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NIAGARA FRONTIER TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Committee Meeting

April 22, 2021

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Transcript of Video Recording

of Proceedings held at NIAGARA FRONTIER TRANSPORTATION  
AUTHORITY, 181 Ellicott Street, Buffalo, New York,  
stenographically transcribed by VALERIE A. ROSATI, Notary  
Public.

1           MEMBERS IN THE BOARDROOM:

2           Sister Denise Roche (Chair)  
3           Commissioner Adam Perry  
4           Kimberley Minkel (Executive Director)  
5           David State (General Counsel)  
6           John Cox (Chief Financial Officer)  
7           William Vanecek (Director, Aviation)  
8           Tom George (Director, Public Transit)  
9           Helen Tederous (Director, Public Affairs)  
10          Karen Novo (Director, Human Resources)  
11          Darren Kempner (Manager, Government Affairs)  
12          Dejuan Hardy (Manager EEO/Diversity)  
13          Susan Ohol (Admin. Assistant to Director of  
14                                    Public Transit)

15           MEMBERS ON THE PHONE:

16           Commissioner Joan Aul  
17           Commissioner Anthony Baynes  
18           Commissioner Margo Downey  
19           Commissioner Michael Hughes  
20           Commissioner Philip Wilcox  
21           Vicky-Marie Brunette (Deputy General Counsel)  
22           Steven Duquette (Chief Information Officer)  
23           John Schaefer (Director, Engineering)  
24           Lyle Death (Director, HSEQ)

25           MS. MINKEL:   Dave, if you could do a roll.

26           MR. STATE:   Roll call for the committee meetings.

27                    Commissioner Ansari?

28                            Commissioner Aul?

29           COMMISSIONER AUL:   I'm on, David.   Thank you.

30           MR. STATE:   Commissioner Baynes?

1 COMMISSIONER BAYNES: Here. Thank you.

2 MR. STATE: Commissioner Blue?

3 COMMISSIONER BLUE: Present.

4 MR. STATE: Commissioner Downey?

5 COMMISSIONER DOWNEY: Present.

6 MR. STATE: Commissioner Hicks?

7 Commissioner Hughes?

8 COMMISSIONER HUGHES: Here.

9 MR. STATE: Commissioner Perry?

10 COMMISSIONER PERRY: Here.

11 MR. STATE: Commissioner Persico?

12 Commissioner Tucker?

13 Sister Denise?

14 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: Here.

15 MR. STATE: And Commissioner Wilcox?

16 COMMISSIONER WILCOX: Here.

17 MR. STATE: That's enough.

18 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: Okay. We are ready to begin.

19 And thank you all for taking the time to be here.

20 Welcome this morning to our committee meetings,

21 our joint committee meetings, which we've been

22 doing for several months and livestreaming.

23 And we're going to open this morning with a

1 report on government affairs. And we're going to  
2 ask Darren Kempner to do it, please.

3 MR. KEMPNER: Thank you, Sister. Good morning,  
4 commissioners. I'm really feeling the pressure.  
5 I never get to go first, but -- especially after  
6 that comment about being professional and  
7 entertaining, I'm really feeling it.

8 So for the professional or the entertaining  
9 part, whichever you choose, the American Jobs  
10 Plan. On April 22nd the Senate Republicans  
11 introduced a counteroffer to the initial proposal  
12 from the administration. That counteroffer was  
13 about five hundred seventy billion dollars, which  
14 pretty much matched the transportation  
15 infrastructure portion of the original  
16 administration's plan. So that tells you  
17 something, that they believe the definition of  
18 infrastructure to be much more narrow, but at  
19 least focused on transportation infrastructure.  
20 So that's good for us running an airport system  
21 and a transit system.

22 The proposal changed the amount -- or,  
23 recommended changing the amount invested in

1 public transit through the Act from about a  
2 hundred and ten billion to sixty-one billion, but  
3 recommended an increase in the airport  
4 infrastructure piece of the Act to forty-four  
5 billion for airports versus twenty-five billion  
6 in the administration proposal. So there's,  
7 there's -- so there's not yet agreement on  
8 exactly what transportation infracture is,  
9 there's not agreement on exactly how much the  
10 bill should be and there's also not agreement on  
11 how to pay for it all.

12 So the Senate plan, Republican plan uses a  
13 very different approach. It relies on user fees,  
14 financing tools and inducing spending from the  
15 private sector, where, if you recall, the Biden  
16 plan includes an increase in the corporate -- or,  
17 at least corporate tax reforming, increasing the  
18 corporate tax rate.

19 So this is a moving target as we know. The  
20 Senate Republicans are expected to come back with  
21 a revised counteroffer. And things seem to be  
22 heading towards about a trillion dollar general  
23 agreement on a dollar amount. That's good. And

1           maybe some agreement on what the infrastructure  
2           is, but probably no agreement on how to pay for  
3           it. So with that said, the Senate is looking  
4           again at budget reconciliation as a measure.  
5           We'll probably know more about that later this  
6           summer as there's some session days in June and  
7           then some breaks in July with a full August  
8           recess. So I hope to have more information when  
9           I come back to you in June on this proposal.  
10          But, for now, hopefully heading towards more of  
11          an agreement at least from what we can see.

12 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: Good.

13 MR. KEMPNER: And that's completes my report. If  
14          there are any questions.

15 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: Any questions for Darren?

16                 It's going to be some good news somewhere.  
17          Thank you very much.

18 MR. KEMPNER: Thank you.

19 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: And I think we have more good  
20          news. We're moving on to human resources  
21          committee update, and Karen Novo is going to give  
22          us that.

23 MS. NOVO: Thank you, Sister. Good morning,

1 commissioners. So we normally have a robust  
2 meeting once a year, and with the combined  
3 meetings and with the pandemic, we are doing  
4 combined overview of just our 2020 for human  
5 resources, and if there are any questions, please  
6 feel free to ask at any time.

