

# Fact Sheet on Fairgrounds Speedway Proposal

## High-level, shared goals:

- Shift the financial burden away from Nashville taxpayers who, per Metro Charter, are currently responsible for facility improvements and ongoing maintenance on the speedway.
- Create better – not *more* – racing by maintaining the 10 race weekends per year, reducing track rentals, and renovating the facilities to include state-of-the-art sound absorption equipment to reduce auto racing sounds by 50 percent over current conditions.
- Complete the modernized Fairgrounds and preserve a unique piece of Nashville’s history by restoring the second-oldest operating motor speedway in the United States. Originally home to harness horse racing, the Fairgrounds track dates to 1891, one year before Ryman Auditorium opened its doors.

## Update on process:

On November 8, 2022, the Metro Fair Board received documents and a presentation of a proposal to revitalize the historic Nashville Fairgrounds Speedway (NFS). The lease and development agreements between Metro and Bristol Motor Speedway (BMS) set the stage for preserving and restoring one of the nation’s most revered racetracks.

Subject to approval by the Fair Board, the Metro Sports Authority and Metro Council, BMS would enter into a long-term contract to lease, manage and maintain the NFS. The proposal funds track renovations and ongoing maintenance without requiring any general obligation debt. The proposal would complete the reimagined Nashville Fairgrounds campus and transform the speedway facility into a year-round, multipurpose venue. Pending Fair Board approval, the proposal will be sent to Metro Council in spring 2023.

## Agreement overview:

- 30-year lease for BMS to manage, operate and maintain NFS
- The project is also funded by an up-front contribution of \$17 million by the State of Tennessee and a \$17 million contribution from the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp
- Metro Sports Authority will issue 30-year revenue bonds to finance the speedway renovation. Revenue streams for debt service and facility maintenance include rent payments, taxes paid by venue patrons, sponsorship agreements and event revenue
- Renovations to include:
  - Rebuilt grandstand to seat approximately 30,000 fans
  - Addition of new multipurpose event facilities
  - Renovation of the racing surface, including modernizing driver and spectator safety features
  - Installation of state-of-the-art sound absorption features to reduce auto racing sounds by 50 percent over current conditions
  - Updating the entire facility to bring into ADA compliance
- Race weekends to remain limited to 10 per year and track rental dates will be reduced
- BMS to develop a calendar of non-racing events, including partnership with the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp
- Lease agreement includes a commitment from BMS to host NASCAR Cup races

## Completing a comprehensive renovation of the Fairgrounds

Pending approvals by the Fair Board, Metro Council, and the Sports Authority, this partnership will deliver the final component for a comprehensive modernization of the historic Nashville Fairgrounds. Recent renovations to the Fairgrounds have included a new state-of-the-art Major League Soccer stadium, an upgraded Fair Park, new expo facilities, and forthcoming mixed-use development, but have lacked a vision for the speedway’s future until now.

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## **Partnership with an industry leader**

Bristol Motor Speedway, part of the Speedway Motorsports family, is a leading auto racing organization with the expertise to create a better future for the NFS. Bristol's role would include operating and maintaining the speedway, hiring and managing personnel, attracting events and sponsors, and making contractual payments to Metro and the Fair Board. BMS would maintain the current 10-weekend race schedule and apply its expertise to build a robust calendar of non-racing activities including corporate events, festivals, and other special events.

## **Responsibly addressing Metro's financial obligation for the speedway**

In 2011, 71 percent of Nashville voters supported a Metro Charter amendment to protect the historic uses of the Fairgrounds, including the speedway. As a result, the Fair Board has a mandate to maintain the speedway facility and operate a racing program. Over the decades, Metro has lacked the capital to invest in the facility. The current facility has a significant unfunded maintenance backlog including a lack of industry-standard safety features.

Per Metro Charter, Nashville residents are currently financially responsible for facility improvements and ongoing maintenance. This proposal shifts this financial obligation away from local taxpayers and onto Bristol. The Metro Sports Authority would issue revenue bonds to be paid for by facility patrons and track activity: rent payments, sponsorships, food & beverage revenue sharing, ticket taxes, and sales tax generated at the facility.

## **Preserving a piece of Nashville's history**

Nashville Fairgrounds Speedway is a legendary venue in global motorsports. Nashville Fairgrounds Speedway is the second-oldest operating motor speedway in the United States, with auto racing beginning in 1904. Originally home to harness horse racing, the Fairgrounds track dates to 1891, one year before Ryman Auditorium opened its doors. Paved in 1958, NFS hosted NASCAR Cup races that included wins by Richard Petty, Darrell Waltrip and Dale Earnhardt.

## **Modernization that benefits the neighborhood**

- The track renovation will include state-of-the-art sound absorption components that along with other steps will reduce overall track auto sounds by 50 percent, according to an analysis by Wrightson, Johnson, Haddon & Williams, a renowned acoustical engineering firm. Reduction is achieved through construction modifications, muffler requirements for non-NASCAR motorsports events, and a reduction in track rental days. All of these conditions are in the agreement.
- Bristol Motor Speedway has agreed to community partnerships with local nonprofits including Conexion Americas, Glencliff High School (Maintenance and Light Repair Pathway), Fall-Hamilton School, Boys & Girls Clubs of Middle Tennessee, Operation Stand Down Tennessee (support for military veterans), North Nashville Community Economic Development Consortium, and a local chapter of Speedway Children's Charities.