

As we move past the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, as students return to in-person learning and employees start returning to the office, Moving Forward believes it is as important as ever to prioritize innovative mobility and transit options for our citizens.

Throughout the pandemic, Nashville-Davidson County and the Middle Tennessee region have continued to grow. Davidson County is projected to grow by over 21% from 2020 to 2045. As Nashville and the Middle Tennessee region experience economic recovery, more and more people will need to access economic and educational opportunities through improved transportation and transit.

According to data from Transportation for America, cities that invest in transit during and emerging from recessions experience larger and more equitable recovery. Our entire community benefits when we invest in transit, and all Nashvillians and Middle Tennesseans should have access to affordable, convenient, dependable transit.

Moving Forward urges elected officials to not only continue to make meaningful investments in our current MTA-WeGo transportation system, but to make longer term plans for the creation of and investment in a robust mobility and transportation system that truly serves our residents. We're talking about a transit system that offers connectivity across the city and region and provides real mobility options for Middle Tennesseans. Not only will this require city leaders to put a higher priority on transportation and mobility planning, but it also means securing dedicated funding. Moving Forward believes dedicated funding is crucial to really tackle our transportation challenges.

Peer cities across the United States have continued to make transit a priority by dedicating funding to the challenge, with Austin, Texas approving a referendum for dedicated funding for transit in November 2020. To enhance our quality of life, to ensure that our residents have access to jobs, education and amenities, to build a robust transit system, we must have dedicated funding.

Not only will investments in transit today help us during this current economic recovery period, but it will help us be better positioned to face future crises. Some might say we can't afford to invest in transit. Moving Forward would say we can't afford not to invest, and we're already behind the curve.

We encourage Nashvillians to become engaged in learning more about transportation and mobility issues in Nashville and in the region. We also believe it is important to understand the city's budget and financial health. We can afford dedicated funding for transit, and we must secure it.

If you're not already involved, we welcome you to join Moving Forward's efforts and be part of the conversation by signing up at www.movingforwardmidtn.com.

Sincerely,

Todd Rolapp

Moving Forward Chair

Ashley Northington
Moving Forward Vice Chair

m@vingforward

Moving Forward is dedicated to creating regional mobility solutions that work for Middle Tennesseans. Moving Forward empowers business, community, and transit thought leaders to engage in the critical transportation issues facing Middle Tennessee by reviewing the region's progress toward greater mobility options and identifying mobility, and specifically transit, solutions for the region.

Moving Forward is governed by a coordinating committee with two issue-specific task forces, each of which are led by business and community leaders. Moving Forward works closely with elected officials and the public sector – the Tennessee Department of Transportation, the Greater Nashville Regional Council, WeGo (the Metropolitan Transit Authority), and Mayors throughout Middle Tennessee – to create regional mobility solutions. Moving Forward brings business and community insight and innovation to the conversation.

Started in August 2015, Moving Forward relaunched in 2019, with the following values and goals.

MOVING FORWARD'S VALUES

Accountability, collaboration, equity, regionalism and urgency.

MOVING FORWARD'S GOALS

- 1 Facilitate a regional approach to improve mobility.
- 2 Update the Nashville Area MPO 2045 regional transportation plan in 2021. Update the WeGo strategic plan (nMotion) in 2022.
- 3 Advocate for near-term projects to improve mobility.
- 4 Identify and secure dedicated funding for mobility in the region by 2024.
- 5 Begin construction on the first phase of the WeGo strategic plan in the region by 2026.

MOVING FORWARD COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Todd Rolapp

Bass, Berry & Sims

CHAIR

Ashley Northington

RW Jones Agency

VICE-CHAIR

Greg Bailey

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CHAIR OF MOBILITY POLICY TASK FORCE

