

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102
December 21, 2023
8:30 a.m.**

MINUTES

The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Board met on Thursday, December 21, 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 December 15, 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 (Absent)
Ms. Amy Haase (Absent)
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

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 Call to Order at 8:33 am

Notice of the Regular Meeting was published in the Omaha Daily Record on December 15, 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 Meeting

The first item of business is the approval of minutes from the previous meeting.

Regular Meeting: November 30, 2023

Motioned by Meadows; Seconded by Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, HAASE 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.

No comments were communicated before the board.

Agenda Item #3 Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

As we are rapidly approaching the end of the year, Ms. Cencic reflected on some of Metro's accomplishments and statistics in 2023.

Metro made notable progress in implementing our MetroNEXT plan and increased service on Routes 3, 4, 11, 13, 15, 16, 24, and 30, improving our frequency and overall service delivery for our customers.

Ridership

- Ridership has grown throughout 2023 accordingly showing the need for these improvements and more in the future.
- Through November of 2023, Metro carried 2,932,586 bus trips and 6,912 trips on MOBY. Compared to 2022, this represents an 18% increase in average weekly ridership across the system.
- The top five used routes in the system are Routes 18, ORBT, 24, 4, and 15.
- The highest day of ridership this year was October 4th carrying 13,740 rides in a single day. Over 500,000 of the trips through November of 2023 were on ORBT, representing approximately a 35% increase in total ORBT ridership over 2022.

K-12 Rides Free Program

- Metro successfully renewed our K-12 Rides Free program through July 2025.
- In November, Metro carried 51,053 student trips: making the total rides this school year (since June 2023) 264,326. In total, the program has provided just shy of 800,000 student trips since its inception.
- Comparing the second half of 2022 to 2023, the K-12 Rides Free program utilization saw a 41% increase in average monthly ridership.

Administration

- Additionally, the staff has done a commendable job in recruiting and onboarding near-record numbers of staff to support Metro's work. Staff has been continually reviewing, updating, and improving our training programs and serving our staff.
- Metro successfully negotiated new contracts with both the Transport Workers Union and Teamsters that are mutually beneficial to Metro's employees and the needs of the agency to continue to provide vital services. These contracts represent the most substantial updates to these contracts in many years.
- Metro has also made significant strides in building up our technology, policies, and procedures to support the agency's growth. New finance, payroll, and HR software have been implemented and staff is working diligently on modernizing the maintenance, parts inventory, bus assignment, and yard management system which is anticipated to be implemented in early 2024.
- Additional protocols and practices to improve our cybersecurity have been initiated. With the help of the Planning and Policy Committee, numerous formal policies have been updated this year.

Community

- Metro staff have been actively involved in engagement efforts, increasing Metro's presence in the community at special events and with stakeholders.
- Metro has and is continuing to build strong partnerships throughout the region and has added new opportunities for the public and key stakeholders to engage with Metro including our joint symposium with MAPA and the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center on Transportation, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that was held this summer.
- Metro has done the groundwork to revitalize and refocus our Transit Advisory Committee and looks forward to seeing the benefits of this work early next year.

Challenges

- Issues with our bus fleet due to supply chain issues, mechanic shortages, and long lead times with outside vendors for bodywork and specialty repairs.
- These issues have resulted in the need to supplement our fixed route fleet with MOBY vehicles primarily on express routes to continue to provide our needed service.

While staff anticipates needing to continue to augment our fleet with these smaller vehicles through the first quarter of 2024, the staff is doing an admirable job of finding creative solutions to the underlying issues of supply chain disruptions and vendor management.

Leadership Academy

- Staff is currently accepting applications for participation in this program and is seeing strong interest from our workforce.
- Applications are due tomorrow, the 22nd, but as of this morning, 31 applications that are either fully or partially completed have been initiated, and we anticipate additional submissions before the deadline.

Unapproved Board Minutes

- As we are limited to 12-15 slots in this first cohort, Ms. Cencic reported that she and the rest of the selection committee are going to have some tough decisions to make.
- Our first class of the Leadership Academy will be held on January 24th. Ms. Cencic reported that she anticipates updating the Board in her report next month on the makeup of the cohort and the initial session.

On Sunday, December 24th, Metro's services will be ending early at 8 pm in recognition of Christmas Eve. Ms. Cencic extended wishes to everyone in attendance for a very happy holiday season and offered to answer any questions that the Board had.

The Board appreciated the time reflected on the year. There were no questions.

Agenda Item #4 Administrative Reports

a. Administration/Human Resources (D. Grant)

Mr. Grant reports the following:

Due to no CDL classes in November, no new operators started. There were two promotions Deanna Coleman Custodian Supervisor and Tyler Rocha, Network Security Manager, and one new hire Juanite Hall, HR Generalist.

Mr. Grant concluded his report, there were no questions.