7 So I always like to start off with our  
8 mission statement. Our mission statement, I'm  
9 not going to read line for line. We do -- these  
10 are the programs that we -- some of our services  
11 that we provide and our -- to implement -- that  
12 we implement throughout the year. This is also  
13 detailed in our HR charter, which Kim brought to  
14 the board last month. So unless there are -- and  
15 there's been no changes, so unless there are any  
16 questions, I'll move on.

17 So this slide here is just an overview of  
18 our HR team. It gives us the different titles,  
19 what we're made up, recruiting, labor relations,  
20 deputy director, manager of employee services.  
21 Everything that we serve throughout the  
22 Authority. And we have a great team. Then we  
23 have our EEO team, Dejuan Hardy, who is with me

1           today, our manager of EEO/Diversity and  
2           development. And then his team below him.  
3           Benefits. So this is just made up of our team.

4           And in addition to our team here, we also  
5           have medical. And we have a doctor and a PA that  
6           is on staff three days a week with us and handles  
7           all of our medical pre-employments, our, our  
8           19-A's and many other things that involve the  
9           medical for pre-employment.

10           This slide is our Authority workforce. So  
11           this gives an idea of just how many employees are  
12           out at each of the areas. Just to give an  
13           example, if you look at, say, Buffalo Niagara, a  
14           hundred and twenty-three. That is a group of  
15           airport, consists of custodial staff, airfield  
16           supervisors, aviation, management, fuel farm.  
17           Then you go down to -- and I won't go through  
18           each one. Then if you go down to NFTA Metro  
19           operations, and that consists of station  
20           managers, operators, station clerks, bus and rail  
21           controllers. Then to the far right, NFTA Metro  
22           support. That consists of payroll, accounting,  
23           customer care and so on. It's just a different



1           grouping of employees that we have in each area.  
2           And of course the police and fire speaks for  
3           itself.

4 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: Totals, Karen?

5 MS. NOVO: I'm sorry. What's that?

6 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: Total?

7 MS. NOVO: Total employees that we have? We have  
8           budgeted about fifteen forty budgeted positions.  
9           So these are active employees. Of course we have  
10          vacancies that I'll be talking about shortly.

11           Okay. Next slide, please. So this is our  
12          Authority openings. And there's some concerns  
13          here. We're hiring. We're hiring. And it's  
14          been very difficult through the pandemic;  
15          however, even prior to the pandemic, we started  
16          seeing an uptick in our openings for mechanics.  
17          Very, very concerning. Trades. All those areas  
18          right now have been very, very hard to recruit.  
19          We are working with all the partners out there in  
20          the community. Northland Training Center has  
21          been a great partner we've been working with.  
22          We've been talking with the students, talking to  
23          Alfred, talking to different trade areas, talking

1 to other peer agencies. Everyone is in the same  
2 boat right now as far as mechanics. So this is  
3 a, this is a huge concern for the Authority.

4 Commissioner Perry, did you have a question?

5 COMMISSIONER PERRY: No.

6 MS. NOVO: Okay. I'm sorry.

7 So I just want to -- with this slide, in  
8 addition to our vacancies, we have retirements of  
9 course. So right now we're looking at  
10 approximately, over the next three years  
11 projected out, twenty percent of our workforce to  
12 retire. So that's very, very concerning on top  
13 of this. So as you know, as Kim said, things  
14 keep her up at night, this keeps me up at night.  
15 We have a lot we need to do here.

16 Yes?

17 COMMISSIONER PERRY: So we've got fifty-five  
18 mechanics. And that's just us. We have all  
19 these other places, car dealers, all these other  
20 places need mechanics.

21 MS. NOVO: Yes.

22 COMMISSIONER PERRY: So our experience is not unique.

23 MS. NOVO: No, it's not.

1 COMMISSIONER PERRY: So there are hundreds and  
2 hundreds, probably thousands and thousands of  
3 unfilled positions for mechanics throughout  
4 Western New York.

5 MS. NOVO: Absolutely.

6 COMMISSIONER PERRY: Now -- and I believe based on  
7 labor statistics information that I've seen that  
8 we have the exact same situation with plumbers  
9 and electricians and carpenters, and all these  
10 other skilled trades that offer great wages,  
11 great benefits, they're completely portable  
12 nationwide, and it allows an individual to start  
13 their own business. On the other hand, other  
14 parts of the labor force that we're sending  
15 people to all these college programs for, we  
16 don't have these same, same unfillable, unfilled  
17 jobs. So I'm wondering, what is, what is all the  
18 hype about everybody's got to go to college and  
19 everybody's going to have an office job and the  
20 lack of attention, other than the great efforts  
21 that have occurred at Northland, on producing  
22 people to fill these jobs that can't be  
23 outsourced that give people good wages, good

1 benefits and a solid future. I don't get it.

2 MS. NOVO: Yeah. I think we've talked about this  
3 before, and it's a challenge. I don't know --  
4 and we talk about Northland, and I have to thank  
5 Commissioner Tucker and his team. They have been  
6 so helpful with us for the last, you know --  
7 well, a couple years, but more so the last --  
8 past year. We have been working with his team.  
9 We have taken our bus out there, our community  
10 bus out there. We're working on -- Holly  
11 Carpenter, our recruiting manager, she has been  
12 on top of it working one on one with students.  
13 We have hired actually -- we actually have right  
14 now seven in the hopper I'll call it, ready to  
15 start. So we're gaining some progress, but it's  
16 not enough of course. We do we have --

17 COMMISSIONER TUCKER: Thank you. This is  
18 Commissioner Tucker, and I'd just like to join  
19 in -- and I apologize, I was a few minutes late  
20 for the call. But, Holly and John Dembik and the  
21 other NFTA HR professionals have been outstanding  
22 to work with. We actually started the  
23 recruitment back in January with the bus. We

1 started with a pool of seventy students. After  
2 taking a few tests, we're down to about thirty  
3 students, then it went down to sixteen, and now I  
4 think we have seven in the pipeline. So it's a  
5 great relationship and a great partnership. One  
6 of the challenges, though, has been I believe the  
7 multiple departments and the multiple occupations  
8 within the NFTA, they all have very specific  
9 tests. And that's been a challenge to make sure  
10 we have the right student applying for right  
11 test, applying for the right occupation. But,  
12 other than that, the partnership has been  
13 outstanding, and we're looking forward to  
14 building more on that.

