

REGULAR BOARD MEETING
REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102
June 27, 2024
8:30 a.m.

MINUTES

The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Board met on Thursday, June 27, 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 June 21, 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
Ms. Amy Haase
Ms. Julia Plucker

Authority Staff:

L. Cencic, CEO/Executive Director
K. Pendland, Interim Deputy Executive Officer
D. Grant, Human Capital, and Talent Development Director
E. Simpson, Legal Director (Virtually)
W. Clingman, Finance Director
J. Willoughby, Senior Project Manager (Virtually)
R. Sherping, Safety Director (Virtually)
A. Johnson, Civil Rights & Inclusion Director (Virtually)
J. Beverage, Maintenance Director (Virtually)
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 8:34 am

Notice was published in the Omaha Daily Record on June 21, 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.

Agenda Item #2 Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

- a. Regular Meeting: April 25, 2024

Motioned by Plucker; Seconded by Haase

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS ABSENT, LUND ABSTAIN), MOTION CARRIES

- b. Regular Meeting: May 23, 2024

Motioned by Haase; Seconded by Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS ABSENT, LUND ABSTAIN), 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 public comments were presented to the Board.

Agenda Item #4 Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic opened her report with ridership updates. For May, Metro's ridership was over 291,000 which is a weekly average of 67,000 trips. This is 9,000 more this year than May last year. Metro's K-12 Rides Free Program has been very impressive with 52,000 rides through May for a total of 560,000 rides this past school year. This was a 50% increase from the prior school year. Since its inception, the program is just shy of 1.1 million rides.

For CWS this year, ORBT and other services were available one hour after the end of games to ensure spectators made it back to their destinations. Data is currently being gathered regarding the final ridership numbers; however, strong ridership was observed from the first week. There were packed buses and that was as a result of plenty of help from staff, and volunteer ambassadors guiding people to their buses.

Ms. Cencic thanked staff including Dana Stump, Justin Hutchinson, Temesha Williams, Valerie Spencer, Hussein Reza, Milton Currington, Eren Gomez, and Sara Moulton who played a huge role in making this happen.

Metro is currently working on a partnership with the Omaha Public Library. It's in the early planning stages, this partnership would make it easier to access digital materials while riding the bus such as e-books, audiobooks, movies, and music utilizing Metro buses' free wifi.

Metro is also in the preliminary stages of working with the Vision Zero team at the City Planning Department on pedestrian safety measures in South Omaha. Metro is not only about connecting people, places, and opportunities from bus stop to bus stop but also the entirety of the trip. More details to come.

TSA Administrator, David Pecoske, will be visiting Metro on July 22nd. Transit in general falls under TSA however a lot of the programs for ground transportation are opt-in types of oversight and reviews. Randy

Sherping, Director of Safety and Training has been taking advantage of the successful partnership with optional safety assessments and training.

Staff have been busy preparing for the annual Triennial Review with the Federal Transit Administration that will occur onsite at the end of July and will look at every aspect of Metro going 3 years back.

The sustainability project kickoff meeting was done. The approximately two-year project will be adding solar panels, water reclamation, electrical upgrades, air conditioners in the maintenance shop, and employee parking lot improvements. The phasing plan will help alleviate any parking issues. Metro parking lot enclosures/blocks used during the College World Series will remain in place during this project. The first phase of the parking lot will begin early to mid-July and is expected to be completed before the weather changes at the end of the year. Solar panels estimated completion is set for next year but the actual date has not been confirmed.

Ms Cencic introduced a staff change. Kevin Pendland, Metro's IT Director, is serving as Interim DEO and has been with Metro for a long time and all are excited to have him in this new role.

Ms. Cencic concluded her report and opened up for questions from the Board. There were none.

Agenda Item #5 Administrative Reports

Administration/Human Resources

(D. Grant)

Mr. Grant reported Metro has new team members coming on board: two bus operators, one paratransit operator, two mechanics, a custodian, a mechanic supervisor, a paratransit dispatcher, and a transit field supervisor.

In addition to recruiting, the HR department partnered with Communications and Civil Rights and Inclusion staff to participate in the Cinco de Mayo and Juneteenth parades last month.

