, accessible, and reliable mobility options for all Nashville communities.


View the Metro Nashville Transportation Plan at nashville.gov/Mayors-Office.aspx.


MOVING FORWARD 2021 SCORECARD


Moving Forward continues its work to expand mobility options in Middle Tennessee. Moving Forward's work is grounded in the values of accountability, collaboration, equity, regionalism, and urgency. This scorecard tracks the progress made in 2020 on Moving Forward's goals to create multi-modal mobility options for our region. For more information, visit movingforwardmidtn.com.


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Complete  **Underway**  **Ongoing** 

-  1. Facilitate a regional approach to improve mobility

In 2019, the Moving Forward Mobility Policy Task Force researched how peer and aspirational regions coordinate to provide regional transit. The Task Force released a report finding that while there are multiple models of regional coordination, all of the peer regions offering higher-order transit have funding streams dedicated solely to transit. The Middle Tennessee region does not possess dedicated funding for transit. The entire report can be found at movingforwardmidtn.com.
-  2. Update the Nashville Area MPO 2045 regional transportation plan in 2021
Update the WeGo strategic plan (nMotion) in 2022

The Nashville Area MPO regional transportation plan (RTP) must be updated and approved every five years in order to access federal transportation funds. The MPO updated the RTP in 2020. Unfortunately, community input opportunities and the Solve This Together initiative were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The MPO intends to relaunch the Solve This Together initiative and to engage the Middle Tennessee community in more visionary planning in 2021 when public safety permits. To learn more, visit solvethis.together.org.
-  3. Advocate for near term projects to improve mobility

Middle Tennessee can make incremental and innovative improvements to its multi-modal transportation system even as we work towards another transit referendum. 2020 was challenging for transit due to COVID-19 and a resulting shift to telecommuting. Throughout 2020, Moving Forward hosted a Speaker Series focusing on the current state of transportation and mobility and featured guests from the federal, state, regional, and Metro levels. View the Speaker Series at movingforwardmidtn.com.

Moving Forward has remained engaged and provided recommendations for Mayor Cooper's Nashville Transportation Plan.
4. Identify and secure dedicated funding for mobility in the region by 2024

The Middle Tennessee region is the only metropolitan area of its size in the country without a local, dedicated source of funding for transit. This severely limits the region's ability to receive state and federal funding, which often requires a local match. No action was taken on this goal in 2020.

The importance of dedicated funding for transit was clear in 2020 when Metro Nashville/Davidson County, in a severe budget crunch, used one-time, federal CARES Act funding to replace local funding to sustain current WeGo operations. Meanwhile, a proposed referendum to roll back Metro's property tax increase, had it proceeded, would have also harmed transit.
5. Begin construction on the first phase of the WeGo strategic plan in the region by 2026

This objective is ambitious but critical for Middle Tennessee to continue to be a prosperous region for its vibrant and diverse residents. Reaching this goal will be made more difficult as local, dedicated funding is not secured. No action was taken on this goal in 2020.