The Board appreciated promoting within and the recruiting of new staff.

b. Programs/Operation (I. Maldonado)

Mr. Maldonado reports the following:

Metro has experienced gradual but continuous improvement regarding operator attendance, the availability of buses for service delivery, the delivery of bus parts, and the increase in inventory. The temporary assignment of paratransit buses with bike racks on express routes has been beneficial to customers.

Staff attended the Omaha 360 meeting in collaboration with community stakeholders in North Omaha. Currently Metro is checking inventory of signage, ensuring the video and audio surveillance system is fully operational, and looking at ways to ensure customers are being dropped off and picked up safely at the North Omaha Transit Center.

Quarterly safety training was conducted for dispatchers, supervisors, and operators with an emphasis on safety and driving.

The operator schedule change will take place on January 14th no major service changes will be made at this time other than a slight increase in the frequency of service on ORBT during the early evening hours on the weekdays and from every 15 minutes to 12 minutes on Saturdays and the return of Route 3 to its regular route with the completion of the 42nd Street bridge.

Mr. Maldonado concluded his report and opened the floor to questions.

The Board asked for Mr. Maldonado to repeat the service increase for the ORBT and Mr. Maldonado confirmed the change to the route will also occur on January 14th.

Unapproved Board Minutes

Mr. Lawse also asked about operator attendance. Mr. Maldonado further stated to the Board that attendance has begun to improve from November now that the new attendance policy and contract have been in place. Additionally, Ms. Cencic added that our extra board assignments that cover vacation and sick callouts are smaller than desired. New operators coming out of training will be assigned to the extra board to help cover absences. Desired improvements in service due to absences will not be fully realized until enough operators are hired and trained to fully staff the extra board.

c. Communications

(N. Ebat)

Ms. Ebat reports the following:

Coming into the end of the year, Communications has been focusing on the K-12 Rides Free Program moving forward successfully by helping the community become or stay aware of this program. As large as this program has grown, staff are still finding that many haven't heard about it or how to access the program. One focus has been on updating and enhancing education materials. Various weekends were spent at community and family-focused events to help with awareness of this program. Metro attended the Empowerment Network Education Summit follow-up to address issues that were brought up during a previous summit. Transportation was previously identified as one of the top barriers to accessing the classroom and education overall. The most recent discussion with the Step-up Program was how to maximize the K-12 Program which included OPS students and parents.

Communications is working towards the New Year with the Transit Advisory Committee; notifications have started to be sent out to the Committee Applicants.

Metro is also working with organizers of large events ways to partner to encourage people to use public transit to access the various events next summer.

The Board Chairman asked about utilizing the bus lanes during downtown events and if people see the bus getting through perhaps it will help increase ridership. Ms. Ebat did bring up the fact that during these events the bus lanes are at times blocked by traffic entering and exiting garages for parking and how her team is discussing with the city to partner about how to ensure bus lanes are kept clear for bus usage only during these events.

Ms. Ebat concluded her report and opened the floor to additional questions. There were no questions.

Agenda Item #6 Resolution: Request Approval for the Amendment of Operating Policy 36, Hospitalization / Medical/ Insurance Benefits

(W. Clingman)

Staff recommends the amendment of Operating Policy 36 which addresses group health insurance benefits for eligible Metro employees. Operating Policy 36 was last amended in January 2014.

The proposed updated policy, now titled the "Employee Health Insurance Benefit Plans", will provide better clarity regarding the policy's scope. The changes will streamline the policy, eliminating ambiguity between the policy and the plan documents that govern the provision of medical, prescription drug, dental, and vision benefits. The updated policy formalizes practices that have been in effect, but not explicitly addressed in earlier versions of Operating Policy 36. The practices include, but are not limited to, waiving participation in the health plan, the annual open enrollment process, qualifying life events, participation in the health Flexible Spending Account, and COBRA.

Redlined and clean copies of the proposed policy are included in the Board packet. The proposed amendments to Operating Policy 36 were discussed with the Planning & Policy Committee. Assuming Committee concurrence, recommend approval.

Unapproved Board Minutes

Mr. Clingman acknowledged Ms. Cencic and Ms. Simpson's time working on the policy changes. Mr. Clingman reported that some of the changes were to clarify and remove redundant language from the policy.

The Planning and Policy Committee met to review the policy and recommended it for approval.

Motion by Meadows; Seconded by Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, HAASE ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item # 7 Resolution: Request Approval for the Amendment of Operating Policy 19, Holidays

(W. Clingman)

Staff recommends the amendment of Operating Policy 19 addressing holidays for all regular administrative employees not covered by a Collective Bargaining Agreement. Operating Policy 19 was last revised in October 2006. This policy covers observed holidays as well as floating holidays. Overall, the policy has been separated into two distinct sections to provide better clarity between observed and floating holidays.

The policy identifies seven (7) paid observed holidays each calendar year. In the proposed amendment, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is converted to a floating holiday from a required observed holiday. This change is being made as fixed and paratransit services remain operational and often administrative staff are required to work that day as well. The second key modification to observed holidays is a clarification that part-time staff will receive four hours of observed holiday pay.

