



Metro Transit Advisory Committee

June 12, 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

Staff Present: Bridget Battafarano, Nicole Ebat, Alicia Johnson

Attendees:

TAC – Clarice Dombeck, Clyde Anderson, Isabelle Dunning-Ward, Dayton Headlee, Tamara Dwyer, David Baker, Alex Mendoza, Joichiro “Joey” Yamada

Members of the Public – Andrew Demarest, John Sullivan, Daniel Padilla, Monique Summers-Currington

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

1. Daniel Padilla: What are projected numbers for driver retention and attrition?
 - a. Nicole Ebat: We do not have the numbers, but we can get that information. We are looking to increase to 168 operators by September.
2. Andrew Demarest: What is the shortage of drivers vs what is needed for full service every day?
 - a. There are about 77 buses and drivers at morning pullout, lower during the day, evening is back up to about 70. We have about 156 operators on staff currently. Availability of operators varies quite a bit because not every driver is here every day. Operators may be out on sick leave, FMLA, vacation, etc. We also have long-time drivers who are ready to retire, which is another factor in coverage.
3. Alex Mendoza: Had a conversation with public works about snow removal. Was told that the onus for all removal is on Metro. Also, owners do not have to clear their walks beyond 36” to either side.

- a. Nicole Ebat: Not fully accurate. Metro works with property owners and businesses and asks that they help by clearing their own sidewalks. Some spaces belong to the city and so are the responsibility of the Parks Department. The Metro Custodial team focuses on clearing the ORBT stations and transit centers and does not have capacity to service all stops. Metro has used a post-card/letter campaign asking neighbors to do a little extra shoveling to help others get access to bus stops. This was met with limited success. We'd love to hear ideas to increase accessibility.
- 4. Monique Summers-Currington: Maybe we should ask the news to help?
 - a. Nicole Ebat: We do news stories about it regularly.

Approval of previous meeting minutes

*Motion: Clarice

*2nd: David Baker

New Business:

1. Paratransit appeals – None
2. Metro updates and upcoming events
 - a. New structure for meetings: 10-minute public comment period at the beginning of meetings, 2-minute public comment period at the end of each agenda item. Serves to create structure around the Committee and public discussion throughout the meeting.
 - b. CEO events
 - i. Spoke at the Empowerment Network's Rebuilding the Village conference
 - ii. Was on a panel for UNOs Fueling the Future event. Spoke about transportation as a support service being provided to students
 - c. DEO's last day
 - i. Today was Ivan Moldonado's last day before retirement. Our interim Deputy Executive Officer is Kevin Pendland, our current IT director
 - d. Update on Midwest Fest
 - i. Isabelle Dunning-Ward: How did the code redemption go?
 1. Metro partnered with Midwest Fest directors to offer coupon codes for rides. 72 codes were redeemed for this pilot. A few people had questions about how to input the codes to get the free ride, so we will be doing some extra explainer materials for future use. Did put out a video explainer on social media that received positive comments and engagement. Have an upcoming partnership with Open Omaha to offer something similar, improving as we go.
 - ii. Engagement was good – conversations and supporters of transit. We were able to sell swag like stickers and prints
 - iii. Clyde Anderson: How did the code work?

1. Metro established code to put into Umo. When users scanned their Umo app, the code went through without charging your account. Must establish Umo account to use.
 - iv. Andrew Demarest: Do we know which routes most of the codes were redeemed on?
 1. We do not but would guess ORBT since that's where it was heavily advertised.
 - e. Event updates
 - i. Juneteenth Parade 10-1pm June 15
 - ii. Freedom Fest 12pm-5pm June 15th
 - iii. World Refugee Day 10am-4pm June 23 at Central High School
 - iv. Youth Pride Festival July 12th
 - v. Pride Parade July 13th
 - f. Board Updates
 - i. Metro has Pension Committees for both hourly and admin staff. Retiring DEO was on both committees, so resolutions for those appointments will be on the next board docket.
3. Metro Presentation
 - a. Metro presenter – Finance Director, William Clingman – rescheduled to July
4. Committee report on public feedback
 - a. Tamara Dwyer: Paper maps were requested from people who have limited/no access to app and/or downloadable schedules.
 - i. Metro Staff: We try to ensure staff at shelters and libraries are familiar with where to get the PDF downloads for people. Anyone is welcome to call to request maps sent to them in the mail. As a COVID response, we stopped printing them regularly and we are weighing whether to go back to printing.
 - a. Committee: Concerns and frustrations about Route 15 not running. It only runs once an hour to Oakview, so if a bus doesn't show, it could be 2 hours someone is standing there. 18 gets irregular during rush hour. MyRide disruptions/glitches further this problem. Alerts sometimes do not go out about delays. Having problems with MyRide *or* schedule interruptions is fine. Having both issues isn't feasible for riders. Display boards are also sometimes not working.
 - i. Nicole Ebat: We are working with MyRide. The developers created an update a few months ago and it broke some things in system. We are sending them issues as they pop up so if you notice issues, please let us know the times so we can send that on to developers for fixes. You can email that to: info@ometro.com. Display signs connected to same system. Dispatchers can get displays to show interruptions, but we're working on incorporating that into their workflow; it's also sometimes a connectivity issue.
 - b. Andrew Demarest: Issues with ORBTs not showing for late-night trips. Is this due to driver shortage/maintenance issues? Also, family gets off near Park Ave and sometimes this station gets missed.