While Metro has always celebrated new staff completing the 6-8 weeks training class, graduations have been increasing in attendance under the leadership of Juanite Hall. Graduation honors the accomplishment of passing the first stage at Metro by completing intensive classroom training. At the last graduation, there were nine graduates but close to 40 were in attendance to welcome them to the team. Members of the leadership team will share during this event how they started in transit. Some started their careers as bus operators and transitioned into leadership roles. This is evidence that while you begin on the front lines there are opportunities to move up to other various roles throughout their career with public transit.

Mr. Grant concluded his report and opened up for questions from the Board. There were none.

Programs/Operation

(K. Pendland)

Mr. Pendland, the current IT Director, also introduced himself as Interim DEO here at Metro. He has been with Metro for 13 years and has been in leadership roles for nearly 25.

He informed the Board that while he wishes he could stand here today and tell them how wonderful things are and that Metro is providing the best service for the public, reports contained in the Board packet indicated we are falling somewhat short of those goals. Mr. Pendland along with Ms. Cencic have begun several initiatives to create a better rider experience and to alleviate internal resource issues.

One of those initiatives is to reinvest in training, which includes a Transportation Safety Institute class that was held at Metro offices the week of June 10th. There were 27 participants, 11 from Metro, and 16 additional attendees representing 14 other agencies. This course was a study on the components of Safety Management Systems and how those work together to create a safer work environment.

Ms. Cencic and Mr. Pendland also brought in a third-party contractor to assist with the redevelopment of processes and procedures that will be designed to provide a more customer-centric approach to Operations. The goal is to provide more accurate information to the public, allowing everyone better access to our services.

Mr. Pendland went on to further inform the Board that while he would love to report and tell them that next month's data will be much more encouraging, as our Maintenance Director is fond of saying, "Metro is a large ship with a small rudder, it's going to take some time to turn it around.". With that, he asks for patience and hopes in the coming months he will have a more positive presentation for the Board.

Mr. Pendland concluded his report and opened up for questions from the Board.

The Board asked for any updates on the lack of buses and why the no-operator numbers are increasing again.

Mr. Pendland indicates it will take further research to determine how accurate the data is and to ensure the numbers are not being counted twice with no operator and no bus available instances.

Ms. Cencic further informed the Board that parts remain the primary issue with the availability of buses. At any given time Metro has between 30-50 buses down. Metro continues to attempt to locate additional vendors to supply parts and maintenance staff are working to resource old bus parts. There is currently no immediate end in sight. There is a list of over 100 parts that suppliers can't give an estimated date of shipping and that's beyond the ones they are saying 120 days out. The maintenance department continues to work hard to keep buses running while waiting on those parts.

The Board had concerns about on-time performance. Are there any insights as to why there are so many early departures?

Mr. Pendland indicated it should not be happening and stated that is why a third-party contractor was hired to look at the process and procedures of operations.

Communications

(N. Ebat)

Ms. Ebat opened by saying being a communications professional and wanting to report and share her love for transit can be difficult following Mr. Pendland's report. However, this is why Metro staff with the communications department are out in the community to have these hard conversations through public participation, outreach, and community engagement.

Metro's communications team worked with organizers of Midwest Fest to encourage people to attend the large downtown event by bus, especially being right next to the 8th & Farnam ORBT station. Partnering with the organizers to test Metro's multi-use benefit codes and saw a decent number of rides with them. It also gave a really good opportunity at the fest to teach people one-on-one how to use the MyRide and Umo apps. Metro also attended the Juneteenth Festival, Freedom Festival, and World Refugee Day events.

Over two days our Community Mobility Coordinator led four How to Ride trainings for people learning English as a second language. A member of our legal team very graciously joined us to assist with interpretation.

Metro has the Memorial Park Concert partnering with the organizers to give concertgoers a better way to get to and/or from Memorial Park during this year's concert. Anyone who has gone knows how much of a nightmare traffic is when you're trying to leave the event. Metro and the concert organizers worked to encourage people to take the bus to the concert, park at Westroads for free, or park somewhere farther east down Dodge. When the concert is over, several ORBTs will be waiting at 62nd & Dodge so that people can hop on board and get where they need to go. Coolers, blankets, and all the usual concert goodies are welcome on board.

Agenda Item #6 Resolution: 2024-16 Request Appointment of New Member to Salaried Pension Retirement Committee

(W. Clingman)

Staff requested the appointment of a new committee member to fill a vacancy on the Salaried Pension Retirement Committee.

The Metro salaried pension plan requires a 5-member committee which is comprised of the following individuals:

- 2 members of Metro's management personnel appointed by the Board of Directors
- 1 member of the Metro's Board appointed by the Board of Directors
- 1 member from Omaha who is qualified in financial affairs appointed by the Board of Directors
- 1 member at large from Metro's salaried personnel who the other retirement committee members select.

Staff requested that the Board appoint Edith Simpson to the Salaried Pension Retirement Committee. The Board approved unanimously.

Motioned by Haase; Seconded by Lund

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #7 Resolution: 2024-17 Request Appointment of New Member to Hourly Pension Retirement Committee

(W. Clingman)

Staff requested the appointment of a new committee member to fill a vacancy on the Hourly Pension Retirement Committee

The Metro salaried pension plan requires a 6-member committee which is comprised of the following individuals:

- 2 members appointed by the Transport Workers Union of America, Local 223: one from among the local membership and one from the International Union.
- 2 members appointed by Metro Board of Directors: one from Metro management personnel and one from the Metro Board.
- 2 members from Omaha who are qualified in financial affairs: one approved by the Union and one appointed by the Board of Directors

Staff requested that the Board appoint Kevin Pendland to the Hourly Pension Retirement Committee. The Board approved unanimously.

Motioned by Lund; Seconded by Haase

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #8 Resolution 2024-18 Request Approval for Amended Procurement of Twenty-Six (26)

Fixed Route Buses

(L. Cencic)

In November 2023, the Metro Board approved a resolution to procure up to twenty-six (26) replacement New Flyer fixed route buses for a cost not to exceed \$15,575,000. This resolution did not include various elements of this procurement including technology components and wiring (radios, TripSpark, video system, etc.), training, or special tools. These components were originally planned as a separate procurement, with the technological components being installed by Metro staff after vehicle delivery. Given the time-consuming and costly nature of this after-market installation, staff propose to have New Flyer complete this work during the original build, which will streamline the process without adding significant cost.

The procurement will occur through a cooperative agreement with the State of Washington, which has executed contract number 06719 with various transit bus manufacturers including New Flyer through a federally compliant competitive procurement process. The State of Washington has granted permission for Metro to participate in the cooperative procurement effort. The original resolution from last year assumed 2023 pricing for this procurement. New Flyer was not able to accommodate the 2023 pricing in this contract due to capacity constraints in line production and supply chains. The State of Washington's contract number 06719 has been updated for negotiated 2024 rates.

The estimated cost of the twenty-six (26) buses is \$17,774,609.91 including the technology components at \$1,242,803.12. This includes a discount for progress payments at engine installation and vehicle acceptance. Assuming Board approval, extended warranties, training, and special tools would be negotiated with New Flyer as a part of this procurement.

Staff requested approval to award a contract with New Flyer in an amount not to exceed \$18,727,652, which includes all of the necessary technology, warranties, training, and special tools. The bus order would include eleven (11) 40' Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses, six (6) 35' CNG buses, five (5) 40' diesel buses, and four (4) 35' diesel buses. Said purchase would replace twenty-six (26) transit buses that have met or exceeded their useful life.

These buses would be funded through grants from the Federal Transit Administration's 5339 Buses and Bus Facilities program. Board approval of this contract will encumber up to \$3,745,531 in local funds. This item was sent to the Finance/Procurement Committee for review along with a detailed explanation of why those costs were anticipated cost and not included. This is what is necessary to get buses at Metro and in operation.

The Board asked what the estimated time of arrival for the new buses. Ms. Cencic informed the Board that Metro has received tentative line entry spots, therefore the estimated time buses will begin being manufactured in March of 2025 for the first set and June of 2025 for the second set. Metro expects the first set to arrive in December 2025 and the second in early 2026.

The Board approved unanimously.

Motioned by Plucker; Seconded by Lund

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #9 Board Chair Report

(D. Lawse)

Mr. Lawse indicated that committees have nothing new to report other than the previous resolution review by the Finance/Procurement Committee. Metro staff continues to work on updating policies. Nothing further to report at this time.

Agenda Item #10 Date, Time, and Place of Next Regular Board Meeting

Thursday, July 25, 2024, at 8:30 a.m.

Authority's Administrative Building

Agenda Item #11 Adjournment at 9:08 am

Motioned by Lund; Seconded by Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES