



**MINUTES
TANK Board Meeting**

March 3, 2026

Call to Order: 11:10AM

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Ms. Rittinger at 11:10AM

ROLL CALL

Roll call was captured by Matthew Crowe, Board and External Affairs Coordinator.

IN ATTENDANCE, Board Members:

Boone County	Kenton County	Campbell County
Kimberly Rossetti	Scott Guenther	Gina Rittinger
Eric Hall	Ed Kuehne	Brian Ellerman
Laura Thompson		Lisa Cooper

IN ATTENDANCE, Staff/Other:

Mike Duncan – Board Attorney
Gina Douthat – General Manager
John Young – Director of Operations
Olivia Tussey – Transit Planner
Rena Agramonte-Turner – Director of HR
Gary McCulley – Assistant Director of Operations
Matthew Crowe – Board and External Affairs Coordinator

FY 2026–27 Budget Discussion

General Manager Ms. Gina Douthat presented three budget scenarios for FY 2026–27 for committee review. The board must formally adopt a budget by June per state statute.

Ms. Douthat noted several key budget factors applicable to all three scenarios:

- Wages budgeted at a 4% increase per the current CBA. FY 2026–27 is the final year of the agreement; leadership is already planning for the next contract negotiation cycle.
- A 3% increase in service hours reflects newly contracted service only — the Licking River Link (funded by KYTC) and Amazon overnight airport service (fully funded by Amazon). These hours are offset by corresponding contract revenue.
- Fare revenue projections have been corrected upward. The March 2025 service reductions did not result in the anticipated ridership decline; ridership is essentially flat and fare revenue is up year-over-year.
- COVID-era federal operating funds are being drawn down: approximately \$2.4M available this year, ~\$740K next year, and zero beginning in FY 2028–29. County contributions will increase correspondingly each year.
- The annual substandard route review — conducted for 15+ consecutive years — found no substandard fixed routes for the first time. The South Bank Shuttle remains the sole exception.

The county funding formula was updated for FY 2026–27 to include TANK Plus service hours, which are no longer considered a pilot after three full years of operation. The formula allocates contributions equally across population within a mile of a fixed route, employment within a mile of a fixed route, and service hours. As a result: Boone County +0.3%, Campbell County +0.7%, Kenton County –1.0%.

Budget A – Baseline (No Service Changes)

Reflects the system as currently operated with no changes, including the South Bank Shuttle on its full schedule for the full fiscal year. Total budget represents a 6.8% increase over the prior year. Staff are actively pursuing a corporate sponsor for the South Bank Shuttle; Meet NKY has committed \$100,000 for the second consecutive year for this service.

Budget B – Transit Development Plan, Year One

All baseline service is retained with two changes: (1) South Bank Shuttle reduced from approximately 15–16 hours/day to 7–9 hours/day beginning October 2026, with full elimination planned in FY 2027–28 absent a sponsor; and (2) Routes 39 and 40X in Boone County consolidated into a single route. Total is a increase of 4.8% over the prior year and a 4% reduction in service.

Budget C – Meeting the Needs

Incorporates the major 2019 service redesign recommendations as suggested by Nelson Nygaard through the Transit Development Plan. South Bank Shuttle is reduced beginning October 2026 and eliminated in FY 2027–28 absent a sponsor. Most local routes increase in frequency from hourly to every 30 minutes. Routes 1 and 25 are linked to create a 15-minute corridor through downtown Covington. Route 1 is extended to Newport St. Elizabeth/Fort Thomas. Route 16 in West Newport is removed as adjacent changes provide coverage. All express routes remain unchanged. The model projects approximately a 25% increase in fixed-route ridership. This represents a increased of 12.3% over pervious year spending.

Staff noted that if Budget C is adopted, it is recommended that FY 2027–28 include the addition of two TANK Plus on-demand zones (Kenton and Boone Counties). A federal grant covering vehicle costs for this expansion has been approved and will be available in FY 2027–28.

South Bank Shuttle – Discussion

The committee discussed the South Bank Shuttle at length. Key points:

- If the shuttle is continued, vehicles would ultimately be replaced with standard 30-foot fixed-route buses branded for shuttle service, covered by the federal capital program. No replacement buses are in the current capital budget; a decision is needed within 6–8 months.
- The Covington Convention Center will be closed for renovation for approximately two to three years, reducing shuttle demand during that period.
- Additional sponsorship conversations were identified as a near-term priority. Potential partners discussed include the Cincinnati Bengals, Cincinnati Reds, and Party Source considering the recently approved alcohol advertising policy.
- Transit Planner Ms. Olivia Tussey noted that a phased reduction this year preserves the ability to implement the Route 1/25 15-minute corridor in FY 2027–28 without a coverage gap in South Covington.

Fleet & Capital Planning

Director of Operations, Mr. John Young and Ms. Douthat previewed a vehicle fleet strategy presentation to be brought to the next Operations Committee meeting. Staff are analyzing passenger load data by route, time of day, and stopping to determine appropriate vehicle sizing. Approximately half of current routes may be candidates for smaller vehicles. Staff noted that farebox purchased approximately 15 years ago have exceeded their rated useful life and a replacement decision will be required.

Long-Range Financial Outlook

Ms. Douthat presented multi-year projections through FY 2028–29 under the Budget A baseline. The expiration of COVID-era federal operating funds creates an approximate \$2.5M annual structural gap beginning in FY 2027–28, compounded by assumed 5% annual operating cost growth. The committee acknowledged these trends are not unique to TANK but noted the projections will require different conversations with county fiscal courts in upcoming years.

Board Direction

Following discussion, the committee directed the General Manager to present Budget Options B and C to the three county fiscal courts, with the board's position that Option C represents the minimum level of service needed to meet the transit needs of the Northern Kentucky community. This recommendation was made through a motion by Mr. Ellerman, seconded by Ms. Cooper and approved by the board unanimously. Budget B is presented as the fiscally constrained alternative.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned by Ms. Rittinger.