

**Meeting Minutes – March 25, 2021**

**MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF OMAHA**

**2222 Cuming Street**

**Omaha, Nebraska, 68102**

**March 25, 2021**

**MINUTES**

The Transit Authority of the City of Omaha Board met in Regular Session on Thursday, March 25, 2021 at 8:30 a.m., virtually instead of in the Authority's Administration Building, 2222 Cuming Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68102, due to COVID-19. Notice was given in advance of the meeting by publication in the Omaha World Herald. 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. Jay Lund, Chair

Ms. Julia Plucker, Vice Chair

Ms. Amy Haase, Secretary/Treasurer

Mr. Daniel Lawse

Mr. Othello Meadows

**Authority Staff:**

L. Cencic, CEO/Executive Director

E. Simpson, Legal/Human Resource Director

D. Finken, Finance Director

D. Jameson, Safety Director

K. Shadden, Operations Director

L. Barritt, Marketing Director

G. Bradley, Maintenance Director (Absent)

K. Pendland, IT Director

J. Willoughby, Senior Project Manager Engineering/Transportation/Planning (Absent)

J. Rumery, Grant Administrator (Absent)

Rebecca Mahr, Recording Secretary (Absent)

**Others Present:**

Other Metro staff

Lee Myers

Other members of the public

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### **Agenda Item #1: Call to order**

Mr. Lund called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. For the benefit of the public in attendance, a copy of the Open Meetings Law has been 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 Meetings**

Mr. Lund entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Board Meeting on February 25, 2021.

Motion by Mr. Meadows; Second by Mr. Lawse

#### **ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.**

### **Agenda Item #3a: Administrative Reports**

(E. Simpson)

- The Douglas County Health Department opened COVID vaccination registration to Metro beginning March 13, 2021. Metro's COVID Liaison, Linda Barritt, and myself registered employees during operating hours throughout last week. As a result, many staff members have received their first vaccines.
- Metro continues to recruit for open staff positions. We made a conditional offer of employment to the best qualified applicant for Finance Director.
- Once Metro's annual financial audit is finalized, Metro workers' compensation self-insurance will be ready for submission.
- I am working with Operations to develop a reasonable modification program for passengers with a disability exempting them from the Federal Mask Mandate. Details are planned for publication later this week.

### **Agenda Item # 3b: Administrative Reports**

(D. Jameson)

This past month has been filled with spring cleaning and staff training.

Earlier this month, we had an in-house, 3-day, 24-hour multiplex system training facilitated by New Flyer. For April, we are working with Allison Transmission to come on site and train staff on their unit operational features, testing, diagnosis, and repair. We continue to investigate additional training opportunities for Metro maintenance staff in the coming months.

Metro continues replacement of special tools for the Maintenance department, including additional wheel lifts, wheel dollies and brake caliper/rotor lifts to name a few.

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Bus Operator Barriers. Shipments will continue for the NF buses over the next few weeks until fulfilled. We are still waiting on an ETA for the AD bus barriers, hopefully they will ship within the next 60 days or so. Training and installation resume this weekend.

The final 6 NF buses are all here, the final unit arrived last Friday. The first 5 buses should enter revenue service next month, followed by the final six in May. New model training will commence by the end of this month.

We started the pre-production process for our 3X 40' electric NF buses. The buses remain on schedule for delivery Q4, 2021, with the first arriving the week of Thanksgiving. We continue working with our Engineering Team along with NF Engineering Team, so that Metro is prepared to support the electrical charging and infrastructure of these buses.

Earlier this month, operational administration staff remotely attended refresher Assault Awareness and Prevention for Transit training facilitated by NTI Rutgers University. This class was a train-the-trainer format. We will add this to Metros' next all- staff training within the next two months.

Staff will virtually attend "Think Transit" Conference, next month. This is an annual event sponsored by Trapeze, which is our operational software company. We will be sending Eric Koebel, our Scheduler to this event. This will be a great opportunity to connect with peers and share experiences. This conference is usually attended by over 500 transit professionals each year.

Metro's COVID-19 mitigation continues with building and vehicle fleet sanitation every day. Buses continue to be traded out mid-day, weather conditions permitting. Our daily building mitigation efforts include fogging all areas within the administration areas, the vehicle fleet, re-wiping down the entire operator's compartment, removing & cleaning the passenger fabric seat inserts, wiping down hard surfaces, doors and door handles, hand railing, all common areas and bathrooms. All ORBT stations & stops have received a top-to-bottom, deep power wash and sanitation bath. Metro will continue to clean all ORBT stations & stops on a regular basis.

Metro continues with ORBT refresher training with emphasis being placed on station parking and OTP.

Metro is soliciting the public for HVAC Repair RFQ, Request-For-Quotes. This contract is for diagnosis and repair of our HVAC systems on our revenue fleet. This will be the third year that Metro has had a HVAC contract. Quotes are due early next month, and we anticipate returning to the BOD next month for approval to award a two-year contract.

Finally, starting next Thursday, April 1, and continuing all month, is national Distracted Driving Awareness Month. As the BOD may know, distracted driving accounts for over 2.5 million motor vehicle accidents each year, with over 1,000 injuries and 9 fatalities every day due to distracted driving. Metro will have additional information available to alert staff and our customers on the ways to reduce risky behaviors of distracted driving.

This concludes my report.

### **Agenda Item # 3c: Administrative Reports**

(J. Rose)

Metro continues to gain followers across all social media platforms. While outreach has been limited during the pandemic, we did conduct virtual presentations with the Kiwanis Club and the Zoo. We continue to gain earned media around MetroNEXT and ORBT. Earned media around MetroNEXT has resulted in good coverage in the Omaha World-Herald and a highlight in the KETV morning show, among others. Specific to MetroNEXT, we

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utilized rider alerts and posters, social media content (organic and paid), paid underwriting radio campaigns, printed surveys, community outreach, and internal engagement to glean valuable feedback for the initiative.

**Agenda Item #4: Resolution #417 – Request for Board Recognition – Nebraska Public Transit Week, April 11-17<sup>th</sup>** (L. Barritt)

For the past seven years, Nebraska Public Transit Week has been dedicated to raising awareness of public transportation across the state.

Transit has served the cities for Omaha and Council Bluffs since 1867. The Metro’s fixed route and paratransit service operated 3,264,110 miles and 235,087 hours in 2020 connecting people, places, and opportunities.

Metro customer service celebration includes surprise fare media giveaways and randomly selected system-wide 30-minute free fare periods. The weekday onboard radio announcements will be made by Dispatch twice daily.

Metro’s employee appreciation includes a variety of events and encouraging customers to thank employees for their role in providing transit service.

RESOLUTION 417

WHEREAS, public transit provides Omaha and all Nebraskans access to medical, business, employment, social and supportive services; and

WHEREAS, public transit allows individuals to remain independent, contributes to economic development, reduces traffic congestion, decreases carbon emissions, and improves urban and rural mobility; and

WHEREAS, Metro provides the only public transportation service in Metropolitan Omaha and Rural Transit Providers service many of the smaller towns and rural counties in Nebraska; and

WHEREAS, public transit professionals are respected and admired for their efforts, but are rarely recognized for their dedication and service due to their commitment to remain behind the scenes to ensure that they keep Omaha and all Nebraska moving; and

WHEREAS, Nebraska is served by 7 urban transit systems and 55 rural transit systems in 86 Nebraska counties; and

WHEREAS, despite the COVID-19 pandemic decreasing Americans’ need to travel in 2020, public transit provided its essential nature in Nebraska with over 2.8 million customer boardings. Transit providers traveled over 5.7 miles to get Nebraskans where they needed to go; and

WHEREAS, Nebraska has numerous public transit employees who provide service to Nebraska, 253 of which are employed by Metro, who must maintain stringent educational requirements and standards, particularly Bus and Van vehicle Operators; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Board of Director’s and the Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers recognizes the important role that public transit professionals play, and wishes to acknowledge that role.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Metro Board of Director’s, DO HEREBY CONGRATULATE the Employees of Metro Transit and the Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers on its 47<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and 49 years of

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service to our state's citizens and proclaim the week of April 11 – 17, 2021 as PUBLIC TRANSIT WEEK. In Omaha, and all of Nebraska, and we do hereby urge all citizens to increase their understanding and awareness of their local transit systems, and the many services provided.

Discussion was had.

Motion by Ms. Haase; Second by Mr. Lawse

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.**

### **Agenda Item #5: Administrative Report**

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic informed the Board that free fares on ORBT will be extended until Summer 2021. This will allow Metro to align the start of ORBT fare collection with the introduction of the new fare payment system. Ridership on ORBT has remained strong during the pandemic, with over 50% increase in ridership on weekends in comparison with Route 2. With the current vaccine rollout, Metro feels the extension of free fares will also allow more people the opportunity to ride ORBT for the first time. Metro will issue more specifics on timing of when fare collection and the new fare payment system will begin once more information is available.

Ms. Cencic updated the Board that she presented MetroNEXT to the Omaha Advisory Board yesterday. Metro is seeing a lot of enthusiasm from stakeholders and other groups in the area looking for increased transit opportunities. Metro hopes this enthusiasm will extend to the public.

Ms. Cencic updated the Board that LB661, the bill that would make assault on a transit operator a felony, has passed the Judiciary Committee. This is in part to the hard work of many people including several Metro bus operators. Ms. Cencic would like to recognize these individuals for their efforts to push this bill forward.

Ms. Cencic informed the Board that Metro is working on offering additional training to management staff on Emotional Intelligence. This training is expected to take place in late April and early May.

Lastly, Ms. Cencic informed the Board that she is working with Ms. Simpson on developing the exemption process for mandatory face masks on board transit vehicles. Currently face masks are required for all transit vehicles and buildings with limited exceptions resulting from any disability that prohibits the individual from wearing a face mask. Customer compliance has been strong overall but there has been confusion around what qualifies as an exemption. In order to assist our drivers, we are creating a process by which riders will need to submit an exemption application and will then receive an exemption card if approved. Riders will then be required to show their exemption card to board a bus or enter a transit facility without a face mask.

Discussion was had.

### **Agenda Item #6: Board Chair Report**

(J. Lund)

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Mr. Lund informed the Board that the month of April will be busy with approval of new bylaws, Board job descriptions, committee structures, etc. Mr. Lund is looking forward to the new Board structure as Metro moves forward with a report that will follow a normal agenda and regular committee reports. Mr. Lund is also excited about MetroNEXT. With the local news and the focus on the upcoming election cycle, public transit is coming to the forefront as a major topic of interest. This is a great time for Metro to launch the discovery phase of MetroNEXT. People have been looking for a long time for this type of platform to express their opinions and give their input.

**Agenda Item #7: Executive Session**

Mr. Lund entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session at 9:07 a.m.

Motion by Ms. Plucker; Second by Ms. Haase

**ROLL CALL:  
UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.**

Mr. Lund entertained a motion to return to Regular Session at 11:03 a.m.

Motion by Ms. Plucker; Second by Ms. Haase

**ROLL CALL:  
UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.**

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

**Tuesday, April 22, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at Metro Transit Authority's Administrative Building.**

**Agenda Item #11: Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was entertained to adjourn the meeting at 11:03 a.m.

Motion by Ms. Haase; Second by Ms. Plucker

**ROLL CALL:  
UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.**

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**Mr. Jay Lund – Chair**

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**Recording Secretary**