- i. Nicole Ebat: It may be one or both of those issues that result in missed rides. The Park Ave station should not be missed and ORBT should stop at every station. When this happens, please report to Customer Service with the bus number, direction of travel, time, and route:
<https://www.ometro.com/customer-service/customer-comment-form/>
- c. Alex Mendoza: We know about the bus stop audits for accessibility, benches, etc. Is that done?
 - i. Metro Staff: The fieldwork portion of audits is completed – 63 questions for each of the 2500 or so stops – they are aggregating/analyzing data and will let us know next steps. Related: the city awards a contract for the bus benches with ads on them. The new contract was just awarded to a company called Creative Outdoor. They will replace all (about 400) third-party bus benches, have public maintenance records, and put benches no further than 20 feet from the bus stop. From the time the contract is signed, they have 60 days to remove old benches and 120 days after that to replace them.
- d. Clarice Dombeck: Safety issue at N. 20th and Paul St. stop: saw a bicyclist get hit, sidewalk narrow. Safety issue at 24th and Pratt: person hit by car after deboarding bus. With regards to route: Was there a stop at 18th and Charles at some point? Residents say they miss having it there for accessibility.
 - i. Bridget Battafarano: We can talk to planning, see what they observed at those stops during the audit. Can also look into the history of stops near 18th and Charles.
- e. Dayton Headlee: With the new library going in at 72nd and Dodge, both ORBT stations are across busy streets from it. Is there a way to change that?
 - i. Nicole Ebat: Unfortunately, not in our purview and the infrastructure changes are extremely expensive and disruptive to Dodge to move a station. Planning staff working closely with the Crossroads developers and hopefully will with the library to encourage safety and accessibility features.
 - ii. Clyde Anderson: At Mode Shift Omaha and Public Works meeting in the winter, made recommendation to add elevated pedestrian walkways.
- f. Joey Yamada: Is there development on potential ORBT on 24th St? David Baker: Is there a timeline for what's happening along 24th?
 - i. Nicole Ebat: On study phase. More delays than anticipated due to late grant award payments. The next piece is hiring a contractor to begin the study for enhanced transit amenities along 24th street. It will be an enhanced corridor, but that may or may not mean it would become the next ORBT. Planning staff have been working late nights and early mornings to assess the line's current functioning and timing. Various possibilities for what it might look like. Will require us to engage with the communities along that route so there will be many opportunities for public involvement and we will be coming to TAC to help with that.
- g. Clyde Anderson: Understand there is a new grant for electric buses.

- i. Nicole Ebat: Do not think this grant has been awarded. There is a plan to add those buses progressively over time; not sure the timeline.
 - h. Andrew Demarest: What is the timeline for environmental plan including things like CNG [Compressed Natural Gas] and electric buses?
 - i. Nicole Ebat: About 30% of our fleet is currently CNG or Electric. Federal government plans to get all transit agencies to electric and/or hydro by 2050.
- 5. Set July Agenda
 - a. Clarice Dombeck: Has been working on a proposal with Cedric Ludlow to establish a Community Action Subcommittee; the purpose is to have TAC and community members advance the goals of MetroNext. Identify community needs and engage in advocacy, tactical urbanism, activism with partner organizations and neighborhoods. Hope to have it on agenda for a vote next month. Tactical urbanism examples: 3D printing publicly available accessibility features as a temporary solution; add murals and beautification to stops. Creating space for community leadership to be involved. Keep Omaha Beautiful is interested in “greening” bus stops. Open to revision, suggestions, conversations with TAC members.
 - i. Metro Staff: Will relate to Metro’s Public Involvement Plan and we hope to include TAC in the ways and levels that TAC is willing and able to participate. A previous staff had been working on adopt-a-bus-stop plan. Difficult to organize, but open to suggestions. Looking to add new shelters and want to include greenery in these spaces through partnerships. Custodial staff also need to do upkeep and don’t want to overload them. This proposal is a good way for us to begin the conversation about what our next involvement plan will look like when we get to that after events season.
 - b. Speaker: Finance Director, William Clingman

Next meeting:

- July 10, 2024, 6:30 p.m. Metro administrative offices

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