Full-time employees covered by this policy will receive four (4) days of floating holidays per year. Full-time employees employed on Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Juneteenth shall be awarded one floating holiday on each of those days. Additionally, after one (1) year of full-time continuous service, employees will receive one (1) floating holiday on January 1st and a second floating holiday on June 19th of each calendar year.

Redlined and clean copies of the proposed policy are included in the Board packet. The proposed amendment to Operating Policy 19 was discussed with the Planning & Policy Committee. Assuming Committee concurrence, recommend approval.

Mr. Clingman presented that this policy is reorganizing and clarifying several changes and differentiates holiday pay as observed holidays and floating holidays. Martin Luther King Day and Juneteenth have been moved from observed holidays to floating since Metro operates during these days. Metro is trying to better align these holidays with the days of operation.

Staff are not allowed to convert observed holidays to floating holidays. Staff will now receive four floating holidays a year and this only affects administration.

The Planning and Policy Committee has reviewed this policy and recommended it for approval.

Motion by Meadows; Seconded by Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, HAASE ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #8 Resolution: Request Approval of Standing Purchase Orders

Staff is requesting approval of the standing purchase orders that are in excess of \$25,000.00 for 2024. The Purchasing Policy stipulates that the Board shall approve all Standing Purchase Orders exceeding \$25,000.00 on an annual basis. A copy of the Standing Purchase Order list is included in the Board packet.

This list was distributed to the responsible Directors for review, then sent to the Finance/Procurement Committee for review prior to the Thursday, December 21, 2023, Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha d/b/a Metro Board Meeting.

Staff recommends approval of the Resolution.

Mr. Clingman presented the annual request with no significant changes.

The Procurement Committee did review and recommend for approval.

Motion by Plucker; Seconded by Meadows

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, HAASE ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #9 Resolution: Rescind Operating Policy 32, Bus Advertising

(W. Clingman)

Staff is requesting approval of a resolution to rescind Operating Policy 32, Bus Advertising which was adopted in March of 1986 and last revised in August 1988.

In September 2022, Administrative Policy 1, Advertising was adopted by the Board. Administrative Policy 1 outlines the framework by which Metro manages advertising on buses and throughout its operations and in effect replaces Operating Policy 32. Staff is requesting the Board rescind Operating Policy 32 in order to avoid confusion or potential conflicting guidance as it pertains to commercial advertising on or within Metro's facilities and vehicles. A copy of both Operating Policy 32 and Administrative Policy 1 are included in the Board packet.

Recommend Approval.

Mr. Clingman indicated rescinding Policy 32 so it would not conflict with Administrative Policy 1.

The Planning and Policy Committee reviewed and recommended for approval.

Motion by Meadows; Seconded by Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, HAASE ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #10 Resolution: Request Approval of Fuel Contracts

(L. Cencic)

Metro determined that it was prudent to obtain bids for both diesel and gasoline fuel due to a decrease in fuel market prices. Metro's existing contract with Agriland is anticipated to end in January 2024.

On December 7, 2023, Metro requested bids for both diesel and gasoline for a six (6) month period beginning in February 2024. Metro received 5 bids for these contracts. The low, responsive, compliant bid for ultra-low sulfur diesel was from Sapp Bros Petroleum, Inc. at \$2.5643 per gallon for 232,500 gallons. The low, responsive, compliant bid for gasoline was also from Sapp Bros Petroleum, Inc. at \$2.0499 per gallon for 90,000 gallons.

Unapproved Board Minutes

The CEO/Executive Director advised the Board Chair, Mr. Lawse, who agreed to the award of these contracts. Both proposed contracts are below the \$3/gallon budgeted for fuel for 2024. Metro's existing diesel contract which is expiring in January 2024 is \$2.533/gallon.

We are requesting full Board concurrence for two contract awards to Sapp Bros Petroleum, Inc. in accordance with Metro's Procurement Policy. The contracts with Sapp Bros Petroleum, Inc. will be in the amount of \$596,199.75 for the diesel purchase and \$184,491 for the gasoline.

Sapp Bros Petroleum, Inc. is paid upon invoicing after delivery, which is spread out incrementally throughout the contract period.

Recommend Full Board Approval

Ms. Cencic presented this Resolution and indicated that the current contract ends on January 31st 2024.

The Board expressed appreciation for watching the markets. Ms. Cencic indicated that Kelly Benesch should receive the credit for stepping up in this area over the last two years.

Motion by Plucker; Seconded by Meadows

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, HAASE ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #11 Board Chair Report

(D. Lawse)

Mr. Lawse did not have a board report but expressed his appreciation to staff for the work that is done at Metro and wished everyone Happy Holidays!

More policies will be updated in the new year. It is believed to be halfway through the process.

Happy holidays however you celebrate this time of year.

Agenda Item #12 Date, Time, and Place of Next Regular Board Meeting

January 2024 Board Meeting will be held Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. at the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority's - Administrative Building

Agenda Item #13 Adjournment at 9:09 am

Motion by Plucker; Seconded by Meadows

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, HAASE ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES