

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102
January 25, 2024
8:30 a.m.**

MINUTES

The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Board met on Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 8:30 a.m., in person at the Authority's Administration Building, 2222 Cuming Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68102, and virtually. Notice was published in the Omaha Daily Record on January 19, 2024, in advance of the meeting. For the benefit of the public in attendance, a copy of the Open Meetings Law is posted in the meeting room and the Agenda is published on the display in the facility lobby. The following persons were in attendance at the meeting:

Authority Board:

Mr. Daniel Lawse, Chair
Mr. Othello Meadows, Vice Chair (Absent)
Mr. Jay Lund (Absent)
Ms. Amy Haase
Ms. Julia Plucker

Authority Staff:

L. Cencic, CEO/Executive Director
I. Maldonado, Deputy Executive Officer (Absent)
D. Grant, Human Capital, and Talent Development Director
E. Simpson, Legal Director (Absent)
K. Pendland, IT Director (Virtually)
W. Clingman, Finance Director
D. Kelsey, Operations Director (Absent)
J. Willoughby, Senior Project Manager (Absent)
R. Sherping, Safety Director
A. Johnson, Civil Rights & Inclusion Director
J. Beverage, Maintenance Director (Absent)
N. Ebat, Sr. Manager of Communications & Community Relations
S. Perry, Executive Administrator & Board Secretary

Others Present:

Other Metro staff
Members of the public

Metro connects people, places, and opportunities through quality transit services.

Agenda Item #1 Call to Order at 8:31 am

Notice of the Regular Meeting was published in the Omaha Daily Record on January 19, 2024. For the benefit of the public in attendance, a copy of the Open Meeting Law is posted in the meeting room, and the Agenda is published on the display located in the facility lobby and online at ometro.com.

Agenda Item #2 Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

The first item of business is the approval of minutes from the previous meeting.

Regular Meeting: December 21, 2023

Motioned by Plucker; Seconded by Haase

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #3 General Public Comment Period

This is an opportunity for members of the audience to be heard regarding topics related to the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha, not on the agenda for a maximum of 2 minutes.

No comments were communicated before the board.

Agenda Item #4 Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic began her administrative report pointing out that the new IT Configurations in the boardroom were being used for the first time at this board meeting. She also further explained that new IT will be implemented in the downstairs training room. This will enhance Metro's ability to conduct better training and quality hybrid and community engagement interactions with the public.

Ridership in January

There was slightly lower ridership anticipated and experienced due to the extreme weather events that occurred. Acknowledgment and appreciation were extended for how hard the staff (all departments) worked during the weather events. Some adjustments had to be made during these events and consisted of late starts, early pull-ins, and some cancellations of express services due to freezing temperatures. However, with the weather, Metro still saw significant ridership. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day there were no express routes, routes started at 8 am and ended at 6 pm still carried 2,400 riders and on the following day carried over 5,000 riders during those same service hours.

There was never a day when services were completely canceled despite the weather.

Mr. Lawse asked about the customer's response.

Ms. Cencic indicated there were negative comments but more positive feedback regarding getting the information out to the public.

During the last board meeting, Ms. Cencic informed the Board of the start of the Leadership Academy the following month. Metro Leadership Academy a/k/a MLA started on January 24th. MLA received 35 applications but was only able to accept 15 participants which was about a 40% acceptance rate. The first-cohort participants come from different perspectives and experiences which include 2 Mechanics, 2 Fixed Operators, 1 Moby Operator, 10 Administrative staff including 2 Managers, 2 Dispatch Supervisors, 1 Moby Dispatch Supervisor, 1 Communications Specialist, 1 Civil Rights and Inclusion, 1 HR, and 2 from Training.

Unapproved Board Minutes

Mr. Lawse said that he was sad that everyone could not be in this first cohort and thanked all the staff who were involved. He further explained that as a rider of transit service himself, he appreciates the safe driving of the drivers, the mechanics, and the administration who are keeping the buses running.

The Administrative Report and follow-up were concluded.

The meeting was moved back to Agenda Item #3 for public comment due to Mr. Foltz's difficulty unmuting during the applicable time.

Agenda Item #3 General Public Comment Period

Benny Foltz, CEO of Roam Share Non-Profit Local Bike Share Operation to include Heartland Bike Share and Bike Link in Lincoln and Valentine NE 1144 N 11th Street 68102

LB 1250 has been pushed to the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. Mr. Foltz is asking for support. It is a bike share bill, the first for Nebraska the 2nd in the country. This would be providing financial support through a grant process.

It is not currently open for public comment yet, but he indicates he will let Metro know.

Mr. Lawse asked if this would be offered as state funding under a competitive grant.

Mr. Foltz's response was it's currently under the Economic Development Department and at this time it's very vague by design. The Economic Development Department will determine who is eligible, but the criteria is still being determined. Mr. Foltz is also hoping that the funds can cover operational costs, which is vital for his organization.

Further exchange between Metro and Mr. Foltz

Metro has partnered with bike share in the past with ORBT stations and is a good first and last-mile option to the bus stops.

Both are regional and every new bus stop Metro considers bike share, and the holistic partnership is working out great for this community and region.

Agenda Item #5 Administrative Reports

a. Administration/Human Resources (D. Grant)

Updates regarding December recruiting were as follows: 11 new roles began including 7 Transit Operators, 2 Building Facility Personnel, 1 Project Manager, and 1 Mechanic Supervisor. Mr. Grant said that Metro is excited to see the new faces.

