

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

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA  
2222 Cuming Street  
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102  
October 26, 2023**

**MINUTES**

The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Board met on Thursday, October 26, 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 October 20, 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 (Virtually)  
Mr. Othello Meadows, Vice Chair (Virtually)  
Mr. Jay Lund (Absent)  
Ms. Amy Haase  
Ms. Julia Plucker

**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  
E. Gomez, Communications Specialist

**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**

Notice of the Regular Meeting was published in the Omaha Daily Record on October 20, 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.

Item #2 and General Public Comments were tabled until a quorum was available. Ms. Haase took the position of facilitating the meeting until such time that the Chair or Vice Chair was available. The Board moved on to Item #4.

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

Ms. Cencic reports the following:

The 3rd Anniversary of ORBT will be November 18<sup>th</sup>. ORBT Ridership numbers for September were 57,736 rides, a record monthly high, and a 10-year ridership high along the Dodge corridor. The ridership milestone is perfect timing with the anniversary of ORBT which continues to be a very successful project.

Staff will be participating in the Nebraska-wide designated Veterans Days parade in Bellevue. Staff are looking forward to participating in this event and celebrating our veterans.

Last month it was mentioned that we are doing a lot of coordination and communication with FTA, including at conferences. We will continue to work closely with them on projects such as the Planning and Environmental Linkages Study with Council Bluffs and MAPA which is studying a potential multi-modal bridge and potential streetcar in Council Bluffs. Additionally, FTA staff toured the building which was the first time since before COVID.

Metro has also been focusing on conferences and training and the most notable is APTA (American Public Transportation Association). Ms. Cencic was present along with representatives from Operations, Training, Communications, Maintenance, and IT.

Nicole Ebat, from Communications, will talk later in the agenda about our participation in the Chamber's CODE Conference: Commitment to Opportunity, Diversity and Equity, which also had quite a few members of staff participating.

Ms. Cencic concluded her report and opened the floor to questions.

Ms. Haase asked about the numbers for the K-12 Program. Ms. Cencic indicated she did not have the exact numbers but could share them after the board meeting. It continues to account for a significant portion of overall ridership. Ms. Cencic further stated that she and the staff are working on a potential extension of funding to continue to support that project, but nothing to officially report at this time.

More discussion was had about how other transit authorities are looking at this program and its success.

**Agenda Item #5 Administrative Reports:**

a. Administration/Human Resources (D. Grant)

Mr. Grant reports the following:

Updates regarding recruiting. Seven positions were filled in September. Two Bus Operators, one Mechanic, one Utility/Garage, one Custodian, one Field Supervisor as well as the Executive Administrator. Among

those seven two were promoted from within, Brett Heck-Jenders from Transit Operator to Transit Field Supervisor. Deanna McCormick from Custodian to Custodial Supervisor. Metro is excited to have those two employees promoted to their new roles in our organization.

Additionally, new roles are being sought for an HR Generalist, Network Security Manager, and Project Manager which are all posted on the Metro website.

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

Ms. Cencic did add that she was excited to share that there is a current class at this time with more custodial and facilities staff, which is a much-needed resource for Metro.

b. Programs/Operation (I. Maldonado)

Mr. Maldonado reports the following:

Teams have continued to work arduously to maintain safe operations for service and delivery. September Metro saw the largest number of service interruptions. While we've experienced a slight improvement in the arrival of parts necessary to repair our fleet, we still have 13 buses out of service waiting for critical parts that are in backorder and four buses needing major repair with outside vendors. In addition to vehicles and maintenance in September we experienced the largest number of operator absences. Employee attendance policy and staff accountability have been at the forefront of contract negotiations with both unions. As such, the two contracts being presented today for your approval include a better attendance policy and incentive for employees with good attendance. We believe the new attendance policy and attendance incentives combined with other negotiated items will greatly assist Metro and the provision of safe and reliable services. Our staff is committed to continuing our efforts to improve employee attendance, effective maintenance on repairs of our fleet and to continue to improve service delivery. In addition to that our teams began discussions of preparation for winter month snow operations.

Mr. Maldonado indicated his participation in a number of stakeholder meetings with the Douglas County Health Department, Omaha Streetcar Authority Operations Committee, Metropolitan Planning Agency Transportation Technical Advisory Committee, and others. Also, Metro's management team participated in the 2023 Omaha Airport Emergency Plan reveal and table talk exercise.

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

Ms. Cencic further explained after the Board acknowledged an appreciation for explaining the number of service interruptions that occurred, that September was a rough month for service, but staff are continuing to work to get parts in.

c. Communications (N. Ebat)

Ms. Ebat reports the following:

The Communications Department along with several other departments attended the Chamber of Omaha CODE Conference this past Friday, October 20th. Metro was selected as one of the breakout sessions. Facilitating was the head of Metro's Communications Department, Planning Department, and Civil Rights and Inclusion Department presenting essentially on how organizations and community members can help bring a focus from individual transportation in transit to community-wide transportation movement and getting people where they need to go. The main questions presented were how can the community help Metro's mission towards increasing transit equity and help work to bridge the gap between modes of transportation. An activity was designed for participants to walk away recognizing the kind of perceived

stigma that sometimes comes with riding public transportation and how that may affect people who rely on or choose to ride public transit and the mission of growing transit in the City of Omaha. It was also asked for them to do their part in helping to knock that negative stigma down.

Ms. Ebat recognized before the Board that this was a multi-departmental effort beyond the speaking and putting together of the presentation, other communications team members and departments assisted as well.

Ms. Ebat highlighted Metro's participation in an event that ties directly into the K-12 program. Metro was able to help with the Central High Eagles Take Flight Day - a day juniors and seniors go to different organizations as a type of fair to see the various careers and what college resource information is available and this was primarily done by bus to get around the city.

Christy from Central High School shared, "Those who know me at all know that I am normally not at a loss of words, this day did it with its breathtakingly stunning impact on kids and its undeniable testament to the power of collaboration and community engagement. Thank you for giving this day to our students, for welcoming them into your world, and for helping them picture a future where they can count themselves among your colleagues".

The Communications Team has been at a handful of resource fairs in September with help from the Civil Rights and Inclusion Team. Next week they will attend the Refugee Health Fair put on by UNMC in Benson. In addition, ORBT's 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebration is coming up and Metro is looking forward to being able to help people get around town for their various holiday lights festivals that will be up at the end of the month as well. Ms. Ebat concluded the report and opened the floor to questions.

Ms. Haase asked if there was still involvement in Leadership Omaha. Ms. Ebat informed her the last event with Leadership Omaha was about a year ago. She is aware their events just kicked off but that last time Metro participated in the last part of their cohort session.

***\*\*Mr. Lawse joined the meeting Virtually therefore a quorum is now in place to complete the remainder of the agenda items. \*\****

**Agenda Item #2 Approval of Minutes of Previous Special and Regular Meeting**

- a. Special Meeting: September 19, 2023

**Motion by Ms. Plucker; Second by Mr. Lawse**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (LUND AND MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

- b. Regular Meeting: September 19, 2023

**Motion by Ms. Plucker; Seconded by Mr. Lawse**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (LUND AND 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.*

Ms. Haase 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. No members of staff or the public came forward to comment.

**Agenda Item #6 Resolution: Request Approval of the Amendment of Operating Policy 50, Staff Uniform Allowances** (W. Clingman)

*Staff is proposing the amendment of Operating Policy 50. The policy covers who is eligible to receive a uniform allowance. The policy was adopted by the Board in August 2022. The proposed amendment adds custodial supervisors as an eligible position to receive a uniform allowance.*

Mr. Clingman presented the following:

This is the amendment of the uniform policy, and the only change is the addition of the Maintenance Custodial Supervisor position which was an oversight in the original drafting of this policy.

Ms. Haase opened the floor and explained that she and Mr. Lawse both reviewed the policy and its change.

**Motion by Plucker; Second by Mr. Lawse**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (LUND AND MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

**Agenda Item #7 Resolution: Request Approval of Administrative Policy 3, Investments**  
(W. Clingman)

*Staff is proposing the approval of Administrative Policy 3 regarding Metro's financial investments. This policy is the next step in enhancing Metro's overall fiscal sustainability and responsibility. It builds on Administrative Policy 2 which established formal fiscal reserves and was approved by the Board in August of 2023. Administrative Policy 3 provides investing guidelines for the reserve funds. The proposed Administrative Policy ensures that the money will provide the best possible returns while minimizing the risk of loss on the original principal investment. The primary goal of the policy is the safety of the investment, with liquidity and return as subsequent goals. Additionally, the policy ensures conformity with Revised Nebraska State Statutes for how local political subdivisions can invest funds. Finally, it places dual responsibility for oversight of investments with the CEO and Finance Director.*

Mr. Clingman presented the following:

Administrative Policy 3, Investments puts in place guidelines for how we invest reserved cash, and excess cash depending on how you look at it. Metro's Finance Department met with the Policy and Planning Committee and the information was sent to the Finance Committee. It sets forth the guidelines placing dual responsibility on Mr. Clingman and Ms. Cencic which is good internal control. Thanks to Edith Simpson in Legal and Carly Bressman in Finance for helping to draft this policy.

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

Ms. Plucker indicated that the Finance Committee did review the policy.

Ms. Hasse indicated that this policy paired nicely with the item passed a couple of months ago creating those reserves.

**Motion by Plucker; Second by Lawse**

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (LUND AND MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

**Agenda Item #8 Resolution: Request Approval of 3-Year Labor Agreement Between Metro and Transport Workers Union of America, Local 223 for January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2025**

(I. Maldonado)

*Staff is requesting Board approval for Metro's CEO to execute a three (3) year labor agreement between Metro and the Transport Workers Union, Local 223 (AFL-CIO). Metro's final offer was ratified by the rank and file in October 2023.*

*Heavy duty and auto mechanics will receive a five (5) percent salary increase in the first year of the contract, two (2) percent in the second year, and three (3) percent in the third year of the contract. Wages for a Master Electrical Mechanic will be adjusted based on salary trends of sixteen percent during the first year of the agreement, two (2) percent in the second year, and three (3) percent in the third year of the contract. The Building Grounds and the Equipment Leadman wages will be comparable to a First-Class mechanic's wages. All other employees will receive a three (3) percent salary increase in each year of the contract. The shift differential for shifts that extended beyond 8:00 p.m. will be increased from two (2) to four (4) percent for hours worked between 5:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. As an incentive for good attendance, employees who have successfully completed their employment probationary period and have achieved zero unexcused absences during a pay period may earn an additional one and a half hours of Paid Time Off for Sickness to be used for future pre-approved sick absences. Starting in calendar year 2024, employees will receive Juneteenth as a paid floating holiday which they may use throughout the year. Employees will receive a slight increase for uniforms and those who require tools will receive a slight increase in their tool allowance.*

*Assuming Board approval, the collective bargaining agreement will be retroactive to January 1, 2023, and will expire on December 31, 2025. A copy of the ratified contract was sent to the board for review.*

*Recommend approval.*

Mr. Maldonado presented the following:

Staff are requesting to execute a 3-year labor agreement between Metro and the Transport Workers Union, Local 223. Metro's final offer was ratified by the rank and file in October 2023. Mr. Maldonado proceeded to elaborate upon the modifications outlined in the resolution.

Mr. Maldonado concluded the presentation.

Ms. Haase thanked everyone for their hard work.

Mr. Lawse thanked everyone as well and informed the board that Mr. Lund and himself met as the Operations Committee and reviewed this with staff.

**Motion by Lawse; Second by Plucker**

Ms. Plucker also thanked anyone who sat at the table to negotiate this contract.

Ms. Haase opened the floor for any comments on this item. There were none.

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS (LUND AND MEADOWS ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

Agenda Item #9 Resolution: Request Approval of 3-Year Labor Agreement Between Metro and General Drivers and Helpers Union, Local 554 for January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2025

(I. Maldonado)

*Staff is requesting full board approval for Metro's CEO to execute a three (3) year labor agreement between Metro and the General Drivers and Helpers Union, Local 554 (Teamsters). Metro's final offer was ratified by the rank and file in October 2023.*

*Employees will receive a three (3) percent salary increase in the first year of the contract, a two (2) percent increase in the second year, and a three (3) percent increase in the third year of the contract. A new step increase has been added to the first year of the contract for employees who have completed two (2) years of service. As an incentive for good attendance, employees will receive two (2) additional leave days for sickness, and those who have one (1) or fewer unexcused absences per six (6) month semester may earn up to one additional eight (8) hour day of Paid Time for Sickness per semester. Starting in calendar year 2024, employees will receive Juneteenth as a paid floating holiday which they may use throughout the year. A four (4) percent shift differential will be provided to employees working after 5:00 p.m. Employees will receive a slight increase in uniforms allowance.*

*Assuming Board approval, the collective bargaining agreement will be retroactive to January 1, 2023, and will expire on December 31, 2025. A copy of the ratified contract was sent to the board for review.*

*Recommend approval.*

Mr. Maldonado presented the following:

There is another union as part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement that works out of the Council Bluffs area known as the Teamsters.

Staff are requesting Board Approval along with the Metro CEO to execute the 3-year labor agreement between Metro and the General Drivers and Helpers Union 554/Teamsters. Metro's final offer was ratified by the rank and file in October 2023. In that document, an item was accidentally left out under Article 18. The document that you have before you the missing language has been included and the correction is still being approved. Mr. Maldonado proceeded to elaborate upon the modifications outlined in the resolution.

Ms. Haase wanted to confirm that Article 18 is the Health and Welfare Benefits and that it will be the same as the Transit Workers Union contract. Mr. Maldonado confirmed that it is.

Mr. Maldonado further states that the union agreed that the language in that article would not be changed. Part of the language was left out, corrected, and sent back to the union.

Ms. Cencic indicated that there is no anticipation of concern, just wanted to point out the oversight.

Mr. Lawse thanked everyone as well and informed the board that Mr. Lund and himself met as the Operations Committee and reviewed this with staff.

Mr. Lawse and Ms. Hasse wanted to be certain this could be approved as it appears in the board packets. Ms. Cencic indicated the copies in the board packets are correct and that the finalization of counter signatures is all that is needed. Contracts will not need further approval.

**Motion by Lawse as it is in the board packet; Second by Plucker**

Ms. Haase asked if anyone had any comments or wanted to speak on this topic.

A hand was seen up in the Zoom for comments. Time was allotted but no response was ever brought forth.

**ROLL CALL:**

**UNANIMOUS FOR HAASE, PLUCKER AND LAWSE. MR. MEADOWS HAS JOINED BUT ABSTAINED FROM THE VOTE. (LUND ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES.**

**Agenda Item #10 Resolution #437: Board Recognition of Metro Paratransit Operators** (L. Cencic.)

Ms. Cencic presented the following:

*Staff is requesting the Board's recognition of Paratransit Operators, Natalie Nichols, and Joe Walker, who on September 26 and 27, represented Metro at the 31st Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers' (NATP) Paratransit Roadeo. The Paratransit Roadeo tested the Operator's driving and safety skills as they maneuvered various timed road obstacles resembling real-life driving scenarios. Both Paratransit Operators were selected to represent Metro based on their safe driving history, excellent attendance record, great customer service skills, and outstanding overall performance. Operator Joe Walker was the second-place winner of the small bus division. As a second-place winner, Joe qualified to compete in the Community Transportation Association of America's Roadeo and Expo which will take place in June of 2024 in West Palm Beach, Florida.*

Ms. Cencic presented that the Board recognizes Natalie Nichols and Joe Walker. Both did a wonderful job of representing Metro.

With your indulgence, I would like to read the resolution and ask the Paratransit Operators to come forward:

**RESOLUTION NO. 437**

**Resolved by the REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA BOARD**

**WHEREAS,** *Paratransit Operators Natalie Nichols and Joe Walker have exceptionally served Metro and the citizens of the Omaha Metropolitan Area for over eleven years, having exhibited a safe driving history, excellent attendance records, great customer service skills, and outstanding overall performances; and*

**WHEREAS,** *On September 26 and 27, 2023, Paratransit Operators Nichols, and Walker represented Metro at the 31<sup>st</sup> Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers Paratransit Roadeo, and*

**WHEREAS,** *The Paratransit Roadeo tested Operators' driving and safety skills as they maneuvered various timed road obstacles resembling real-life driving scenarios that Operators face often while driving, and*

**WHEREAS,** *Both Paratransit Operators demonstrated outstanding safe driving skills at the Paratransit Roadeo, and Operator Joe Walker won second place in the Roadeo small bus division. Said outstanding accomplishment qualified him to represent Metro in June of 2024 at the Community Transportation Association of America Roadeo and Expo in West Palm Beach, Florida.*

**Now, therefore be it resolved by the REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA BOARD:**

That Paratransit Operators Natalie Nichols and Joe Walker are hereby commended for their outstanding accomplishments and as such their service and contributions to the success of the Authority in its endeavors to continually improve transit service in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area are deeply appreciated.

Ms. Haase and Mr. Lawse thanked the participants for their services and representation in Nebraska and now nationally.



**Motion by Plucker; Second by Lawse**

**ROLL CALL:**

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

**Agenda Item #11 Resolution: Request Approval of the Amended By-Laws of the Transit Advisory Committee** (N. Ebat)

*In 1975, Metro formed the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) - a group of appointed community members tasked with providing their thoughts, feedback, and suggestions on fixed and paratransit services within the Omaha metro. The TAC has gone through various phases and evolutions in the decades since while continuing to play a vital role in supporting Metro. Notably, the TAC advises staff and hears appeals to ADA complementary paratransit service (MOBY) applications.*

*The By-Laws of the TAC were last adopted in 1987. The proposed amendments to the Transit Advisory Committee By-Laws aim to enhance the effectiveness of TAC and align it more closely with the evolving needs of our public transit system and the broader community Metro serves.*

*The proposed By-Laws transition the committee membership from appointed positions to application-based members while striving to reflect the diversity of the greater Omaha community. The TAC will continue to play an important role in supporting transit and will be supported by Metro staff. The proposed amended By-Laws as well as future amendments require approval from both the Board and the TAC.*

*Recommend approval.*

Ms. Ebat presented the following:

A request for Board approval regarding the amendment of the by-laws of the Transit Advisory Committee for Metro. Last adopted in 1987. Working to move efforts in equitable transit toward the future and to move this committee in a way that represents our community as a whole. One of the biggest changes is looking to move this from an assigned committee into application-based that way it represents the community in both a geographical manner and a diverse manner looking at multiple forms of transit. The intent is to enhance the effectiveness of TAC and align it more closely with evolving needs. TAC will continue to play that important role in providing recommendations to Metro on projects as well as looking at appeals for Metro's complementary Paratransit Services aka MOBY.

Ms. Ebat concluded her presentation and opened the floor to questions.

Ms. Haase confirmed that the Planning and Policy Committee did review the by-laws and the amendment is much needed. Excited and hoping it will engage the committee much more.

Ms. Plucker asked how committee members were appointed in the past. Ms. Cencic said they were appointed by various agencies and organizations who were designated to appoint members. Metro did not have control over who was appointed. Ms. Cencic further explained that over the years there have been very dedicated committee members but there have also been many vacancies. Transitioning to an application process to select members, there is hope to bring in more people.

Ms. Haase asked if the organizations had been informed of this change. Ms. Cencic stated that to the extent possible, this will happen. For example, MAPA is one such organization. However, many of the organizations with the ability to appoint a representative have not done so for a long time.

**Motion by Lawse; Second by Meadows**

**ROLL CALL:**

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

**Agenda Item #12 Board Chair Report** (D. Lawse)

Mr. Lawse informed the board that a virtual participant had their hand raised for comment and time was allotted for comment on the last board item. No comment was presented. Mr. Lawse expressed his apologies for not being able to hear or see the person or comment and indicated that they can contact the Metro staff maybe by phone if they would like to be heard after the board meeting.

Mr. Lawse stated that he appreciated the work of staff on contracts, agreements, and policies.

Ms. Haase stated that tentative resolutions for next month's agenda are:

- Approval for the Amendment of Operating Policy 36, Hospitalization / Medical Insurance Benefits
- Approval for the Amendment of Operating Policy 37, Retirement Plans

Mr. Lawse opened it up to Lauren Cencic for further updates or comments. She indicated that Metro is continuing to revise policies and establish new ones. The tentative resolutions for next month are intended to improve clarity on those policies. Procurement currently has a request for bids for garage doors and will bring that procurement item to the Board in the near future. The Chair report was concluded.

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

November's Board Meeting will be the fifth Thursday of the month in lieu of the Thanksgiving holiday. It will be held Thursday, November 30, 2023, at 8:30 a.m. at the Regional Metropolitan Authority Transit of Omaha d/b/a Metro - Administrative Building

**Agenda Item #14 Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was entertained to adjourn the meeting at

**Motion by Plucker; Seconded by Meadows**

**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. \*\*