15 MS. NOVO: Thank you, Commissioner. And I agree.  
16 Same thing. We thank you for your partnership  
17 along with this.

18 COMMISSIONER PERRY: Considering all this, maybe we  
19 should be advocating for a Buffalo Billion Three,  
20 and all of it should go to Northland.

21 COMMISSIONER TUCKER: I second that.

22 MS. NOVO: So on another good note, we have five  
23 veterans that we've hired, mechanics, between the

1       airport side and one actually from Northland that  
2       has just been hired. So we have five veterans,  
3       which is great news, over the past few months.  
4       I'd like to highlight that. That's great.

5               So as our numbers are going up, our  
6       vacancies -- our retirements, our vacancies, we  
7       talked about this about a year or so ago prior to  
8       the pandemic, but we really never expanded on it  
9       too much. But, at the time we talked about  
10      putting an RFP out for a salary study succession  
11      planning. So we did put one together and we are  
12      actually going to be advertising it tomorrow on  
13      the street. So that will be advertised for three  
14      weeks and I'll keep the board updated as to how  
15      that's going.

16             Okay. Any further questions on this slide?

17             So this is a slide of virtual world of  
18      recruitment with the pandemic last year. Again,  
19      Holly, John Dembik from Tom's team, everyone has  
20      been great. We're trying to do different ways  
21      of, you know, driving the bus by, trying to take  
22      applications, different things. We did a lot of  
23      Zoom meetings with candidates. It's difficult,

1       though. I mean, you know, virtual works in some  
2       areas, but recruiting, you need that face to  
3       face, you need to sit down, you need to talk  
4       about the different jobs. As Commissioner Tucker  
5       mentioned, each job is specific. So we did what  
6       we could do. I think there was some great ideas  
7       out there from the team, but I'm glad we're  
8       getting back now to in person now. So that's  
9       just a little picture of our virtual world of  
10      recruitment.

11                So EEO department initiatives. So,  
12      Dejuan -- I'll have Dejuan speak to that, the  
13      manager of our EEO and Diversity.

14   MR. HARDY: Good morning, commissioners. The EEO  
15      department, we participate in the Buffalo  
16      Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Exchange. It's  
17      ran by the Buffalo Niagara Partnership. It  
18      consists of a lot of different major companies  
19      around the Western New York area. And the goal  
20      is to identify challenges that may arise as well  
21      as best practices. So we found that to be very  
22      resourceful and we felt that it would be a good  
23      idea to have a similar group internally, so we

1 started our own diversity and inclusion  
2 committee. We have been working to identify  
3 areas of improvement and looking to start many  
4 different programs Authority-wide.

5 One of the programs I'd like to highlight  
6 today is the training for our employees and  
7 supervisors. Just to give you an idea of what  
8 that training consists of, it will have courses  
9 such as inclusion in the modern workplace,  
10 managing unconscious biases and global harassment  
11 and discrimination prevention.

12 We also are continuing to monitor our DBE  
13 programs as well as ensure our ADA compliance  
14 requirements for all Authority properties as  
15 well.

16 MS. NOVO: Thanks, Dejuan.

17 So this is our employment testing which we  
18 talked about a little bit briefly. So we are  
19 non-Civil Service testing. So throughout the  
20 year you may hear me talk about exams coming up  
21 and testing coming up through the HR report, so I  
22 just want to give a little overview of what we  
23 do.



1           So our mechanics. We have different  
2           comprehensive skills tests. This is all  
3           pre-employment. So these are different tests  
4           that we're going through. We have safety  
5           assessment testing. Administration, we have  
6           measures to identify their skills, technical  
7           skills, computer skills, et cetera. This is just  
8           a way to assess the employee, what we need to  
9           work with, how we can help them, you know, pass  
10          the testing and so forth, and see where they may  
11          need a little more guidance and help. And that's  
12          where Holly and team -- I know Holly is also  
13          working on the mechanics with John Dembik and  
14          Tom's team. What we need to do as an Authority,  
15          how can we help them pass as well as working with  
16          Northland. So that's -- this is a great  
17          opportunity.

18                 The next slide is the second part. I'm  
19                 sorry. Two slides for the testing. We also have  
20                 the fire and police testing, the exam. In fact,  
21                 our police is coming up in June. So we postponed  
22                 it from March, if you all recall, so we are  
23                 having that police officers test coming up in

1 June. So it's going to be June 17th, 18th --  
2 we're doing three-day testing due to the social  
3 distancing. And we are doing it on site at the  
4 airport as opposed to having it at the Buffalo  
5 Convention Center, again, because it was very  
6 hard to get the convention center. Those places  
7 were not opening. So we have about fourteen  
8 hundred applicants that will be coming through  
9 and we'll do over it over a three-day course, and  
10 I'll of course keep you posted on that. I  
11 believe the fire -- we are talking with Chief  
12 Major. We're looking to possibly do the fire in  
13 the fall. Again, because of retirements coming  
14 up as well.