Al Pramuk

Gresham Smith

VICE-CHAIR OF MOBILITY POLICY TASK FORCE

Rev. Dr. Judy Cummings

Retired

CHAIR OF MOBILITY PLANS TASK FORCE

Erin Hafkenschiel

Vanderbilt University

VICE-CHAIR OF MOBILITY PLANS TASK FORCE

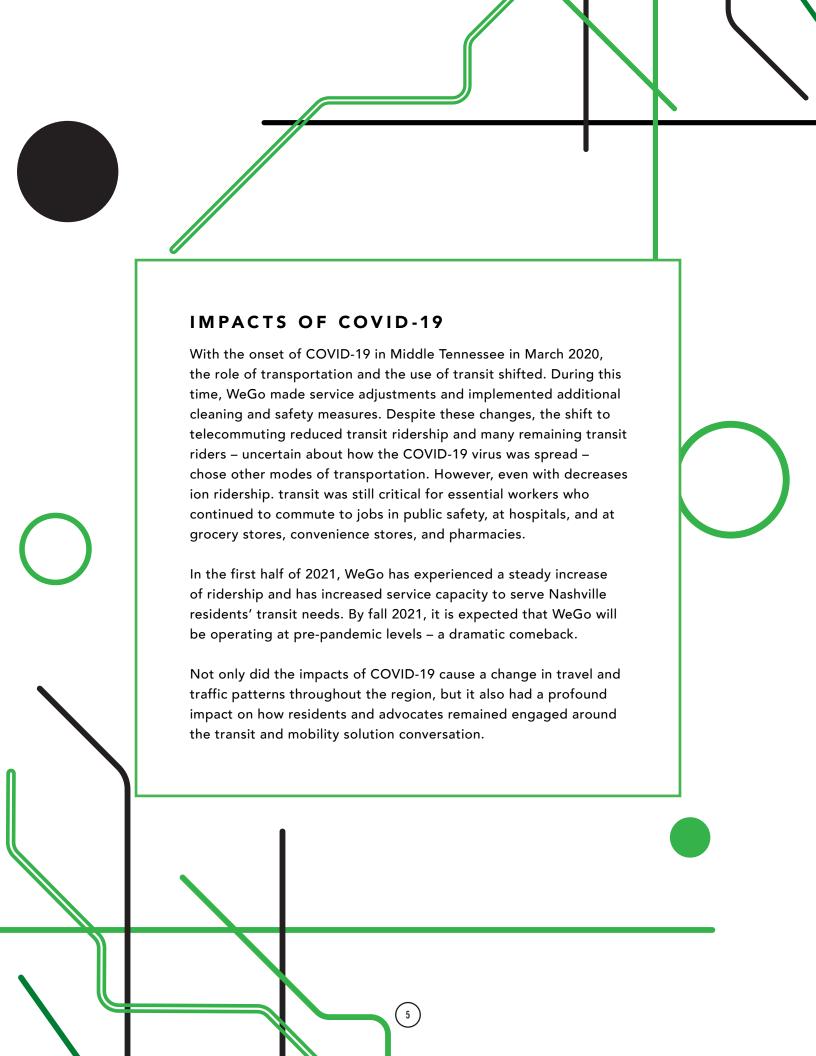
MOVING FORWARD TASK FORCE

Mobility Policy Task Force

Creates original research and input to guide policy; responds to legislative or administrative action; ensures volunteers are aware of policy issues at the federal, metro and state level.

Mobility Plans Task Force

Provides the business perspective to the region's plans and projects; creates opportunities to provide project/topic specific information to business and community leaders; aids business and community leaders in amplifying mobility messages throughout the community.





Throughout 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:

Brookings Institute

HOW COVID-19 COULD CHANGE DESIGN OF CITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation for America (T4A)

HOW COVID-19 IS IMPACTING TRANSIT
AND HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COULD RESPOND

Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT)

HOW COVID-19 IS IMPACTING TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN TENNESSEE

Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC)

HOW COVID-19 IS IMPACTING TRANSPORTATION
AND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Mayor Cooper's Office Of Transportation, Infrastructure and Sustainability with WeGo

HOW COVID-19 IS IMPACTING TRANSPORTATION
AND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON COUNTY

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 Speaker Series at movingforwardmidtn.com.

METRO NASHVILLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

In 2020, Mayor Cooper's Office of Transportation, Infrastructure and Sustainability engaged the community in creating a transportation plan for Metro Nashville. The proposed Transportation Plan was intended to reflect the community's priorities for investment and would draw on specific projects from Metro's many previous, approved transportation plans including plans for bike/pedestrians, for transit, for smart infrastructure, etc.

The Mayor's Office hosted listening sessions and engagement opportunities with community stakeholders from January to March of 2020, providing opportunities to residents throughout Davidson County to voice their ideas, priorities, and concerns regarding transit and transportation in Nashville.

On March 12, 2020, Moving Forward hosted a Metro Nashville Transportation Plan listening session facilitated by Faye DiMassimo and other staff members from the Office of Mayor John Cooper. This meeting provided Moving Forward members and members of other stakeholder organizations an opportunity to be engaged in and weigh in on the Mayor's transportation plan. After that engagement opportunity for Moving Forward members, the Moving Forward Coordinating Committee issued a letter outlining recommendations on the forthcoming Transportation Plan.

The draft plan was released for comment in October 2020. 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 comments on the final draft Transportation Plan raised two main concerns: the necessity of dedicated funding and the need for a plan for moving people and goods to, through and around downtown Nashville.

On December 1, 2020, Mayor Cooper's office presented the plan to Metro Council, seeking the Council's approval of a resolution of endorsement for the plan. 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.

METRO NASHVILLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Source: Office of Mayor John Cooper, 2021

TDANICIT	
TRANSIT —	
Better Bus Service Expansion	\$180M ²
Murfreesboro Pike Bus Rapid Transit	\$413.3M
Clarksville Pike Rapid Bus	\$92.9M
WeGo Star Commuter Rail Improvements	\$139.6M ³
Total Transit	\$825.9M ¹
TRAFFIC/MULTIMODAL/SAFETY ————————————————————————————————————	
Sidewalks	\$200M
State of Good Repair	\$200M
Jefferson St. Multimodal Cap/Connector	\$175M
Restoration & Resiliency, State Routes, Partnership Funding and Innovation/Sustainability corridors	\$117M
Safety/Vision Zero/Traffic Calming	\$75M
Active Transportation/Bikeways/Greenways	\$35M
Traffic Management System/Signal Upgrades	\$15M
Downtown Neighborhood Traffic Project	\$1 M
Traffic/Multimodal/Safety Total All Projects Total	\$818M \$1.6439B

NOTES

¹ Total annual operating - \$34.71M

 $_{\rm 2}$ Annual operating \$29M, which also includes Murfeesboro Pike BRT and Clarksville Pike Rapid Bus annual operating

 $^{^{\}scriptscriptstyle 3}$ Annual operating - \$5.71M

With investments in "state of good repair" projects, adding sidewalks, improving crosswalks, creating a traffic management system and a Department of Transportation, Mayor Cooper's *Transportation Plan* serves as a first step in updating and modernizing Nashville/Davidson County's transportation system. Moving Forward believes, however, that this adopted plan alone does not provide the transportation solutions to adequately solve the current and future transportation needs of Nashville.

Moving Forward recommended that implementation of the transportation plan begin immediately by including increased transit funding in Metro's FY22 operating budget and again noted that, without dedicated funding, Nashville/Davidson County's transportation system would not catch up with existing need, much less create a transportation system needed for future growth and prosperity. 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.

METRO NASHVILLE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Even prior to the pandemic, Metro Nashville funding for transit was not on stable footing. In Fiscal Year 2019-2020, WeGo faced a budget deficit of \$8.7 million, which resulted in system design and operations changes and fare increases. Unsurprisingly, the pandemic created further negative impacts on Metro Nashville transit funding. While making changes to service to improve safety, WeGo also experienced at 65% decrease in ridership at its lowest point.

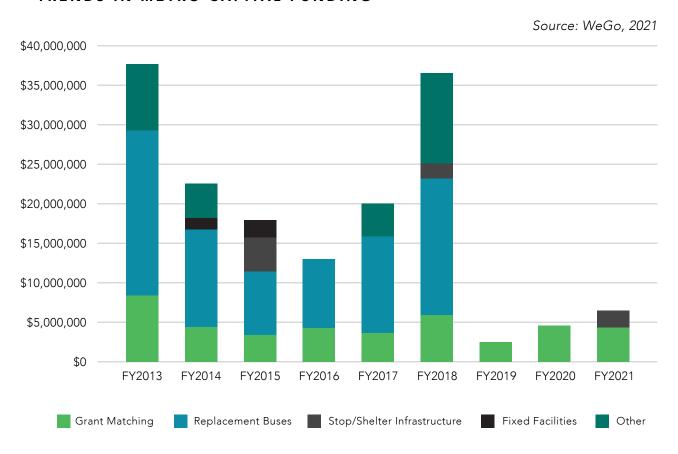
In FY21 WeGo was spared cuts only because Metro's portion of WeGo's budget, \$22.8M, was covered by one-time funding through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Congress included funding in the CARES Act for operations and capital needs for transit agencies throughout the United States with a goal of that transit agencies would exit the pandemic in the same financial condition as they entered it.

With the endorsement of the Metro Nashville Transportation Plan and in the midst of recovery from the pandemic it remained critical for Metro elected officials to consider how to fund transit and mobility projects and operations for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 and beyond.

CAPITAL SPENDING PLAN

On February 5, 2021, Mayor Cooper released his Capital Spending Plan, which proposed spending \$121,882,000 on transportation investments. The bulk of the proposed transportation investments are supportive of transit and achieve initial components of the Metro Nashville Transportation Plan.

TRENDS IN METRO CAPITAL FUNDING



NOTE

"Grant Matching" are the minimum local funds required to access available USDOT and TDOT Grants. These grants are predominately purposed to Preventive Maintenance (Operating Budget) and State of Good Repair Projects.

It is important to note that of the total \$121,882,000 transportation investment, just 5.5% of the transportation investment is put to transit – \$6.6 million total. There are a number of projects and investments proposed that are supportive of transit such as sidewalk projects, the traffic management program, and the Downtown Neighborhood Traffic Project, but direct capital investment in transit is very limited, which presents a challenge for WeGo to not only recover from COVID-19, but expand to better serve current and future riders.

MAYOR COOPER'S CSP INCUDES FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT THE METRO NASHVILLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN, ADOPTED IN DECEMBER 2020

\$21 million to repair 31,500 feet of sidewalk and build more than 2,500 feet of new sidewalk

- \$2 million to build an estimated 16 new bus shelters in 12 districts
- \$30 million to pave more than 180 "lane miles" across the city
- **\$2.5 million** for traffic calming projects in 24 neighborhoods
- **\$7.5 million** for smart traffic management projects to shorten commutes on some of Nashville's busiest roads

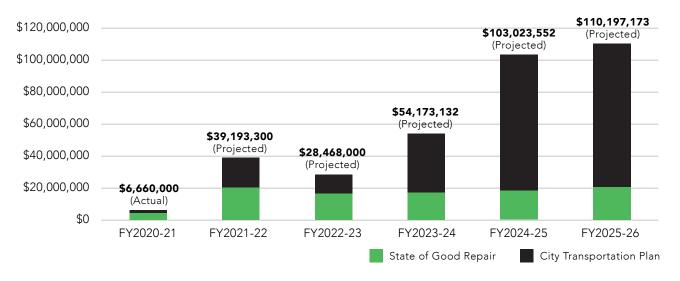
Capital investments continue to be critical to the success and operational capacity of WeGo. Although the included \$6.6 million investment is impactful in providing necessary bus shelter and transit center expansions as well as needed federal match dollars, additional funds will be required to achieve critical components of the transportation plan as well as sufficiently provide capital investments needed to fully implement the **Better Bus** program.

BETTER BUS

Better Bus focuses on and improves system access and frequency. These proposed improvements span a five-year phasing in period and an annual operating budget increase of approximately \$25 million. When implemented, these system improvements would increase fixed route service by 31 percent and would create better span of service, better evening and weekend service, better weekday service frequency, better local and connector service, route extensions, and improved crosstown routes.

PROJECTED CAPITAL NEEDS

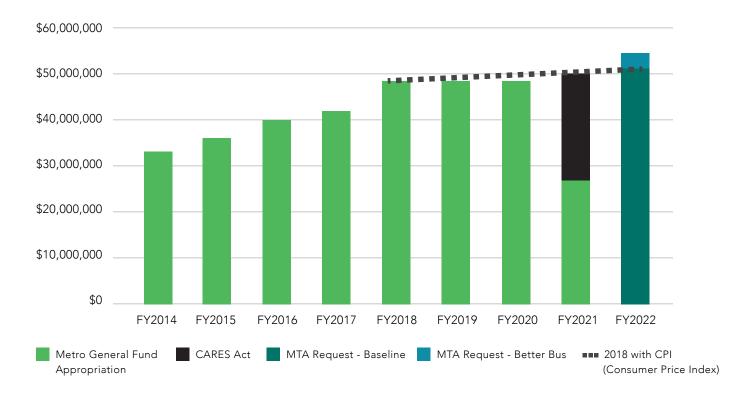
Source: WeGo, 2021



METRO OPERATING SUPPORT TRENDS

ANNUAL METRO OPERATING BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS TO WEGO

