How Nashville Works
Recommendations to Mayor O'Connell
November 21, 2023

POLICY BRIEF

Nashvillians want affordable housing, safe neighborhoods, and equitable educational opportunities. Underlying each of these issues – and decisions about other big topics that impact Nashvillians' quality of life – is the need for city services that work well.

The Mayor charged this committee with recommending solutions to help make Metro work for all Nashvillians.[1] He specifically directed us to focus on some of the "15 Fixes" he put forward as part of his mayoral campaign.[2]

Mayor O'Connell has articulated his aim to make Nashville's government the premier customer-service organization in the city.[3] Progress toward this goal would pave the way for the advancement of each of the 15 Fixes.

With this focus in mind, this committee has aligned on a short list of recommended actions that we believe could have a significant impact.

I.   Guiding Principles

While many of this committee's recommendations are designed to be implemented in the short term, we begin with guiding principles intended to help steer Mayor O'Connell's administration as he tackles the 15 Fixes and well into the future.

- Metro Government should be accessible to all Nashvillians. They should be able to communicate with the city in the way that works best for them, and they should experience best-in-class customer service when they engage with the city.

- Decisions about Metro policy should be open and transparent. Nashvillians should be actively included in community conversations about our city's path forward.

- Metro leaders should hold themselves accountable to Nashvillians. They should provide regular reports about their progress toward promised solutions and demonstrate how community input has shaped their decisions.

- Mayor O'Connell should foster a culture of collaboration between Metro departments and with Metro-affiliated offices. Increased coordination across Metro entities will help expedite solutions to issues Nashvillians face.

II.   Policy Recommendations

Each of these recommendations embodies one or more of this committee's guiding principles and involves actions that could be taken in the short term.

A. The O'Connell Administration should ensure that every Metro department delivers excellent customer service, and that every Nashvillian can interact with Metro Government in the way that works best for them.

Every Nashvillian who interacts with Metro Government deserves a-best-in-class customer-service experience regardless of what department they are working with, what part of town they live in, or what problem they are seeking to solve. Mayor O'Connell should regularly communicate that delivering exemplary customer service is a priority within Metro, and he should lead the development of a system that delivers it.[4]

From Metro leaders to front-line staff, employees need resources – like training, technology, and equipment – to deliver an excellent customer-service experience. To ensure Metro departments and offices are adequately equipped, Mayor O'Connell should work with Metro Council and other Metro officials to align on customer service as a priority worthy of investment. Further, the Mayor should encourage the heads of all Metro departments and elected offices to create a plan – or sharpen existing plans – to deliver excellent customer service.

The O'Connell Administration should seek to better understand Nashvillians' experiences with Metro Government today. It could, for example:

- Review interactions related to the services Nashvillians access most often, *e.g.*, trash and recycling, non-emergency needs, and water and sewer-related requests.[5]

- Study how Nashvilians interact with nashville.gov and hubNashville to determine whether they are easily able to find what they need or file a request.

- Determine where city systems – like payment processes that do not accept credit cards – make interacting with Metro harder than they should.

- Identify places where red tape entangles Nashvillians seeking a permit from the city to advance an important community goal, like building affordable housing or bringing a grocery store to a food desert.

Next, the O'Connell Administration should work with Metro department heads and other leaders to upgrade goals and metrics related to customer service. They might consider these questions: If Metro were the premier customer-service organization in the city, and it effectively utilized technology and data to deliver exemplary service, what would that look like?

How might we ensure that all Nashvillians can access their government in a way that works for them?

Finally, relevant Metro employees should be trained in customer-service delivery and the use of metrics. Performance reviews, compensation, and other measures of success could be linked to customer-service outcomes to help reinforce these principles.

B. Mayor O'Connell should adequately resource hubNashville, and he should empower its team to clearly communicate with Nashvillians and proactively address their requests.

hubNashville is critical to Metro's work to address Nashvillians' needs. Mayor O'Connell should promote it among Nashvillians and prioritize it within Metro Government.

