

**MINUTES TO BE APPROVED AT THE DECEMBER BOARD MEETING**

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA  
2222 Cuming Street  
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102  
November 30, 2023**

**MINUTES**

The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Board met on Thursday, November 30, 2023, 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 November 24, 2023, 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  
Mr. Jay Lund  
Ms. Amy Haase  
Ms. Julia Plucker (Absent)

**Authority Staff:**

L. Cencic, CEO/Executive Director  
I. Maldonado, Deputy Executive Officer  
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 (Absent)  
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 8:33 am**

*Notice of the Regular Meeting was published in the Omaha Daily Record on November 24, 2023. 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 Regular Meeting**

- a. Regular Meeting: October 26, 2023

**Motion by Ms. Haase; Seconded by Mr. Meadows**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (LUND ASTAINED, PLUCKER 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.*

Mr. Lawse opened the General Public Comment Period to invite members of the audience to be heard regarding regular topics related to the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha.

Lydia Neese 4207 Williams St, Omaha, NE 68105. She attended virtually on behalf of her husband who sustained a traumatic brain injury last year and recently applied for Moby services after being approved for outpatient therapy through Madonna Rehab. She further explains that Metro has an express route directly across from Madonna Rehab but does not have a fixed route which means that his rehab hospital is inaccessible to him and many other disabled patients. She is asking what could be done to provide her husband with this access every week. She is willing to pay what's necessary to provide her husband with a sense of independence.

Mr. Lawse thanked her on behalf of the board. The Board advises that a meeting be arranged with Metro staff or Ms. Cencic for assistance with what can be done. Ms. Cencic indicated that Ms. Neese has spoken to staff regarding this issue but if more discussion is needed Metro staff including herself will contact her to follow up. Mr. Meadows adds that he was pleased that this was brought to their attention. If the Board is never told they do not know and urge the public to bring these concerns when necessary.

**Agenda Item #4 Administrative Report** (L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic reports the following:

Ridership numbers look great for this month. As of November 28<sup>th</sup>, just shy of a month left of 2023 there have been 2.9 million trips which is 300,000 more than all of last year.

ORBT this year has over 500,000 trips 1.4 million trips since its inception. Further information will be shared in the Communications reports regarding the anniversary of ORBT and the activities involved.

Mr. Lund ask about if regular ridership numbers across the entire system reaching pre-Covid levels. Ms. Cencic did confirm that yes ridership is reaching pre-covid numbers.

Ms. Cencic further reported that she has had some exciting meetings with members of the community and key stakeholders. Met with Senator McDonnell, State Legislator, regarding funding priorities for

transportation at the state level in conjunction with MAPA. The importance of system preservation as well as building new roads and viability and transit projects was also discussed.

Ms. Cencic recently met with Heath Mello, CEO of the Greater Omaha Chamber, and he is interested in working with transit and ensuring both the Chamber and Metro are aligned.

Since Union contracts approval, the Letter of Understanding or LOU with the Transport Workers Union has been finalized which will help clarify the transition pieces from the old to the new contract. Pay increases and other items will be retroactive back to January 1, 2023. Some new policies and procedures around attendance and vacation began in November 2023. It was great to work with the union on this and a positive engagement.

Ms. Cencic also provided an update about the Leadership Academy, which is an initiative to build internal staff capacity. Staff is finalizing applications to be released in the next couple of days. The speakers are confirmed. The layout of the courses and details were shared with the board for a 12-month leadership program. 50% of the cohort will focus on general leadership, conflict management, and project management then afternoons would consist of Metro leaders focusing on leadership skills in transit and more specifically at Metro; with an emphasis to break down silos across departments. The overall goal will be for participants to understand what each department does and how it impacts other departments; how it interfaces with federal and state regulations and local ordinances, and to see the bigger picture. The Leadership Academy is open to all staff who have worked at Metro for at least a year and are in good standing. The Committee will review applications and recommend at least 12-15 participants. Hopefully, the first cohort will be a good mix of employees coming from various departments. This has been near and dear to the heart of Ms. Cencic. A huge thank you to Alicia Johnson, Metro's Civil Rights and Inclusion Director, Dewan Grant, Human Capital & Talent Development Director, and the HR Team for their work on this.

