



Session 5: Transit is Essential

A look into how transit is essential for everyone.

Wednesday, October 14

- 4:00 pm **Welcome Back**
Jessica Dauphin, Transit Alliance of Middle TN
- 4:05 pm **The Importance of Equitable Access**
Carol Westlake, TN Disability Coalition
- 4:35 pm **What is WeGo Transit currently doing?**
Steve Bland, WeGo Transit/RTA
- 5:05 pm **Economic Growth & Regional Sustainability**
Ralph Schulz, President and CEO, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
- 5:35 pm **Project Prep time in small groups**



CAROL WESTLAKE

Executive Director, Tennessee Disability Coalition

Carol is a nationally recognized leader in the disability community and a lifelong advocate for disadvantaged people. She is the founding executive director of the Tennessee Disability Coalition where she has served for 27 years. The Coalition's work is grounded in collaborative efforts to improve policy and opportunities for individuals with disabilities and their families.

She is a graduate of Peabody College and Vanderbilt University. Her background and training are in disability, and public policy. Carol regularly serves on state boards and commissions that affect people with disabilities, especially those that promote access to health care, long term supports and services, and economic self-sufficiency. She has helped to establish a number of disability advocacy programs and agencies in Tennessee. With a passion for serving the community and empowering people with disabilities, she is an active volunteer who serves on a number of nonprofit boards.



STEVE BLAND

Chief Executive Officer, WeGo Public Transit and Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)

Stephen G. Bland serves as the Chief Executive Officer of WeGo Public Transit (formerly Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority) and the Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (RTA). During his extensive 28-year career in public transit, Steve has served as the CEO, executive director, or general manager of both large and small transit systems including Pittsburgh, PA.; Albany, N.Y.; York, Penn.; and Gloucester, Mass.

Under his leadership in Pittsburgh, his transit team completed a \$500 million New Starts Light Rail subway extension. He also served as the program director on the CTfastrack, a 9.5-mile advanced bus rapid transit system between New Britain and downtown Hartford, Conn.; and he has done other consulting work on similar projects. Prior to CTfastrack, Steve was the Assistant Director/General Superintendent for the Port Authority Trans Hudson (PATH) Rail System. PATH is a heavy rail transit system that connects Newark, Harrison, Jersey City, and Hoboken, New Jersey with various points in Manhattan, New York City operating 24 hours daily carrying approximately 250,000 commuters with a fleet of 350 revenue rail cars.

Steve holds a Master of Public Affairs in Public Finance and a Bachelor of Science in Public Affairs, with Distinction in Transportation Planning and Management from Indiana University.



Ralph Schulz, Jr. President and CEO, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce

Ralph Schulz became president and CEO of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce November 2006, following a 30-year career in nonprofit management, marketing and fundraising.

During his tenure, the Chamber has played a key role in helping the region emerge from the 2007 recession to a period of unprecedented growth. The Nashville Chamber has been consistently recognized as a top local and regional economic development agency for its role in helping to deliver prosperity to Middle Tennessee communities. The Chamber has also led the movement to improve public school performance through the creation of the Academies of Nashville, established the Moving Forward initiative to ensure the creation of a regional transportation solution through a cohesive community effort and developed into a respected publisher of data on the Nashville Metropolitan Statistical Area with the annual publication of the Vital Signs report.

Schulz currently serves on numerous civic and nonprofit boards including the Nashville Health Care Council, Tennessee Business Roundtable, NashvilleHealth, Music City Music Council, Nashville Predators Foundation and the Board of Trustees of Father Ryan High School. He is a past board member of Alignment Nashville and Center for Nonprofit Management. He has been involved with the Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee, served on the Citizens Advisory Committee for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), MTA's Strategic Plan Advisory Committee, the NashvilleNEXT Steering Committee



and Major League Soccer to Nashville advisory committee. He has participated in Leadership Nashville, Leadership Middle Tennessee and Leadership Music.