

May 14, 2025. Chicago Transit Board Regular Meeting Minutes.

Noticed for 10:00 a.m. Commenced at 10:01 a.m.

AGENDA: The posted agenda for the meeting is available at www.transitchicago.com, "Chicago Transit Board", "Meeting Notices, Agendas, and Minutes", (05/14/2025) (Regular Board Meeting), "Agenda".

There was a roll call vote.

ROLL CALL: Directors: Lester L. Barclay (Chairman), Roberto Requejo, Bernard Jakes, Rosa Y. Ortiz, Michele A. Lee, and Neema Jha.

There was a quorum with 6 members present. Director Michael Eaddy was absent.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Chairman Barclay advanced the agenda to Public Comments.

Secretary Greenlee advised that the Board Office had received requests for public comments:

- Ben Chargot
 - Following his public comment, Acting President Leerhsen requested that Molly Poppe from CTA's staff follow up with him regarding his concerns regarding accessibility for he visually impaired and the next President of the CTA embracing it as a core value and not an afterthought
- Sheila Back Haennicke, West Side Heroin/Opioid Task Force
 - Following her comment there were questions from Director Jakes. Director Jakes then requested that Acting President Nora Leerhsen have someone from the CTA team follow up with the speaker. Acting President Leerhsen directed Veronica Alanis, the CTA's Chief Operating Officer to give Haennicke an update on CTA's progress.
- Julia Cage, Center for Neighborhood Technology and the Coordinator for the Transportation Equity Network (a/k/a TEN)
- Trudy Leong, Rogers Park Chamber of Commerce
- John Paul Jones of the Grow Greater Englewood Organization submitted a written public comment that had already been distribute to other members of the Board.

Secretary Greenlee then stated that there were no more public comments.

Chairman Barclay acknowledged that Alderman David Moore had entered the meeting. He asked Alderman Moore whether he had a comment. Alderman Moore responded that he wanted to speak and gave remarks to the Board.

ADA ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT: Laura Saltzman, Chair of the ADA Advisory Committee gave a report on behalf of the committee. The ADA Committee met on April 14, 2025. They approved their minutes from their January 13, 2025, meeting and entertained public comments.

She “happily” noted that CTA’s Planning Department has been working with CDOT on transit issues which has resulted in the relocation of a southbound stop on Route 36 at Montrose and Broadway back to its original location which will make it more accessible to seniors and people with disabilities.

The ADA Committee also received a presentation from Bill Mooney, CTA’s Chief Officer for Infrastructure on ASAP program projects: seven stations are under construction with eight additional stations in the design phase. The ADA committee appreciate the improvements but are frustrated that the new displays will not have audio functions. Committee members requested that text-to-audio features be incorporated not future iterations of these displays with QR Code access.

The Committee received security updates from Eddie Winters, CTA’s General Manager of Security and Veronica Alanis, CTA’s Chief Operating Officer which was followed with a discussion about Code of Conduct violations, with a focus on smoking.

The Committee also received:

- Information about the homeless outreach efforts taking place on the Red and Blue Lines in partnership with social service agencies.
- An update on the Smart Streets pilot that uses camera-based enforcement to keep bus lanes and bus stops clear.
- A report from the new Wayfinding Subcommittee which met on March 21st.

The Committee’s next meeting is scheduled for July 14, 2025.

There were comments from members of the Board and discussion.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT: Acting President Nora Leerhsen gave the President’s Report. Acting President Leerhsen then ended the President’s Report.

She acknowledged that the agency has had incidents in the past few weeks regarding people entering the right-of-way and being seriously injured or killed. She reassured the Board and the public that the agency’s Safety Team is taking a close look at the details concerning all incidents. She also reminded the Board that the agency has a CTA Employee Assistance Program that is offered to every employee and that managers are required to take a mental health training regarding this issue entitled “CTA Cares.”

She then presented a legislative update and advised the Board that she has been to Springfield several times and has clearly conveyed the message that CTA needs adequate funding to sustain the agency’s services. She has emphasized the imbalance in the existing funding formula and engaged in discussions regarding regional transit reform.

She then highlighted the accomplishments of the agency in the first hundred days of her leadership with a focus on the way she has approached leadership during this period:

- CTA is people driven.
- CTA is performance driven.
- CTA is centered in welcoming places and
- CTA is rooted in dynamic partnerships.

In April the CTA sponsored an Autism Awareness campaign which used our PA system to have children make awareness on autism awareness. It created a welcoming and warm environment for our riders.

In the last hundred days work has begun on the ASAP at the Austin Green Line and the agency is moving forward with the RPM stations that will open in the coming year.

The CTA is exploring ways to do crime prevention through environmental design in our stations and spaces.

She ended her remarks with a focus on partnerships and how she has been using outreach and engagement during this 100-year period. The discussions in Springfield have offered great opportunities for connections between leadership and various organizations. The CTA will be talking about ways to partner with the Chicago Loop Alliance, and she believes that much can come from these types of conversations.

There were comments from members of the Board and there was discussion.

MINUTES: Chairman Barclay asked for a motion to approve the regular Board meeting minutes from April 9, 2025. After being moved by Director Requejo and seconded by Director Lee, the minutes were approved with six (6) votes by roll call.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no Executive Session.

BOARD MATTERS: Chairman Barclay asked whether there were any Board Matters?

Secretary Greenlee responded that there were no Board Matters.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE, AUDIT AND BUDGET: The Finance, Audit, and Budget Committee report was presented by Director Bernard Jakes. The committee reviewed the monthly finance report and approved the April 9, 2025, FAB committee meeting minutes. Director Jakes stated that all Committee agenda items, listed on the Board agenda, were presented, reviewed, discussed, and recommended by the Committee, for Board approval. Director Jakes stated that all the approved committee items, 4 ordinances and 8 contracts, were placed on the omnibus for approval by the Board. Director Jakes concluded the Finance, Audit and Budget Committee report.

Director Requejo moved that the omnibus be approved, and the motion was seconded by Director Lee. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

All approved May 14, 2025, Board ordinances are available online, at www.transitchicago.com, "Chicago Transit Board", "Board Ordinances", Ordinance numbers 025-26 through 025-37.

CONSTRUCTION REPORT: The monthly Construction Report was presented by Bill Mooney, CTA's Chief of Infrastructure and the DBE/MWBE/SBE report was presented by JuanPablo Prieto, CTA's Director of Diversity Programs.

CONSTRUCTION REPORT: The Construction Report was presented and can be found at:
<https://www.transitchicago.com/board/presentations/>

There was discussion.

Director Bernard Jakes Comment: Following the discussion on the Construction Report Director Jakes asked for the opportunity to state something on the record. He stated that members of the public come to the board meeting every month and say both complimentary and insulting things about the Board members. He stated that he was not pleased with the comments made by Alderman Moore earlier in the meeting, he apologized for recognizing him and pointing out his presence to Chairman Barclay, but Alderman Moore is an elected official.

This is a “testy time in the life of CTA because for ten (10) years [the agency] had one president.” It is a contentious time because the mayor gets to choose the new president, and the CTA Board gets to confirm or deny his selection.

There are transit advocates who are saying that the CTA needs to conduct a search for the new President. The mayor has a perspective and people believe what they believe. Everyone has a right to their opinion, but he doesn’t believe that anybody has a right to insult people. He restated that it was important that he get that on the record.

Director Rosa Ortiz Comment: Director Rosa Ortiz then stated that she did not appreciate the comments made by Alderman David Moore. She found them disrespectful, out of sequence from all of the CTA Board’s meetings when everyone has an opportunity to speak. She stated that there is a process that needs to be followed, and those processes were not followed in the meeting. She believes that everyone should be treated the same and that there are certain things that the Board needs to follow and that everyone should be respectful of everyone else at table.

She didn’t agree with the comments. She felt that they were targeted, and that no one deserved that kind of treatment. She is also advocating that the agency has a national search to make sure that the CTA finds the best and the brightest. She knows that because this is a service role it will not appeal to everyone; however, she knows that there are very talented, caring individuals who want this role, are committed to the work and have experience in leadership in making sure that the CTA provides the best service for the city and the region.

Director Neema Jha’s Comments: She expressed that she has a slightly different opinion on this because this was not the first time this has happened. “People have come and referenced the Board and also the president. Let’s be fair [in our indignation.]” “When Dorval was in his seat, people came and said a lot of mean things to him.” She stated that she didn’t recall any of the members of the board saying that the mean comments that were directed at Dorval were unacceptable. Her understanding of the public comment is that they come, and they comment. “They choose their words. We’re not here to regulate what they can or can’t say.”

Therefore, she is not going to comment on what the gentleman did today. She is also not offended

by it. It was how he felt. "So, if we want to condemn what he did, we should condemn everything else that other people have done as well."

"At the end of the day, attacks or not, the Board has a responsibility to deny or approve the candidates that come in front of the [Board] and this is a very special moment. The distinction in this moment in time that makes it different is the way the environment is, the needs of transit funding and the possibilities for the future." The entire Board has the responsibility to be very careful in making a decision that is right for the CTA and the people of Chicago and everything else is secondary – including who the candidate is and who is bringing the candidate.

She wants to be on the record that they are all trying to do the best for the CTA and the people of Chicago. That is the only reason why she sits in her seat as a Board member.

Chairman Lester Barclay's Comments: Chairman Barclay concurred with the comments made by Director Jha. He stated that it is the Chair's prerogative to allow a person to speak who has not signed up prior to the meeting. He further stated that at the Special Board Meeting instead of following the policy to have five (5) public commenters he allowed nine (9) or ten (10) people to speak.

Former CTA Board Member Irvine wanted to speak at the Special Board Meeting, he had not signed up to speak, and Chairman Barclay gave him deference because he was a former board member.

When an elected official wants to make a comment, he believes it is appropriate to give them the opportunity. This is still a country where we have First Amendment rights, so whether we agree – the bottom line is that he has the freedom to express himself.

He agreed with Director Jha regarding President Carter. He was treated horribly. He sustained personal attacks, and the agency even had to add security to his residences. The Board was silent. He didn't see anyone stand up and take any affirmative actions on Dorval Carter's behalf. The Board should use a yardstick, but it should be a fair yardstick.

Chairman Barclay would not deny an elected official an opportunity to speak. If any of the Alderman come to a Board meeting, whether or not they are on the agenda he is going to grant them an opportunity to speak.

Director Roberto Requejo's Comments: He understands that when an elected official attends the meeting, they should be extended an opportunity to speak. He also wants to acknowledge that public commenters who are regular citizens take hours of their time to sign up, and leave money on the table when they leave their jobs to come to the CTA Board Meeting to speak.

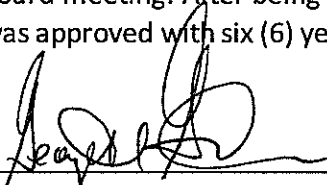
If the CTA is going to have a process, he would encourage everyone to be fair as to how they allow people to come and speak. Our elected officials have public forums and platforms from which they can speak from City Council to committees and press conference. On the other hand, our residents have three (3) minutes at the CTA Board Meeting. He wants the Board to be fair and equitable to that, and while he understands the courtesy and the respect to invite elected officials to speak, he also wants "to be clear who do we allow to express and what in here and how does that compare with others who have only this little window? Which, by the way is not the easiest to access because our system is complicated."

He has been concerned about how the [search] process is unfolding and he has shared that privately and publicly. He would love for us to have a professional process. He would like for us to have one that is not "either/or." He believes it should be a collaboration. He thinks there should be shared decision-making. The mayor has a role relative to the process and the capacity to select. The Board has a role and the Governor's Office could also be a part of the process.

NEW BUSINESS: Secretary Greenlee stated that there was no new business.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chairperson Barclay asked for a motion to adjourn the May 14, 2025, Chicago Transit Board meeting. After being moved by Director Requejo and seconded by Director Lee, the motion was approved with six (6) yes votes and the meeting was adjourned at 11:46 a.m.

APPROVED:



Secretary of the CTA Board of Directors

Date:

