ROADBLOCK
Voters reject city's transit plan

Business leaders call for a quick rebound and urge the city to find alternatives on the heels of the bruising defeat of Nashville's mass-transit plan.

STORY BY MEG GARNER | PHOTOS BY NATHAN MORGAN

REAL ESTATE
Financial giant lands in Nashville
New York money manager AllianceBernstein is moving its headquarters, and 1,000 jobs, to Music City. ADAM SICHKO

MANUFACTURING
Famed Gibson files for bankruptcy
The signature Nashville guitar maker is regrouping after financial troubles. ELEANOR KENNEDY

THE LIST
They build Nashville

NASHVILLE BUSINESS JOURNAL
May 4, 2018
Vol. 53, No. 18, 86
1800 Church St.
Suite 300
Nashville, TN 37203

Breaking news online
NashvilleBusinessJournal.com

On Twitter
@nashvillebiz

Daily email updates
NashvilleBusinessJournal.com/email
Community has benefited from Nashville’s new cachet, executives feel the city’s mounting transportation issues acutely. That increasing congestion hurts both recruitment and retention of employees, in that it chips away at Nashville’s quality-of-life pitch.

This is why many of the business community’s biggest players spearheaded by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, an architect of the referendum campaign – have invested so much time and money into the city’s transit push.

At an election night watch party at the Adventure Science Center, Ralph Schulz, the chamber’s CEO, conceded the race, telling the discouraged crowd the city’s transit push wasn’t over, but “voters have obviously spoken.” Briley did not attend the pro-transit event.

Schulz later told reporters, “The most important thing to take out of today is that we still have the issue, and we’re going to have to continue talking about this to solve the issue. This region is going to continue to grow, but the growth is going to take on a different complexion. It will now be even more urgent for businesses to be close to their workforce, so I think you’re going to see growth that isn’t necessarily as concentrated” along specific corridors.

Business leaders, along with other transit backers who attended the watch party, stood in disbelief as the votes were tallied Tuesday night. Those in the crowd were heard saying: “We gave it our best shot,” and: “It will only be more expensive next time.”

Jim Schmitz, retired Middle Tennessee president of Regions Bank, was chairman of the referendum campaign. Boyd, a 43-year veteran in site selection, highlighted the corporate recruitments Atlanta secured in the years after voters there rejected a transit ballot issue in 2012. “If there is one Achilles’ heel of Atlanta, We always been the roadway system that traffic and commuting. Atlanta did not slip a beat after the referendum was defeated,” he said. – Adam Sichko

“The team who originally proposed that plan should spend time learning what was missing to obtain a ‘yes’ vote. Revise the plan where necessary, and immediately meet with all community stakeholders to gain support. We still need solutions for transit in the very near future.”

Don Hardin, founder and president, Don Hardin Group

“The most important thing to take out of today is that we still have the issue, and we’re going to have to continue talking about this to solve the issue. This region is going to continue to grow, but the growth is going to take on a different complexion. It will now be even more urgent for businesses to be close to their workforce, so I think you’re going to see growth that isn’t necessarily as concentrated” along specific corridors.

Lauren Reed, CEO, Reed Public Relations

“Improving our bus service to make it more convenient and accessible for riders so they don’t have to go into downtown to change buses. We also need to come up with a transportation plan to really solve the traffic congestion on a regional level, which may or may not include a rail system.”

David Hawkins, principal, FH Design

“The city’s growing gridlock problems are not going to go away. The city should quickly pull together a group of community leaders and stakeholders to identify next steps and find innovative, cost-effective solutions to ensure Nashville remains a great place to live and work.”

Barry Vandevelde, COO, Asurion

“The failure of the proposed transit plan should be viewed as a step to an alternative transit solution. Transit has become an issue that reasonable people can disagree on. So, it stands to logic that reasonable people can find common ground to find a plan that the majority can get behind.”

JJ Rosen, CEO, Atiba