Nashvillians who submit a hubNashville request should know what progress Metro has made toward addressing their issue, how long a fix will take, and when it has been resolved.[6] To help make this happen, Mayor O'Connell should work with Metro leaders to ensure that, whenever possible, the hub has access to the real-time information necessary to keep Nashvillians informed.

Nashvillians should not need to understand each Metro department's scope of work in order to get their needs met. But today not every Metro department and office is integrated with hubNashville. Connecting Metro Parks, Metro Water Services, the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department, the Sheriff's Office, and/or Nashville Electric Service with the hub would allow it to more fully serve as Metro Government's front door.

Finally, the O'Connell Administration should ensure that hubNashville is empowered to proactively identify and resolve long-term issues. For example, hub staff recently identified an increase in Nashvillians' requests related to cars and other property that had been abandoned in the public right-of-way. They worked with other Metro departments to get the items removed but, even more importantly, to change the way Metro addresses abandoned property. Mayor O'Connell and his team should accelerate more problem-solving like this.

C. The O'Connell Administration should prioritize openness and accountability in all of Metro's policy decisions.

All Nashvillians should all be able to participate in and contribute to decisions Metro leaders make about big issues our city faces. And no resident should be left with questions about how to communicate with their government, participate in public hearings, or understand what city plans and policies mean for their daily lives.[7]

The O'Connell Administration should lead efforts to ensure that Metro departments' public meetings move beyond mere openness and allow for true community engagement. Specifically, public meetings should be adequately noticed, open forums held at convenient

times in readily accessible locations, into which the community has been actively invited. To promote accountability, standards for these public meetings should be publicly available.

Further, Mayor O'Connell should strengthen the divisions of the Mayor's Office that are responsible for engaging Nashvillians, including the Office of New Americans and the Office of Neighborhoods and Community Engagement.[8] And to ensure that Nashvillians have true visibility into the workings of Metro Government, Mayor O'Connell should continue his efforts to regularly bring Nashvillians into the Mayor's Office.

D. Mayor O'Connell should lead efforts to increase collaboration and problem-solving among Metro leaders.

Nashvillians need Mayor O'Connell and his team to lean into solving complicated problems of coordination across multiple departments and Metro-affiliated offices. This kind of collaboration will be critical to a wide array of the 15 Fixes, including for example the development of a comprehensive Community Safety Plan.[9] Any roadmap to making Nashville as safe as it possibly can be will require input from the Metro Nashville Police Department, Metro Schools, the District Attorney, the Public Defender, and more, as well as robust feedback from community members.

III.   Acknowledgments

The committee is grateful for the contributions of Kristin Wilson, the Chief of Operations and Performance, and Erin Williams, the Director of hubNashville, who strengthened this brief by joining one of our meetings to share their expertise.

This committee is proud to provide Mayor O'Connell with these recommendations. We hope they will accelerate progress toward the 15 Fixes and help make Metro work for all Nashvillians.

Committee members:

- Christy Pruitt-Haynes (chair)
- Jim Gingrich
- Edward Henley
- Leshuan Oliver
- Gini Pupo-Walker
- Sydney Rogers
- Marcus Whitney

Endnotes

1. Media Advisory, Ready for Freddie Committee, Freddie O'Connell Announces Chairs of Three Transition Committees (Sept. 15, 2023), https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oP7LGiuBsY7KHIR9guhlTsOD6h-jEl5w/view?usp=drive_link.
2. 15 Fixes on Day One, https://www.readyforfreddie.com/15-fixes (last visited Nov. 15, 2023).
3. *Id.*
4. *Id.*
5. About hubNashville, https://www.nashville.gov/departments/government/hubnashville#:~:text=Illegal%20Dumping%20(317),Missed%20Recycling%20(750) (last visited Nov. 15, 2023).
6. 15 Fixes on Day One, https://www.readyforfreddie.com/15-fixes (last visited Nov. 15, 2023).
7. *Id.*
8. *Id.*
9. *Id.*