Metro has posted for Safety and Security Specialists, Community Mobility Coordinator, Inventory Specialist, and Transit Field Supervisor in addition to the current openings for Operators and Custodians.

Mr. Grant concluded his report and opened the floor to additional questions.

Mr. Lawse asked if operator training and onboarding had picked up or remained steady during the winter months. Does it have an impact on applicants?

Mr. Grant responded that during the winter months, it remains steady and has a consistent number of applicants starting. The Training Department has been revamping some of their training which is making improvements to the process and how many are graduating.

b. Programs/Operation

(I. Maldonado)

Mr. Sherping provided the report on behalf of Maldonado.

Quarterly Safety Training in December was held.

Pick started on the 14th of January, at this time not able to gauge the effect of the new pick on Operator absences, as Metro has been operating in snow emergency protocols since the start of the pick.

Weather-related service interruptions, late starts, and a few buses were delayed due to towing waits. Mr. Sherping acknowledged the Maintenance staff for their work during these events.

Now having the new TWU president and union stewards in place the safety committee is equal with Metro and Union leadership.

Departments worked together to make sure all were on the same page to communicate with customers regarding interruptions.

MUD injects propane into CNG lines. Buses must go over to Council Bluffs Sapp Brothers to fuel up which takes time. Volunteers from various departments have come in during off time to help get buses fueled.

Moby services do not operate on snow routes due to customers being picked up in various neighborhoods; therefore, a meeting was held on how to handle them during snow services. Communications informed Moby staff of all the changes.

While the Omaha Metropolitan Area experienced various days with below-zero temperatures the proactive efforts of the maintenance team to add anti-gelling additive to all diesel buses, resulted in zero diesel buses experiencing the effect of fuel gelling which occurs during extremely cold temperatures. Proper planning and preparations helped reduce the number of Metro vehicles being stuck in the snow and the number of accidents and safety incidents.

Maintenance and Purchasing staff continue to report experiencing long delays in the delivery of parts which has affected the timely repair of buses and the number of buses available for daily services. As of the present time we have three buses with extensive mechanical repairs being repaired by external vendors, we also have seven buses that are waiting for critical parts and eight buses needing considerable repairs due to accidents.

Mr. Sherping concluded the report and opened the floor for additional questions.

Mr. Lawse extended a thank you for the coordinated efforts to fuel and keep buses in service during extreme weather. He appreciates the proactive training provided for all levels of drivers during the winter months.

c. Communications

(N. Ebat)

During the weather events between the Communications and Dispatch departments 122 MyRide Alerts were pushed out to the community regarding service interruptions and frequency reduction.

Being proactive to give the best notice to customers, Communications utilized various avenues to alert Metro customers e.g. MyRide, GoMetro.

During the recent weather events, Communications shared information on social media with 15 Facebook posts, 32 tweets, and 16 news stories, but the department is reviewing for more news stories. Communications remained active in the comments on social media platforms to respond to and answer any additional comments posted by the community.

The Omaha World-Herald wrote a good story on the Metro staff which consisted of the operators and mechanics driving buses and cleaning shelters in -40-degree weather.

Now that school is back from winter break, outreach has continued to bring awareness to students regarding passes and free fares.

K-12 student rider responsibility will be a part of that focused awareness.

Ms. Ebat concluded her report and opened the floor to questions. There were none.

Agenda Item #6 Resolution 2024-01: Request Approval of Title VI Fare Equity Analysis for the K-12 Rides Free Program

(A. Johnson)

In compliance with Metro's Title VI Program, a Fare Equity Analysis was conducted on the K-12 Rides Free Pass Program to identify the impact of the proposed changes on low-income and minority populations. The program provides free bus, MOBY, and ORBT rides during Metro's regular service hours for any K-12 student in Omaha and the surrounding area. Initially started as a pilot program (May 10, 2021, through June 1, 2022), the program has continued in the pilot phase with temporary funding. On January 11, 2024, the Omaha Public Schools Board of Education approved a contract to provide funding through July 31, 2025.

Metro's Title VI Policy requires a Fare Equity Analysis to be completed for any proposed increases, decreases, or elimination of a fare type to determine if the proposal has a discriminatory impact on minority and/or low-income populations.

The Title VI Fare Equity Analysis found:

- No disparate impact on minority riders.
- No disproportionate burden on low-income riders.
- Minority and/or low-income riders will not be limited by or denied the benefits of the proposed fare change.

Board approval will ensure Metro's continued compliance with the Federal Transit Administration's Title VI requirements.

Staff Recommends Approval.

The Planning and Policy Committee reviewed the policy prior to the board meeting.

Motioned by Haase; Seconded by Plucker

**ROLL CALL:
UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES**

Agenda Item #7 Board Chair Report

The Metro CEO is in the process of her annual review. The Board will be addressing that at the February board meeting.

Appreciation for keeping everything running during the weather conditions.

Metro is recruiting potential candidates for the elected board. The filing deadline is mid-February for incumbents and early March for new candidates. You must file to be a candidate and then meet with your constituents for their vote.

Agenda Item #8 Date, Time, and Place of Next Regular Board Meeting

February 2024 Board Meeting will be held Thursday, February 22, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. at the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority's - Administrative Building

Agenda Item #9 Adjournment at 9:07 am

Motioned by Haase; Seconded by Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Daniel Lawse, Board Chair

Selina Perry, Board Secretary