Source: WeGo, 2021



WEGO FY22 BUDGET

On April 13th, Moving Forward submitted a letter to Mayor Cooper in support of FY22 operating budget funding for WeGo. The letter urged the Mayor to fully restore WeGo operating funds to pre-pandemic levels as well as including an additional \$3.2 million to implement Better Bus service enhancements. The letter of support also pointed to the projected population growth of Davidson County through the year 2045. Even throughout the pandemic, Nashville continued to experience growth, seeing population growth of 1.4% when comparing 2019 to 2020, which is an apprximate gain of 76 people per day. It is imperative that annual funding at least keep pace with growth to adequately meet the mobility challenges of a growing city - providing access to jobs and education for all Nashvillians.

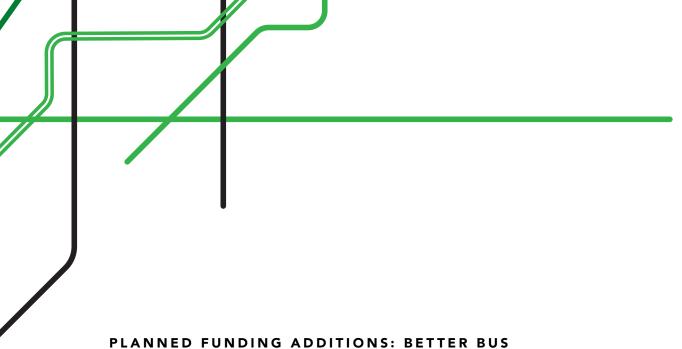
On April 29th, 2021 Mayor Cooper delivered his State of Metro address. During the address he proposed increased funding support for priorities, including transportation. At that time, Mayor Cooper released his proposed FY22 Operating Budget, which included increased funding for WeGo.

Mayor Cooper's FY22 Operating Budget proposal included a \$53,656,100 funding allotment for WeGo Public Transit services, which restores WeGo operating funds to pre-pandemic levels. The proposed budget did not, however, include the operating funding needed - \$3.2m – for the first phase of Better Bus service expansion. To launch phase one of Better Bus, the city proposed relying on non-recurring CARES Act funding.

Moving Forward was present to make public comment to Metro Council on the proposed budget on June 1st. Ashley Northington, Moving Forward vice-chair, provided comments urging Council to prioritize transit investments in the FY22 budget and encouraging the use of operating funds for transit improvements rather than one-time federal dollars. Moving Forward also pointed out the importance of dedicated funding for transit with a commitment to equitable investment for all Nashvillians.

On June 15th Metro Council adopted the FY22 Budget, which did not include any changes to the transit funding Mayor Cooper had proposed and did not include any additional funding for the initial phase of the Better Bus program. The adopted operating budget will allow for WeGo to return to pre-pandemic service levels, but will not allow for necessary service enhancements laid out in the Better Bus Plan. The first phase of Better Bus will, instead, be funded through non-recurring CARES Act funding.

In coming years it will be critical for the Mayor's office and Metro Council to consider additional capital and operating funds to achieve Better Bus enhancements. These enhancements for Better Bus total \$29 million in additional operating funds over the next five-year period.



Source: WeGo, 2021



NOTE

Planned Better Bus service enhancements contained in Mayor Cooper's Transportation Plan total \$29 Million in FY2021 dollars. Planned operations funding requests above baseline are projected over a 5-year period.

COFFEE WITH MOVING FORWARD: A DISCUSSION OF TRANSIT FUNDING & EQUITY

On April 14th, Moving Forward hosted transit advocates and business and community leaders to hear from guests Faye DiMassimo (Senior Advisor for Transportation and Infrastructure, Metro Nashville) and Steve Bland (CEO, WeGo Public Transit). With the goal of building support for transit funding, the event detailed Metro Nashville's transportation and transit funding, and explored how funding efforts and project implementation address issues of mobility and equity throughout our city.

SUPPORT FOR DEDICATED FUNDING FOR TRANSIT

Moving Forward remains committed to securing dedicated funding for transit. Moving Forward believes that investment in transit and transportation that provides access for all Middle Tennesseans to get to jobs, education and amenities will help the region grow stronger as we recover. Investment in transit will help Nashville and Middle Tennessee weather future crises and help us to not only bounce back, but help our residents, employees and employers to bounce forward.

Research by Transportation for America has shown that cities that invest in transit during and emerging from recessions experience larger and more equitable recovery. Our entire community benefits when we invest in transit and all Nashvillians can have access to affordable, convenient, dependable transit. This calls for greater funding for transit with a commitment to equitable investment.

2021 SCORECARD

Moving Forward releases an annual scorecard each January showing what progress has occurred on its five mobility goals.

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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 multimodal mobility options for our region. For more information, visit movingforwardmidtn.com.

Complete



Underway





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 solvethistogether.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.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN: GREATER NASHVILLE REGIONAL COUNCIL

In early 2021, mayors and transportation officials from across Middle Tennessee adopted an update to the region's transportation plan. The Middle Tennessee Connected Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) allocates more than \$10.5 billion in anticipated federal grants and matching funds to improve transportation throughout a seven-county planning area that includes Nashville, Maury, Robertson, Sumner, Rutherford, Williamson, and Wilson counties.

The Regional Transportation Plan establishes goals and objectives for the region and identifies federal funding priorities for investments to improve the region's network of roadways, transit services, and walking and bicycling facilities out to the year 2045.

While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the ability to engage the public during much of 2020, a significant portion of public outreach was conducted over the last three years. GNRC worked closely with the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and local governments to conduct studies, public meetings, and research to inform the Plan's recommendations. The Plan intends to help ensure coordination among existing transportation planning efforts of TDOT, transit agencies, and area cities and counties.

Visit GNRC.org/Transportation

WHAT'S NEXT FOR MOVING FORWARD

PEER CITY TRANSIT FUNDING EVENTS:

Moving Forward remains focused on securing dedicated funding for transit. Even during the pandemic some of Nashville's peer cities succeeded in securing dedicated funding for transit. There is much our city and region can learn from these successes, especially how advocates can best engage around the need for dedicated funding.

In the coming months Moving Forward will join the Mobility Policy and Mobility Plans task forces together to form a joint task force for the purpose of hosting peer city presentations, open to Moving Forward members and the larger business community. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from representatives from Austin, TX and others about recent transit successes and the success campaigns in achieving dedicated funding for transit success.

MOVING FORWARD REGIONAL EXPANSION:

Moving Forward is dedicated to creating regional mobility solutions that work for Middle Tennesseans. Valuing regionalism, one of Moving Forward's goals is to facilitate a regional approach to improve mobility. With this goal in mind, it is imperative that Moving Forward expand engagement to a regional level and include transit partners and thought leaders in the conversation around regional transit and mobility solutions.

In the coming months, Moving Forward leadership will engage in conversations with regional transit advocates and business leaders to gauge interest in expanding Moving Forward outside of the Nashville/Davidson County borders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Moving Forward thanks the leadership and staff of the public agencies charged with implementing transportation policy for sharing their time and expertise throughout the year. Steve Bland and WeGo staff, as well as TDOT staff were all accessible and willing to provide updates throughout the year as it pertained to funding and projects. Michael Skipper and GNRC staff also provided valuable expertise through presentations and frequent updates on transportation planning efforts. We would like to thank Faye DiMassimo, and the Nashville mayor's office staff, all of whom also served as a resource to our work at various points in the year as well as being available to discuss and engage around the Metro Nashville Transportation Plan.

Thank you to the Moving Forward members for volunteering their time and valuable expertise throughout the year. We look forward to continuing our work together as we focus on transit and mobility solutions for our region.

Join Moving Forward's efforts to create regional mobility solutions in Middle Tennessee by signing up at **movingforwardmidtn.com**.