15 Okay. Go to the next. So labor contract  
16 status. So as you may know or may not know, we  
17 have thirteen unions here. So Matt Van Vessem,  
18 who had just started with us back in March who  
19 replaced Lou, has been very busy. We have two  
20 contracts that will be coming to the board this  
21 afternoon for approval, which is our ATU Local  
22 1342. Of course that is our largest union. And  
23 then we have our other one, which is our 264N

1       which is going to be our garage supervisors. So  
2       we have two contracts being brought to the board  
3       this afternoon for approval. And since this was  
4       reported -- this report was done, we actually  
5       have one more tentative agreement, that will be  
6       with our transportation supervisors, and it will  
7       have to go to the union for a vote, but that may  
8       be brought to the board next month. And then we  
9       just started with the airport supervisors and  
10      that would pretty much close everybody out.

11            Any questions?

12            Okay. Next slide. So our medical  
13      department. As you have heard already, we talked  
14      about the doctor and the PA. We have a very busy  
15      medical department. That's where we handle all  
16      our pre-employment, our 19-A's, return to works,  
17      drug and alcohol, which I brought that policy to  
18      the board last month, pre-employment, random,  
19      reasonable suspicion, post accidents, follow-up.  
20      So a lot of work goes behind here, but this is  
21      kind of this data. But, it's a lot of -- all  
22      compliance that we have to do for FTA, DOT and  
23      FAA obviously for the work that we do in our

1 mission. So I just wanted to give an overview of  
2 our 2020 stats for medical.

3 And that will conclude my report unless  
4 there are any questions.

5 MS. MINKEL: And before Karen leaves, I just want to  
6 mention to the board, I mean, you saw all the  
7 work that happens in our HR department. That's  
8 under normal conditions. The past year we had a  
9 pandemic and rules and recommendations changed  
10 quite frequently. Information from our employees  
11 were changing quite frequently. It required a  
12 lot of interaction, a lot of guidance and  
13 assistance from Karen and her team. So I just  
14 want to recognize Karen and our entire HR  
15 department because they did an incredible,  
16 outstanding job over the past year. It's a lot  
17 of work on a normal day-to-day basis. But, Karen  
18 is very humble. You may have noticed her org  
19 chart didn't even have her at the top. That's  
20 the kind of person Karen is. So I just wanted to  
21 recognize Karen and the entire HR department team  
22 for their incredible hard work this past year.

23 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: I agree. Thank you.

1 COMMISSIONER BLUE: This is Reverend Blue. I have a  
2 question. I'm looking at the diversity, equity  
3 and inclusion, and it has the managing biases.  
4 Is this something that all of the NFTA will have  
5 to go through or just the new hires?

6 MR. HARDY: Good morning. Yes, all employees -- we  
7 plan to have all employees go through the  
8 training. There's going to be separate training  
9 for supervisors that will be a little more in  
10 depth, but we plan to have all employees go  
11 through the training and it will be a yearly  
12 training as well.

13 COMMISSIONER BLUE: Thank you.

14 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: You've done a terrific job, all  
15 of you, during a hard year.

16 MS. NOVO: Thank you.

17 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: And there's been so many  
18 setbacks because of not being able to be face to  
19 face with people, interview people. That's  
20 excellent.

21 And now we're going to get the transit plan,  
22 and I'm going to ask Tom George, please, to  
23 present that to us.

1 MR. GEORGE: Thank you, commissioners, and good  
2 morning. I would like to go through just a  
3 snapshot -- it's really not a snapshot, but a  
4 calendar of what we've got going for the next  
5 several months. We're very, very busy in Metro.  
6 We've got a lot of initiatives going on, so I  
7 wanted to talk about it.

8 As we enter into June, it starts our busy  
9 time. So June 1st, next week, we're starting our  
10 public education program of MetGo, our new fare  
11 collection system. So we're doing an outreach  
12 with the community starting on that and trying to  
13 start the information process so that individuals  
14 in the community, the individuals within our  
15 organization, stakeholders, partners, anyone that  
16 you can imagine with this system touches them,  
17 everyone from the College/University Pass Program  
18 to a rider to a bus operator has education.  
19 We're also trying to blend into that the shelter  
20 expansion programs, our enhanced services, and  
21 battery electric buses. We're presenting the  
22 fact that we're rolling out a brand-new fare  
23 collection project with a brand-new NFTA Metro.

1 It's not a rebranding. We love our brand. We  
2 think it's very good. But, it's a new image that  
3 we're moving forward as we advance technology  
4 into the system.

5 On June 7th -- this has now been changed.  
6 We have our round one of community engagement  
7 ends, which was initiated on May 10th. We've  
8 actually had some really robust responses. To  
9 date we're up over three hundred and thirty  
10 responses. Our target was five hundred. Through  
11 some discussion, we've decided to extend that  
12 another week, so we're going to actually go  
13 through to June 14th with that public outreach  
14 program. And that's basically reaching out to  
15 the community and all those folks that we can get  
16 to engage to ask them what they would like to see  
17 from Metro, both in terms of service, span of  
18 service, the frequency, where they want to go  
19 that we don't go, anything that they can bring to  
20 our attention, we'd ask them for input on that.  
21 And that's going to end on June 14th.

22 On June 24th, our next board meeting, we'll  
23 be back in front of you again to discuss round

1       one of community engagement. We'll talk about  
2       what we've heard, what we've received and what  
3       that information is telling us. We're going to  
4       present to the board draft service changes. So  
5       we're in the process of right now looking at our  
6       service, we've been doing it for a number of  
7       months. And now we're taking the input we're  
8       receiving from the community and we're going to  
9       put draft service changes in front of the board  
10      as a result of that public input as well as the  
11      ridership that we've been seeing and to have a  
12      discussion about that and get some input from the  
13      board as to what that may look like moving  
14      forward.

15             We're also going to talk about the MetGo  
16      fare policy. We adopted a MetGo fare policy a  
17      number of years ago. We're going to go live with  
18      it, as I'll talk about in the schedule here, and  
19      I wanted to once again revisit that and possibly  
20      revisit some of the decisions we made a couple  
21      years ago before we, before we go live with that.  
22      So we wanted to have that discussion as well at  
23      the June 24th board meeting.



1           On June 25th, the day after that board  
2 meeting, we're going to start the next round of  
3 public engagement. And that will be based on the  
4 service changes that we present to the board on  
5 the day before. If we receive comments and  
6 whatever input we have, we may change that a  
7 little bit and advance that, but we'll engage the  
8 community as quickly as possible after that board  
9 meeting to start to get feedback on what we're  
10 actually proposing this time. So the first time,  
11 the first round is, tell us what you want; the  
12 second round is, this is what we're proposing to  
13 you, give us feedback on that and tell us what  
14 you think.

15           We're also going to be using an outreach  
16 tool called Remix. It's a very advanced software  
17 tool. It's Web based. It will be on our  
18 website. And it's something where you can look  
19 at the entire map. It's very interactive. You  
20 can put comments on it. And I'll have that  
21 available at the June 24th board meeting for a  
22 very brief presentation so the board understands  
23 that tool and how it works, as well as all of our

1 normal avenues or media outlets that we've used  
2 for public engagement that we've used to date  
3 where we've gotten three hundred and thirty. So  
4 we'll be doing that in the month of June.

5 In July our new fare boxes will be fully  
6 deployed in the fleet. So we talked about MetGo  
7 and we'll have our full deployment of all buses  
8 having fare boxes completed by July 1st. Those  
9 will be fully operational fleetwide. They'll  
10 still be using our existing media, with the  
11 exception of tokens. As soon as the new fare box  
12 goes into a bus, tokens are no longer accepted.  
13 We told the community about this about two years  
14 ago, and the numbers have been dwindling,  
15 dwindling, dwindling. But now that we're  
16 actually going to have fully deployed, that's the  
17 only media that we will not be accepting moving  
18 forward as we're moving away from the tokens.  
19 But, we'll have that fully deployed in the fleet.

20 We're also initiating the shelter expansion  
21 program in July. We've been waiting for shelters  
22 to come onboard. We do have them in-house now,  
23 so we'll be starting that program with a whole

1 new deployment of new shelters in the system.  
2 And we're starting our bus stop rebalancing  
3 initiative by doing public outreach on that as  
4 well. And one of the methodologies we're using  
5 is we're actually going through a route. We've  
6 identified specific route by route, so we'll go  
7 through individual routes and we'll put signs on  
8 the actual stops saying this is being considered  
9 for relocation, this is being considered for  
10 elimination, and this is not being considered for  
11 any changes. And then there will be  
12 opportunities on those signs to get feedback from  
13 individuals, as well as other outreach  
14 opportunities. But we're actually going to the  
15 route itself and putting signage up.

16 And then on July 19th our second round of  
17 community engagement ends. So now we'll have  
18 feedback from the community on what we proposed  
19 earlier in June informally, and then we will  
20 bring to the July 22nd board meeting a formal  
21 presentation of what we have heard back from the  
22 community in that round two, what they liked and  
23 didn't like about what we proposed. And then we

1 will also bring back to you an updated service  
2 plan based on that public input. Then we will  
3 present to the board and that will show you what  
4 we're going to be proposing for the next round.  
5 Those service changes, if those are indeed  
6 adopted, we'll be asking the board for authority  
7 to go to public hearing and go to the formal  
8 public involvement process at that point. So  
9 this will be our third leg of the public  
10 involvement process. We will also be presenting  
11 the proposed MetGo fare policy. So if there's  
12 any changes and they would require public  
13 hearing, that would be vital with the service  
14 changes that we'll be looking for, so we can go  
15 forward with that. Very likely there will be no  
16 changes that would require public hearing, but we  
17 want to go through the process and formally  
18 identify that and make sure everybody is well  
19 informed of that. And as I said, we will be  
20 seeking board approval for the public hearing  
21 process.

22 Effective after that date, if the board does  
23 approve that, the public -- the open public

1 process will begin, and you can submit letters or  
2 e-mails on whatever we're proposing. That will  
3 be vetted through the community and that  
4 information will all be available and we will  
5 then start that actual process.

6 We get into August. Fortunately for all of  
7 us, there's no board meeting in August, but we're  
8 going to be very busy during that month. So  
9 August 15th, the University, CRAM, and Board of  
10 Education program starts. And this year they  
11 will start with new, new ID's which will be MetGo  
12 capable technology. So those ID's will now be  
13 MetGo capable technology. They will not be used  
14 when using the technology initially on August  
15 15th, but they'll all have that technology in  
16 their hand and they'll be using them as they do  
17 with their current CRAM passes today.

18 On August 23rd through the 27th, that's the  
19 week we've identified as the public hearing date  
20 or week. We haven't picked dates or times yet.  
21 Obviously the board hasn't authorized us to move  
22 forward with that. But, that would be the date  
23 we would do that, the week we would do that. And

1       that may be virtual, it may be in person. We'll  
2       see where we are with the pandemic at that point  
3       in time. It may be both. So we'll take a look  
4       at that. And when we present to the board in  
5       July, we'll let you know what that public hearing  
6       process will look like, what format it will take,  
7       so you understand that.

8               And then August 30th, the formal public  
9       comment period ends on those changes and any fare  
10      structure modifications that we're proposing.

11             In September and October -- on September  
12      23rd, we'll come back to the board meeting again  
13      and we'll present the results of the public  
14      hearing to you and the public input process and  
15      we'll be requesting approval of the final service  
16      plan. What we presented to you in July may not  
17      be what we come back to you with in September,  
18      because we will, once again, be taking public  
19      input through the comment period and the public  
20      hearing process, and we will then look at that  
21      and potentially make more modifications in  
22      response to the public feedback at that point in  
23      time. So this is essentially a third bite at the

1 apple again on the service changes as well as the  
2 fare policy. So we'll be coming to the board for  
3 approval on that in September based on everything  
4 we've heard.