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

The board is excited about the investment in staff.

**Agenda Item #5 Administrative Reports:**

a. Administration/Human Resources (D. Grant)

Mr. Grant reports the following:

Echoed Ms. Cencic's excitement for the Leadership Academy. Management is a title that you have to be given but leadership is something you can really step into no matter what role you are in currently. It's more of an attitude and this program will better equip people to lead from where they are. Expressed an excitement of witnessing all the work and the initial concept that stemmed from Ms. Cencic.

Recruiting updates, 12 employees started new roles. Two new positions posted for HR Generalists. One has been filled already. Posted a role for project management in October as well.

Four operators started in October with a fairly large class starting in December super excited to end the year on a strong note on the recruiting front.

Mr. Grant ended his recruitment report for October and opened the floor to questions, there were none.

Mr. Lund extended his congratulations on the recruiting front and the start of the Leadership Academy.

b. Programs/Operation (I. Maldonado)

Mr. Maldonado reports the following:

On a recent Sunday Metro implemented the first snow detours after noticing several streets had not been cleared until approximately 11 am.

Been in communication with the Metropolitan Utilities District or MUD to minimize interruptions to the fueling of our compressed natural gas or CNG buses at times when they introduce propane into their gas pipelines. This is done infrequently due to high demands for the use of gas. They have to introduce propane to meet the needs of their customers. Metro has coordinated with MUD to get advance notice for testing their systems and Metro will fuel up two hours after they end this testing. Working with KALM Energy for other solutions.

Metro continues to experience considerable delays in the arrival of bus parts which have affected the immediate repair of buses and daily bus deployment. Many are backordered due to arrive after January with a significant number expected to arrive after February. In addition to the buses out of service waiting for bus parts, nine buses need extensive repair by external vendors. Four buses require external CNG tank inspections. Any time an accident occurs with a CNG bus an inspection must be done for any leakage by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor who comes in to certify the buses are safe.

Metro has noticed the increase in operators' attendance issues at the start of the ratification of the Collective Bargaining Agreement or CBA around the Thanksgiving holiday. The CBA is ratified, and LOU is being finalized, and a publication of the information was provided to the operators about the attendance process. Before the new agreement went into effect union members may have looked at taking time off before it was executed. This could be the reason for the increase in operators' absences. Now that the contract is in place and the information has been shared with staff everything is being properly documented and holding staff accountable. It is hoped that this will address attendance issues. Communications are open with the union and a meeting is set up for next week to discuss this further.

To minimize service disruptions Metro is temporarily operating paratransit buses on express routes where there is less ridership. Bike racks have been temporarily installed inside five buses allowing up to two bikes onboard and more are set to be equipped with bike racks. This addition does not interfere with wheelchairs.

Two more weeks have been added to the in-service training course, this will entail more hours of actual driving, more proficiency, and better familiarity with various routes. Adding the additional training time Metro hopes to reduce accidents.

Implementation of the new fleet management procurement solution is progressing with job management in dispatch functionality being scheduled to be fully functioning by the end of December with other features being effective by the end of January.

Mr. Maldonado concluded the report and opened the floor to questions, but there were none.

Mr. Lawse appreciated the report addressing the operator's absence. Grateful for the new policies and procedures that are in place to help everyone be there for Metro's riders. He further iterates that he is looking forward to seeing fewer reports of no operators being the cause of no service. Thanks, extended to operators who show up for the riders.

c. Communications (N. Ebat)

Ms. Ebat reports the following:

The first initial snow of this season occurred recently causing Metro to use the snow routes. From a Communications perspective, everything went off without a hitch. What has helped is the interaction between the communications team and the field supervisors that was established over the last snow season. Having all the snow routes turn by turn in place within the hour of being notified has helped get the information out to Metro's riders in a more user-friendly easily accessible format and was well in place for this first usage. No complaints have been received.

ORBT turned three! On November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, at 4:30 am the first ORBT pulled out. That specific ORBT bus that left the garage in 2020 was used in this celebratory event. The celebration was set up in the parking promenade of the Gene Leahy Mall. A thank you was extended to the various departments that made this a success. Maintenance helped make sure all was safe, and Dispatch and Operations provided the ORBT original bus ensuring it was clean on the inside and out. Kids and families were able to participate in activities e.g., making birthday cards and drinking hot cocoa. Communications is working on a display to showcase birthday cards from the kids for Metro staff.

During the ORBT celebration, Metro Partnered with Sustain UNO to set up their art exhibit on the bus and people were able to do a walk-through gallery. Several employees, drivers, and managers attended the event. City Hall staff stopped by and were impressed with the public engagement.

December 1<sup>st</sup> is the last day to accept TAC applications. The selection team will then choose 11 to sit on the committee and thank you's will be sent to all applicants.

Other Metro Community Activities

Metro attended the Bridge to Care Refuge Health Fair. A number of staff and managers walked in the Veteran's Day Parade. December 2<sup>nd</sup> Metro will be in the Community Partner tent at the Christmas in the Village event and a small campaign for the rest of the month is being planned to urge people to use Route 24 to see the expanded portion of the city's holiday light festival - 24<sup>th</sup> & Lake to 24<sup>th</sup> St. in South Omaha.

Ms. Ebat concluded the report and opened the floor to questions, but there were none.

Board members unanimously expressed their appreciation to staff who are out connecting Metro with the city. The Board thought some of the artwork from the ORBT anniversary would be great for social media and possibly t-shirts.

**Agenda Item #6 Resolution: Request Approval for the Amendment of Operating Policy 37, Retirement Plans (W. Clingman)**

*Staff is proposing the amendment of Operating Policy 37. The policy covers the retirement plans offered by Metro. Minor changes are being made regarding the pension plan portion of the policy. The key change is to delegate the appointment of the Plan Administrator to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).*

*A section is being added to the policy to cover the 457 plan offered by Metro. The plan is offered to administrative employees and those whose collective bargaining agreements also allow for it. The policy establishes guidelines for employer match and a 457 plan committee and designates the positions who will act as plan administrators. Finally, the policy clarifies that other plan guidelines are established in the 457 plan document which is maintained by Metro staff and approved by the CEO.*

Mr. Clingman presented the following:

The purpose of updating policies is to align existing practices. The key changes with the retirement and pension plans will allow the CEO to appoint the administrator as opposed to a board-appointed position. It also rolls in the language behind the existing 457 plan and establishes a committee to ensure a responsible set of funds to invest is being offered for employee investment as well as guidelines for employer match.

Mr. Lawes and Ms. Haase confirmed this policy was reviewed by the Policy Committee.

**Motion by Mr. Meadows; Second by Ms. Haase**

**ROLL CALL:  
UNANIMOUS (PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

**Agenda Item #7 Resolution: Request Approval of Contract for Snow Removal (W. Clingman)**

*Staff requests seeking approval of a contract for snow removal for the 2023-2024 winter season. An Invitation for Bids (IFB) was published on Metro's website and in the Daily Record on October 27th and multiple potential bidders were contacted. A single bid from Ham Snow Removal was received. The price is fair and reasonable, and the bid is in accordance with the specifications in Metro's IFB.*

*Due to the nature of the work, the contract was bid as a time and material contract and will have a maximum not to exceed amount of \$280,000. The hourly rates for work range from \$80 to \$320 per hour depending on the type of equipment and number of individuals deployed. Two person crews using shovels and hand-held equipment will be reimbursed at \$120/hour. Two person crews using a plow truck and an additional laborer will be reimbursed at \$160/hour. Material costs is also included on a per pound used basis. The estimated cost for the winter season is approximately \$169,000; however, this can vary depending on snowfall amounts and frequency.*

*Final award of this contract is contingent upon final confirmation and review of the contractor's bid and ability to meet the insurance requirements as set forth in the IFB. This contract is funded with 5307 preventative maintenance grant funds, which reimburse cost at 80%.*

*This item was sent to the Finance/Procurement Committee for review.*

*Recommend Approval.*

Mr. Clingman presented the following:

Invitation for bids for the current snow season was posted. One bid from Ham Snow Removal was deemed fair and reasonable with unit prices. Staff estimates that the cost of the contract will be about \$169,000 but it's unknown in advance as it will depend on the snowfall received this year.

Metro's intent moving forward will be to bid at some frequency but unsure between a year or multi-year at this time.

Mr. Clingman concluded the presentation and opened the floor to questions.

Ms. Cencic indicated Metro is looking at combining snow removal with shelter cleaning so it's a year-round contract which is why this resolution is only a one-year contract. The maximum amount is not to exceed \$280,000.

**Motion by Mr. Meadows; Second by Ms. Haase**

**ROLL CALL:  
UNANIMOUS (PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

**Agenda Item #8 Resolution: Request Approval of Contract for the Purchase and Installation of Garage Doors (W. Clingman)**

*Staff is seeking approval of a contract with DH Pace Door Services, Inc. for the replacement of seventeen (17) commercial, heavy-grade rolling garage doors at the Metro Administrative/Maintenance facility for \$464,434. These doors will replace existing doors that have met their useful life and are worn, damaged, and have obsolete parts. Included in the project is a warranty for five (5) years from the date of completion.*

*An Invitation for Bids (IFB) was published on Metro's website and in the Daily Record on October 5, 2023, and multiple potential bidders were contacted. A sealed bid opening was held on November 22, 2023, and 2 bids were received.*

*The low, responsive, and responsible bid was from DH Pace Door Services, Inc. The base bid price was \$426,434 with an optional extended warranty for \$38,530, making the total contract price \$464,964. The price is fair and reasonable, and the bid is in accordance with the specifications in Metro's IFB.*

*Final award of this contract is contingent upon final confirmation and review of the contractor's bid and ability to meet the insurance requirements as set forth in the IFB. This contract will be paid for with 5307 and 5339 grant funds with a 20% local match. This item was sent to the Finance/Procurement Committee for review.*

*Recommend Approval.*

Mr. Clingman presented the following:

Two bids were received. One bid was deemed acceptable for \$464,964 and will be funded by a mix of both 5307 and 5339 funds. The Contracts and Procurement Manager, Lucy Delrio-Lopez, was acknowledged for all the work on this procurement and informed the Board she will be presenting moving forward.

Mr. Meadows questioned the discrepancy between the two bids received by around \$100,000. Mr. Clingman explained that the bigger bid was from a new installer who did not do a walk-through and only reviewed design specs. The lower bid did a walk-through and was better able to determine what would be needed. The other reason could be because they are a larger company and can be more competitive.

More discussion was had on how old the current doors are and to confirm the plan is to install them next year.

Further discussion was had that upon board approval, the formal award of this contract is subject to a final review of all contractor items. The contractor must provide proof of insurance within 10 days of the bid opening and since this recently opened, staff is still waiting on further documentation.

**Motion by Mr. Meadows; Second by Ms. Haase**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

**Agenda Item #9 Resolution: Request Approval of Purchase of Two Regular Cab Trucks (W. Clingman)**

*Staff is seeking approval to purchase two (2) new, long bed, four-wheel drive pickup trucks with regular cabs and bumper to bumper warranty. These vehicles will replace two non-revenue vehicles that have exceeded their useful life and will assist the facilities crew in maintaining and cleaning Metro's bus shelters, transit centers, and facilities throughout Metro's service area.*

*A Request for Quotes (RFQ) was published on October 17th and 5 dealers in the area were contacted. A single bid from Woodhouse Ford Omaha was received. The price is fair and reasonable, and the quote is in accordance with the specifications set forth in the RFQ.*

*The total purchase price for two trucks is \$104,713. This purchase is funded 80%, or \$83,770, with 5307 grant funds and 20%, or \$20,943, with local funds.*

*A copy of this item was sent to the Finance/Procurement Committee for review.*

*Recommend Approval.*

Mr. Clingman presented the following:

A request for quote or RFQ was posted. Woodhouse Ford of Omaha met all requirements and requests. Recommend approval for \$104,713 for the trucks to be used by Metro facilities staff to replace some of the aging vehicles.

**Motion by Mr. Meadows; Second by Ms. Haase**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

**Agenda Item #10 Resolution: Request Approval to Procure Twenty-Six (26) Fixed Route Buses Through a Bus Cooperative Agreement with the State of Washington (W. Clingman)**

*Staff is requesting full board approval for Metro's CEO to procure twenty-six (26) replacement New Flyer fixed route buses, for a cost not to exceed \$15,575,000. Eighty (80) percent of the cost of the new twenty-six (26) transit buses would be funded through a competitive grant from the Federal Transit Administration 5339 Buses and Bus Facilities program and the remaining twenty (20) percent of the funding would come from Metro's allocation of local property taxes.*

*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. Delivery of these buses is anticipated to begin during the first quarter of 2025.*

*The procurement will occur through a cooperative agreement with the State of Washington, who through a federal compliant competitive procurement process has executed contract number 06719 with various transit bus manufacturers including New Flyer. Permission for Metro to participate in the cooperative procurement effort has been granted by the State of Washington. A copy of the contract has been included in the Board Packet. Final award of this contract is contingent upon final confirmation of all contractual requirements and receipt of a Pre-Award Buy America certification.*

*Board approval of this contract will encumber up to \$3,115,000 in local funds. This item was sent to the Finance/Procurement Committee for their review.*

*Recommend approval.*

Mr. Clingman presented the following:

Requesting approval for a large purchase to replace 26 buses \$15.6 million in cost coming off a grant provided back in 2020 and finally obligated. Thanks, extended to Sherri Levers, Grants Administrator for completing this process. This replacement will be CNG and Diesel buses. No electrics could be purchased with this funding. It's difficult to have aged buses down due to parts, the new buses will help provide better services to our customers and staff.



Mr. Lund was excited about all the procurement items but asked what happens with old buses. Mr. Clingman indicates if it's still functional they are auctioned off or scrapped. Ms. Cencic added that an inventory is taken and at times parts are pulled for the buses that are still in service.

**Motion by Mr. Meadows; Second by Ms. Haase**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

**Agenda Item #11 Board Chair Report (D. Lawse)**

Throughout the last year and a half, Metro and the Board have continued to update policies. Staff have provided 20-30 more policies in the docket for review. Thanks were given to staff who are working on this process.

The board will be initiating Lauren's 2023 review in the next couple of weeks. Selina Perry will be assisting with that and gathering review feedback.

Mr. Lawse opened the floor for any further updates. There were none.

**Tentative Resolutions**

Amendment of Operating Policy 36, Hospitalization / Medical Insurance Benefits  
Approval of Standing Purchase Orders

**Agenda Item #13 Date, Time, and Place of Next Regular Board Meeting**

November's Board Meeting will be held Thursday, December 21, 2023, at 8:30 a.m. at the Regional Metropolitan Authority Transit of Omaha d/b/a Metro - Administrative Building

**Agenda Item #12 Executive Session**

*This Board reserves the right to enter into Executive Session in order to protect the public interest with respect to discussion regarding litigation, personnel, and other matters listed in the Nebraska Revised Statute § 84-1410.*

Mr. Lawse entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of personnel issues at 9:20 am.

**Motion by Mr. Lund; Seconded by Mr. Meadows**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

Mr. Lawse entertained a motion to return to Regular Session at 9:59 am.

**Motion by Mr. Meadows; Seconded by Mr. Lund**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

**Agenda Item #14 Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was entertained to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 am.

**Motion by Mr. Meadows; Seconded by Ms. Haase**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT); MOTION CARRIES.**

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**Daniel Lawse, Board Chair**

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**Selina Perry, Board Secretary**

\*\* These minutes will be included on the agenda for the upcoming board meeting with the purpose of seeking approval. \*\*