



Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha

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Metro Transit Advisory Committee

July 10, 2024

6:30 p.m.

**This meeting is open to the public*

Location: Metro Administrative Offices - Board room

2222 Cuming Street, Omaha, NE 68102

Please enter through the front lobby doors, facing Cuming Street at the top of the ramp

Digital:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81362662191>

Meeting ID: 813 6266 2191

Attendees:

Staff Facilitators: Nicole Ebat Sara Moulton

Committee Members: Cedric Ludlow, Clyde Anderson, Joey Yamada, Isabelle Dunning-Ward, Alex Mendoza, Tamara Dwyer, David Baker, Maria Brady (online)

Members of the Public: John Sullivan (online), Andrew Demarest (online), Monique Summers Currington

6:32 – Call to order

Opening: Public comment period (Limit to ten minutes total, please)

Clyde: Mode Shift Omaha did an assessment on MCC North Omaha. There is a bus bench at NW corner of Fort and 30th St. that's blocking the sidewalk. Who has the responsibility if there are issues?

- **Tamara:** If there was litigation, the responsibility would be determined at that time. Likely multiple parties would share responsibility (e.g: City, Metro, bus bench company.)

Nicole: We do have other bus bench updates. The new contractor will begin removing current and installing new benches within the next 3 months; should be completed within the next 6 months. New benches will be bolted down and the contractor will have to pour the concrete

pads for them. We don't know what that will mean for private property owners, but we will be in continued conversation with the Parks department and contractor and will provide updates.

- Alex: Due to benches being on sidewalks, if a rider has something large with them, it can block the path. It would be helpful if the benches were further back for accessibility.
- Nicole: We're being assured that these kinds of issues will be alleviated by the contractor pouring their own concrete pad.
- Monique: Who is responsible for ADA, particularly the sidewalks around bus stops? Is there a way that fixing them can be expedited?
- Nicole: ADA regulations are required to be followed for all new bus stops and we have made the contractor aware of this issue since Clyde emailed us a couple of weeks ago. It will move, unfortunately, at the speed of their response. The city is responsible for the sidewalks.
- David: What is happening to the old concrete benches?
- Nicole: Not sure exactly; the city owns a set amount of them, so some may be kept, some may be destroyed.
- Isabelle: There was a news report about a bus going sideways on Dodge. What happened?
- Nicole: The driver stalled on Dodge, blocked Dodge for less than ten minutes. Unfortunately, it seems like a long time when there's a big orange bus across Dodge, but it was about seven and a half minutes.
- Clyde: Went to Chicago and hardly anyone uses cash because if they don't have a transit card, they just use a credit card. Is there consideration for credit/debit direct charge for fares at Metro?
- Nicole: We are looking forward to different fare systems, but credit/debit is new technology in the transit fare industry and we would have to change out our whole fare system. Another consideration is equitability, since there are people who will always prefer or need to pay in cash.

Approval of previous meeting minutes

- Motion: David, Second: Clyde. Approved.

New Business:

1. Paratransit appeals – None
2. Metro updates and upcoming events:
 - a. Events: Last month, we participated in the Juneteenth Parade, Freedom Fest, and World Refugee Day. Will be at Youth Pride on evening of Friday, July 12th and invite you to table with us. Will have merchandise that we debuted at Midwest Fest – stickers, keychains, etc. Pride Parade on Saturday as well – you are welcome to join. We have a sign-up sheet. Youth Pride will be 5-9pm. For

Parade, we'll be there early, you don't need to show until 9/9:30 on 16th St. between California and Cass.

- b. Internal: Hosted a staff graduation: 10 new fixed route operators on the street. Two new classes began. Clyde: Did we have retirees who offset the new hires? Nicole: 3 people retired, but not all were drivers. Main new hiring goal is for HR Generalist since operator and mechanic hiring is ongoing. Monique: Under the impression that there will be more than just hiring numbers – attrition rates, etc. - have we been getting those at previous meetings? Nicole: Yes, we've talked about it. Hiring numbers are what we have as far as updates today.
 - c. Partnership: New partnership with the Omaha Public Library that will extend their services to be available on our buses. With our on-board wifi, riders will be able to access the library's full digital collection with QR codes for streaming, reading, etc. while riding.
 - d. Ridership: Number of system-wide rides from last month is around 253,000; down a bit from last month, likely due to school year ending. Measure student rides by entering a tally with the press of a button on the bus. Our Memorial Park concert numbers were 42% higher than ridership on an average night due to staging extra buses by the park at the end of the concert. Sarah: We count overall rides with APC: Automatic People Counter. This system is audited manually twice a year for accuracy.
3. Metro presentation – William Clingman, Finance Director
- a. William: Provided state form - rules of reconciliation for the budget. State budget required to be turned in every year, due September 30th for upcoming year. Majority of revenue comes from property taxes, second to that is Federal funding. Get some state money. Under local receipts is fare revenue, which is a very small piece of the budget. There is also breakdown of spending. Got a significant capital jump recently (through next year) for special projects – specifically a \$10.6 million sustainability project we just started this month.
 - b. Clyde: Under operating expenses, it shows an increase from 36.7 million to 55 million. What is that going toward besides operating the system?
 - i. William: The main increases include fuel price increases, anticipated and unanticipated; upgrading our system; increase in operator wages; increase in number of administrative staff.
 - c. Joey: With transitions to electric buses, are we anticipating fuel spending will go down? Clyde: It seems there was a fueling issue last winter with the CNGs.
 - i. William: Eventually, yes. We have a bus purchase in the works that will be more Compressed Natural Gas, which is pretty reasonably priced. There has to be a balance because of bus functioning in winter weather. There is a federal mandate to move toward electric and we'll continue in that direction. Last winter there were issues because CNG gels in very cold temperatures.
 - d. Joey: Are the ads on the inside and outside of the buses a significant source of income?

- i. William: It's about \$300,000/year, so a large amount of money but not a huge chunk of the budget.
 - e. Monique: Is the sustainability project about vehicles or facilities? Are the buses all getting AC?
 - i. William: It is upgrades to facilities for better overall function, upgrading the parking lot, putting solar panels in to replace skylights, and putting air conditioning in the maintenance area. Nicole: Maintenance AC will hopefully contribute to retaining and hiring staff. We're making progress with contractors on-site for bus AC. William: We also have no debt, which is unusual for a government entity.
 - f. David: Can you explain lines 16 and 28?
 - i. William: It's moving money from one fund to another. We're self-insured so it was moving money to adequately fund that. Our biggest cost is labor.
 - g. Monique: Is your budget based on people planned to hire or current employees?
 - i. William: It is anticipated employees. It will come in under budget because we didn't expand service as much as hoped.
 - h. Clyde: Didn't realize benefits percentage was so high in budget – 50%.
 - i. William: Benefits include health insurance – about \$21,000 per person per year – and the pension plan and workers' comp. The employee premiums go into the employer fund to help contribute, but it's minimal compared to the employer share. We're getting ready to start 2025 [budget] which is due on Sept. 30th. The board will review it, set a property tax levy, and approve that. We hold a public meeting before it goes to the board.
 - j. Tamara: What is our tax levy cap?
 - i. Our current levy is \$6.8 million, cap is \$10 million and that's probably what we'll go for.
 - k. Isabelle: How many people work under finance?
 - i. William: 10 people including purchasing.
- 4. Committee report on public feedback
 - a. David: Is there a resource like a video about how to ride the bus?
 - i. Nicole: there are videos online about how to ride, we are working on updating those and translating them.
 - b. Tamara: Bridget mentioned that there was going to be some outreach to community about how to ride, access services, etc.
 - i. Nicole: Last month we held 4 one-hour trainings at the Learning Community Center of South Omaha on how to ride the bus. Was not hands-on, but good chance to reach some people new to Omaha, learning English as a second language. Were able to answer questions and concerns. Bridget's job is coordinating trainings and train-the-trainer program so we can reach clients at nonprofits and teach staff to reach even more people. It expands capacity. Organizations can just reach out to Metro for those trainings through our website. We also do outreach.

- c. Monique: Family really appreciated and enjoyed the convenience of the extended hours and extra services for College World Series; grandson was very excited. Very well done, especially with the tricky weather.
 - i. Nicole: Sara coordinated most of those details. It's good to hear it was appreciated – thank you!
 - ii. Monique: How are CNG vehicles fueled?
 - iii. William: They are fueled off-site at a well-regulated facility because if something went wrong here, it could be very dangerous. It's like fueling a regular car, but with a specialized pump.
- 5. Set August Agenda
 - a. Walter Shumate, Operations Manager, will speak
 - b. Clyde: Can we talk next time about rider alerts and whether a bus is delayed or is not going to come? It's very frustrating.
 - i. Nicole: This is being addressed in processes and workloads because dispatch is doing a lot at once. Work in progress, but we're doing what we can while we get a better process in place. But that's a good question for Walter in August.
 - c. Alex: We've brought up snow removal – can we talk about that?
 - i. Nicole: BG&E would be the best department to talk about that and they are on our calendar for speakers.
- 6. Last public comment
 - a. Joey: How much is the Moby portion of the operations budget?
 - i. William: Roughly a couple million a year.
 - b. Monique: How do they determine the times that buses are operating in different areas? Friend trying to get Moby service but nearest bus runs only rush hour times. Moby service depends on the hours of the fixed route buses?
 - i. Nicole, Sara: Sometimes people fall outside the fixed route bounds because the route near them is an express and limited. Moby follows the nearest fixed route hours. Expresses are limited so we can't service all those areas.

Close of Meeting Motion: Clyde, Second: Tamara. Approved

Next meeting:

- August 14, 2024, 6:30 p.m. at Metro administrative offices

Please call Bridget Battafarano at 402-341-7560, EXT 2560 if you have questions