5 And then in October we will begin the  
6 transition to -- the full MetGo fare collection  
7 begins. So we're anticipating in October to have  
8 the entire thing in place, and we will take an  
9 approximately one-month period to transition from  
10 the current media and the current system to fully  
11 embedded MetGo system throughout the network.  
12 And that will include everything from mobile apps  
13 to J hooks in merchants to an entire network  
14 system that we will have available.

15 And that will also include fare capping  
16 which is something we're taking a hard look at.  
17 And that's where basically if you get on the  
18 bus -- currently today what we presented to you  
19 previously was daily fare capping. So if you get  
20 on a bus, you would no longer get a day pass, but  
21 the first time you tap your pass, you would get  
22 hit with a one-ride charge. The second time you  
23 hit it, you get hit with the second charge. The

1 third time you hit it, you would be maxed out at  
2 five dollars because that's our day pass. You  
3 can continue to use your pass the whole rest of  
4 the day. We're also now looking, based on a lot  
5 of changes in demographics and community and just  
6 trends in the industry, looking at both weekly  
7 and monthly fare capping. So we'll be looking at  
8 that and presenting that to you.

9 At the end of 2021, if we do receive  
10 approval from the board on fare changes, those  
11 would tentatively go into effect on December 5th.  
12 So we would then move forward with implementing  
13 those. Now, I say they'll go into effect. I put  
14 down here phased implementation is appropriate.  
15 Not everything may go into effect on December  
16 5th. We may phase that rollout, depending on the  
17 feedback and what we receive.

18 And once again, we're looking at core Erie  
19 County service, Niagara Falls service, we're also  
20 looking at Bailey Avenue and putting some limited  
21 stop in there and at then potentially some  
22 significant changes to our express network.

23 The only thing I really didn't talk about in



1 here is, again, in January we anticipate the  
2 delivery of our first pilot battery electric bus.  
3 So, again, there's a lot of excitement going on  
4 around that. And we want to kind of bundle  
5 everything together with an exciting new product.  
6 So it's a very aggressive and busy year, but I  
7 wanted to get in front of the board so they  
8 understand the process we're undertaking and  
9 what's coming.

10 If there's any questions, I'd be pleased to  
11 answer them.

12 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: Sounds busy. Any questions?

13 It's all coming to a head at once.

14 MR. GEORGE: It's all coming to a head at once.

15 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: Plus there's a lot of work  
16 that's gone into it, so congratulations.

17 MR. GEORGE: It's going to be a very, very busy  
18 summer. Thank you.

19 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: Now we have aviation committee  
20 update and that's Bill Vanecek.

21 MR. VANECEK: Good afternoon, commissioners and  
22 present staff. I'll just go over fairly quickly  
23 on this, but I just want to let you know where we

1 stand with respect to our capital projects. The  
2 terminal enhancement project is ongoing. For the  
3 most part, the west end expansion is complete.  
4 There's just a few loose ends to tie up there.  
5 We anticipate having the east end complete by no  
6 later than the end of June, and we'll have a  
7 specific date for when we may want to have some  
8 sort of event on those.

9 The baggage carousels should be complete in  
10 advance of what the schedule says now. We expect  
11 to have both of those complete by the end of  
12 December of this year. So it's going along very  
13 nicely.

14 With respect to our subsurface wetlands, the  
15 work continues. They're going hard and heavy at  
16 it now and they expect to have that complete by  
17 November of 2021.

18 We have started work on the Buell Avenue  
19 lot. They've started clearing the land. It's  
20 going to be a dual purpose lot. It's going to  
21 house employee parking as well as our Metro buses  
22 Ride and Go over there. So we're looking forward  
23 to that. That should be done by the end of

1 April, 2021. That's what the -- I'm sorry.  
2 That's the construction start, but they should be  
3 done by the end of December of 2021.

4 Runway 5-23 is in need of rehab. It's going  
5 to be a multi-year effort for our main runway.  
6 And it's -- you know, we're right now kind of  
7 looking at how we're going to be able to phase  
8 that because as we got more and more into the  
9 project, it looks like there is more damage to  
10 the runway than we had anticipated. So we're --  
11 you know, hang on to your hats. We'll see where  
12 that ends up. But that is our aorta, if you  
13 will, for the airport. It's the most valuable  
14 piece of property we have at the airport. Other  
15 than our passengers, mind you.

16 And taxiway D rehab will start. We're going  
17 to be going out for the contract approval on  
18 January -- or, wrap it up in January, that should  
19 all be done. And this is at Niagara Falls. I'm  
20 sorry. But, the construction should be all done  
21 by January of 2023.

22 Moving forward to some of the quick  
23 financial updates here. I'm not going to bore

1       you too much with this. But, we had -- you're  
2       going to see some pretty dramatic increases in  
3       numbers. Our enplanements for April, '21  
4       budgeted was sixty-six thousand eight forty. We  
5       actually came in at ninety-seven thousand two  
6       ninety-nine, so traffic is coming back. And  
7       we're looking at -- excuse me. So that's the  
8       budget piece. And then on the actual enplanement  
9       numbers, back in April -- it's hard to believe.  
10      Back in April of '20, we only had four thousand  
11      nine hundred and eighty-three people leave the  
12      airport on flights. And that was compared to  
13      ninety-seven thousand two ninety-nine actual this  
14      year. So if you do the math, it's like, you  
15      know, eighteen hundred fifty-three percent  
16      increase year over year. So they're coming back.

17             And I can tell you, on a side note, you  
18      know, we're actually now seeing five thousand  
19      plus days at the airport. Not regularly, but  
20      there's a pretty specific pattern that's kind of  
21      shaping up. Mondays are pretty strong. Tuesdays  
22      are relatively slow, but then Wednesday,  
23      Thursday, Friday gets to be strong again. A

1 little drop-off on Saturday and then a strong day  
2 on Sunday and that pattern has been very  
3 consistent over the past several weeks. So we  
4 anticipate that we'll be doing pretty well going  
5 forward.

6 And the good news about that is that our  
7 total revenue for year over year comparison which  
8 of course is our lifeline, you know, we had a six  
9 hundred and forty -- six hundred and eighty-four  
10 thousand positive variance on concession revenue.  
11 So the tap is starting to flow again and get some  
12 of that money that's so critical to operating the  
13 airport.

14 And let's see. That's it for that. I just  
15 wanted to take a quick thing. So we always track  
16 our revenues by the various categories, food and  
17 beverage, car rentals, parking, et cetera. And  
18 we look at the chart that's in the book right  
19 now. It looks like we're out of the norm. It's  
20 three dollars and sixteen cents per enplanement  
21 for car rentals. And I wanted to touch base a  
22 little bit on that. Right now it's become very,  
23 very expensive across the country to rent a car

1           wherever you're going. And the reason for that  
2           is that early on in the pandemic, car rental  
3           companies started selling their overabundance of  
4           cars, so now they have a limited inventory, a  
5           much smaller inventory of cars which drives the  
6           price up on that. And if you, if you probably  
7           have read, there's certain communities where it's  
8           costing you two, three hundred dollars a day to  
9           rent a car when you go to the southern states.  
10          So it's a struggle on that. We do not have any  
11          provisions in our contract to dictate what they  
12          can charge for a car. That's up to the car  
13          rental companies. But I just wanted to point  
14          that out.

15                 And let's see. What else is in here? We've  
16          got that. Again, at Niagara Falls, as you know  
17          Spirit is still not flying. It doesn't mean  
18          they're not coming back, but they're still in a  
19          holding pattern. But the numbers for Allegiant  
20          were pretty good compared to last year. We only  
21          had a hundred and thirty-eight people fly out  
22          last year in April. This year we had four  
23          thousand two hundred and seven. So, again,

1 people are looking to travel. There's zero doubt  
2 about that in my mind.

3 And, let's see, what else in here is  
4 interesting? I did want to touch and mention one  
5 point. On page fifteen, you'll see at the  
6 bottom, you see BNIA contributions. Going back  
7 in history, the airlines were always funding a  
8 portion of the deficit at Niagara Falls. And as  
9 time went on and as Niagara Falls started getting  
10 commercial service -- because we didn't have that  
11 for a long time. But, when Spirit and Allegiant  
12 were flying, as well as a couple other  
13 airlines -- other carriers, the airlines came to  
14 us and said, look, we're fine to fund it if you  
15 don't have our competition at Niagara Falls.  
16 Because we're actually giving them a subsidy. So  
17 we had to reach a deal with them that at some  
18 point we would drop that down to where they  
19 weren't contributing to Niagara Falls and we're  
20 at that point now. So now Buffalo will be  
21 actually subsidizing some of that, that loss at  
22 Niagara Falls going forward. So hopefully we can  
23 get some more service back, get some more

1 revenues up there and take some of the burden off  
2 at the Buffalo airport.

3 And let's see. A couple of other things. I  
4 just wanted to point out, the airlines at Buffalo  
5 are really starting to focus on increasing  
6 traffic to business markets which is a critically  
7 important element of our -- for our airport. And  
8 if you look at, if you look at American Airlines,  
9 for example, you know, they're going down -- they  
10 have thirty-one flights to Washington, D.C.,  
11 Charlotte's jumped to twenty-five, Philadelphia  
12 is now plus forty -- forty flights more is what  
13 they're projecting to be. And these are monthly  
14 numbers, so don't get too excited about it. But  
15 it was up. And they're critically important.  
16 And Delta now has jumped back in and they're back  
17 in JFK, so they're going to be having eighty-six  
18 flights more per month to JFK and that's an  
19 important number. And, again, those are all kind  
20 of business routes that are there. And then  
21 Southwest is also jumping back in a little bit  
22 too because they're going to add forty-one  
23 flights to Baltimore starting next month.



1           A couple other items of note. We did have  
2           some pop-up vaccinations at the airport. New  
3           York State asked if we would host those folks.  
4           So the set-up is that they're in currently the  
5           Fort (sic) Erie Grill area which is the  
6           pre-security food and beverage operation which is  
7           not currently operating. So we have the  
8           opportunity to sign some people up and get the  
9           vaccine. It hasn't been robust by any stretch of  
10          the imagination. You know, we're probably  
11          talking there have been only about twenty  
12          vaccinations over the last three days. But, you  
13          know, if it becomes more successful, we'll  
14          continue to allow them to do that.

15          I also wanted to note that we, we have  
16          closed -- as you know, we've closed a lot of our  
17          food and beverage operations just because of the  
18          lack of volume, but now that we're turning that  
19          corner, I've pressed really hard on Delaware  
20          North and a few things are going to happen. So  
21          the Anchor Bar is supposed to open sometime next  
22          week. And this is all dependent on how many  
23          people they can actually hire to be able to staff

1           that on a regular basis. The Tim Hortons is as  
2           soon as they get people hired, they will open Tim  
3           Hortons. So they're looking very hard for  
4           individuals throughout the airport and get those  
5           opened. The JetSet East, which is our little  
6           convenience -- so the JetSet, which is our  
7           convenience store, for lack of a better term, in  
8           the airport -- we have two of them. One is right  
9           up by the checkpoint. The other one is on the  
10          east end. That's going to be opened five days a  
11          week. Tuesday and Saturday it will be closed.  
12          Those are our two slowest days. But, they'll be  
13          operating from five a.m. to one p.m. which is  
14          great. They'll catch that big rush in the  
15          morning.

16                 And let's see. Then, also, we have heard  
17          back from the lounge. The lounge is right now  
18          targeting June 23rd to reopen. Again, you know,  
19          it's dependent on if they can get the employees  
20          back to be able to open that. And Fisher Price  
21          is targeting reopening next week. They have the  
22          play gates in the airport, spread out through the  
23          airport. So we -- and really there's not much

1 maintenance that they do. They do have to come  
2 in and keep it clean, but we've committed to do  
3 an antistatic -- the static spray that we can put  
4 on so that -- we'll do that once a week for them  
5 just to give them a little help to get that thing  
6 open.

7 I also wanted to talk a little bit about the  
8 status of the Canadian border. As you know,  
9 right now it's closed. And typically it's thirty  
10 percent of our traffic. So I did a little  
11 researching on kind of how the Canadian -- Canada  
12 is actually coming forth with their vaccinations  
13 compared to what's happening in the U.S. So as  
14 of two days ago, that's what that information  
15 was, in Canada they had administered twenty-one  
16 point nine million doses. There was one, one  
17 point seven four million fully vaccinated  
18 individuals. And that equates to four point six  
19 percent of the Canadian population, which is  
20 about -- it's about thirty-nine -- just about  
21 thirty-nine million people. In the U.S. the  
22 numbers are much more robust. We have  
23 administered two hundred and eighty-eight million

1 doses, we have a hundred and thirty-one million  
2 fully vaccinated and we're at thirty-nine point  
3 nine percent. So that's telling me that we  
4 probably have some more waiting to do before that  
5 border gets open. They have to get those numbers  
6 up in Canada before I think they'll open up their  
7 borders.

8 And just a couple of quick things. You'll  
9 see up here on our screen, you can see we're  
10 trending very nicely with respect to, you know,  
11 our checkpoint throughput. So you can see we're  
12 really on the rise here.

13 If I can go to the next slide. But more  
14 importantly, our airport ambassadors are coming  
15 back in little drips. And this is Bill Hale. He  
16 was there right from the beginning, and he is an  
17 outstanding individual to get people feeling  
18 comfortable as they're going through the  
19 checkpoint in the morning. He's our morning  
20 person and he does a phenomenal job.

21 And then also, on the next slide, you'll see  
22 that we've got -- our Paws for Love program is  
23 back. Maya and Jake are here. People absolutely

1 love these dogs when they walk through the  
2 terminal. So that just a nice little way for the  
3 people to have a little bit of relaxation before  
4 they go off on their flights.

5 And that's what I have for you today. If  
6 there's any questions.

7 COMMISSIONER PERRY: Is there any way that we can get  
8 Maya and Jake onto the aircraft to calm down the  
9 spike in rage in passengers?

10 MR. VANECEK: I would love to be able to do that;  
11 however, that is at the sole discretion of each  
12 individual airline and they will all tell you no.

13 COMMISSIONER PERRY: So for, so for our Niagara Falls  
14 service and for those carriers, it seems to me  
15 that one of the things that's going to happen is  
16 at some point the Canadian border is going to  
17 open and all of this pent-up demand of travelers  
18 that we see worldwide, especially the Canadians  
19 which are the vast majority of our passengers,  
20 they're going to be looking for flights, and if  
21 those carriers are not establishing the service  
22 and selling tickets in advance of that somehow,  
23 that there's going to be some leakage for them,

1           which is a risk, is it not? You know, they'll  
2           find other pathways.

3 MR. VANECEK: Well, it's risk, but they can drive  
4           past the Niagara Falls airport to Buffalo.  
5           They're still going to have plenty of options,  
6           and expanding options, now as the U.S. airlines  
7           start to expand there. You know, and, again, you  
8           know, Spirit I think will come back eventually,  
9           but they're just right now in a holding pattern.  
10          We're hearing nothing from them. Not (inaudible)  
11          to us. They've left a number of airports. But  
12          I'm pretty confident they'll come back. I just  
13          don't have a timetable for that.

14 COMMISSIONER PERRY: So but then we will make an  
15          effort, we will make an effort to capture those  
16          people --

17 MR. VANECEK: Yeah.

18 COMMISSIONER PERRY: -- at the BNIA?

19 MR. VANECEK: Yeah.

20 COMMISSIONER PERRY: Great. Thank you.

21 MR. VANECEK: Any other questions that I can answer?

22           If not, thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER HICKS: This is Wesley Hicks. Wesley

1 Hicks.

2 MR. VANECEK: Yeah.

3 COMMISSIONER HICKS: I have a quick question. What's  
4 your projection of how soon before the border  
5 will open based on your best estimation?

6 MR. VANECEK: I guess if I had to guess -- and it's  
7 purely a guess. But, I'm saying we're, we're  
8 probably looking at September at the earliest,  
9 and I wouldn't be surprised if it leaks into  
10 October or November. The numbers are just  
11 so bad.

12 COMMISSIONER HICKS: Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER PERRY: That's very, and that's very,  
14 very sad, because then we miss the whole summer.  
15 I think you're right, Bill. And it's very sad  
16 because the economy misses the whole summer again  
17 and that's a big challenge, so -- unfortunate.

18 MR. VANECEK: Yep. All right. Thank you.

19 CHAIR SISTER ROCHE: Thank you very much. Are there  
20 any other comments to come forward?

21 Well, thank you to all those who presented.  
22 It's a really good overview of what's happening  
23 these days. And it is different, but it is

1 coming back, and I'm impressed with everything  
2 that is going on in spite of everything else,  
3 what you're doing with the transit and airport  
4 and with HR. It's wonderful. Doing a great job.

5 So we will take a break now. It is ten  
6 minutes to twelve. And we'll come back for our  
7 full board meeting at twelve-thirty or a few  
8 minutes before, please. We'll see you then.

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STATE OF NEW YORK)  
SS:  
COUNTY OF NIAGARA)

I, Valerie A. Rosati, a Notary Public in and for the State of New York, County of Niagara, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the above transcript of a video recording was taken down by me in a verbatim manner by means of Machine Shorthand, and that the transcript was then reduced into writing under my direction.

I further CERTIFY that the above-described transcript constitutes a true and accurate and complete transcript of the video recording.

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VALERIE A. ROSATI,  
Notary Public.

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