

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102
February 22, 2024
8:30 a.m.**

MINUTES

The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Board met on Thursday, February 22, 2024, 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 February 16, 2024, 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 (Absent)
Mr. Jay Lund
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 (Absent)
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
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 8:32 am

Notice of the Regular Meeting was published in the Omaha Daily Record on February 16, 2024. 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: January 25, 2024

Motioned by Plucker; Seconded by Lund

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS 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.

Rose – resident of Midtown

Full wrapping with advertising on the bus limits visibility out of the windows specifically at night. Asking Metro to reduce the window space on buses so riders can see out better.

Mr. Lawse informed the guest that there are some brand guidelines and that advertising is a revenue stream.

Ms. Cencic concurred that the full wraps are a bigger source of revenue than smaller wraps. Ms. Cencic indicated staff would look into the transparency guidelines for window advertising to see if some modifications are feasible.

Agenda Item #4 Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic informed the Board and those attending in person and virtually of the following:

Ridership Numbers

- January total: 211, 256
- Averaging about 50K a week in January even factoring in the two weeks of bad winter weather resulting in service interruptions

K-12:

- January: 32,218
- June 1st through present: 348, 193
- Since the program began: 882, 710

ORBT:

- December total: 44,477
- Still waiting on January probing

Elected Board

- The filing deadline is March 1st.
- As of yesterday, at least one candidate has filed in each district.

Ms. Cencic was asked by Mr. Lund how to register, which is through the Douglas County Election Commission with a small filing fee.

Omaha Chamber of Commerce

Tomorrow, February 23rd, Ms. Cencic shared that she will be presenting at the Chamber of Commerce Board meeting regarding the conversion to an RMTA and the transition to an elected board of directors.

Triennial Review

For the past month, staff has been preparing for the review which happens every three years and touches every department.

- Documents are being compiled and reviewed for submission to our triennial reviewers at the end of this month.
- The site visit is planned for the end of July when they will meet with staff and review our policies, procedures, equipment, and projects in more detail.
- Intensive effort involves almost every department at Metro.

State of Nebraska

Ms. Cencic and staff are closely monitoring state legislative efforts and their potential implications for Metro. There is not a lot to report but it's a very busy session. The governor will be signing the Transit Week proclamation on March 18th.

Peer Site visit

A peer site visit is scheduled for March 11th – General Manager of Wave Transit in Mobile Alabama to learn more about our system, particularly ORBT.

Continuation of focus on internal capacity building and staff development

Staff have attended several conferences including the APTA Communications conference in New Orleans. Metro Leadership Academy had a very productive first session in January and the second session next week will focus on operations and management taught by internal facilitators as well as a continuation of transit regulation, policy, and guidance taught by the Westgate Center from the University of the Pacific.

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

- a. Administration/Human Resources (Juanite Hall)

Ms. Juanite Hall, HR Generalist, reporting on behalf of Dewan Grant.

In January Recruitment Report Metro started 12 new roles which included 9 bus operators, 1 mechanic, and 1 custodian. In addition, Metro will have 7 bus operators and 7 custodians for February start dates. HR has posted an open role for a network security technician.

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

Mr. Lawse asked about the trend for retention and how Metro works on keeping staff longer.

Ms. Hall reported that as a fairly new employee, she has learned a lot from attending meetings and partnering with different departments throughout Metro. She indicated a loss of tenured employees to retirement is being felt slowly, however, Metro's HR averages monthly recruiting of about 10 operators. Metro has been putting in time and effort to ensure staff are equipped by having a better understanding of their role and being a part of the Metro brand.

Ms. Cencic further explained that the overall retention rate for new hires making it to the one-year mark is about 80%, which is in line with or better than industry standards but still is a challenge. There has been a large wave of retirements that we are aware of now and in the near future. Ms. Hall is currently working to improve internal engagement, communications, and morale and is also updating Metro's onboarding process. This will make certain we have the tools in place, so we are not lacking on the Metro side. Metro's Safety and Training Department is continuously working to improve training.

b. Programs/Operation

In January Metro experienced an eventful month with almost an entire week requiring the use of snow routes and detours. Metro has also experienced an increase in service interruptions due to operator absences. In November and December Metro experienced a decrease in unexcused absences and experienced 2047 hours of service interruptions with 83% of operator availability trending at 4% but January saw a significant increase in unexcused absences. What was found was the Extra Board is currently at 12.2% coverage, which is less than the 20% recommended coverage. To further explain, there are a specific number of fixed route drivers and an extra board that is on standby to fill in for unexcused absences, vacations, sickness, etc.

Metro's HR Team has successfully hired nine new operators; however, they will not be available for the extra board until after graduation in March. Therefore, better numbers of operator absences may not be seen for the next couple of months. The HR Team is working arduously to continue to hire more bus operators.

To reduce the number of operator absences. The Deputy Executive Officer and Director of Operations met with the Union President to discuss coverage with a possible temporary solution to reduce the number of Day At a Time or DAT allotted time off slots. This is listed as an option in the union contract between Metro and the Transit Worker Union.

Morning pullout is still being affected by parts delays. Eight buses are waiting for parts internally with some at least 45 days out. Three buses are with external vendors and seven with major or significant body damage.

Metro has acquired a fleet management solution, and it has gone to the live stage. This has been a labor-intensive period with staff using a tremendous amount of time to help facilitate this process. There's much work to be done with getting the fuel usage, vehicle mileage, parts usage, and inventories up and running.

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

Mr. Lawse said that he was grateful for the work of the staff during times of weather and service interruption. He wanted to remind everyone of why Metro is here and as a rider himself worried about what the riders are faced with when a bus does not show up and they are not able to make it to their destination. He wanted to know how this is being communicated to riders. Could Metro have prevented this in retrospect? Could Metro be more proactive? Mr. Lawse expressed that he understands that the delay with parts is out of Metro's control, and new operators are being trained but what's most important is operators being there for customers. Operators' numbers are going up. In January 2023 .6% of revenue hours were interrupted, September, October, and November an overall 3%, in December 5%, and in January 2024 was almost 9%. What's changing the most is the operators' absences.

Mr. Maldonado acknowledged the validity and concerns raised by Mr. Lawse. He advised that looking at trends and trying to anticipate so many moving parts makes it difficult to be proactive, but that he and staff would renew efforts to do so. Metro must put the rider at the center of it all. Communication is key and it's a possibility that reducing service may be an option.

c. Communications

(N. Ebat)

Ms. Ebat wanted to address communication questions from Mr. Maldonado's report.

Metro Communications Department is always actively asking riders to follow live tracking and updates, continuously working to increase capacity to get alerts out, and working with dispatchers to know when to get the word out that a bus will not pullout but admits her department is not where she would like it to be just yet

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

but is working toward it. There are communications through MyRide on which routes might become less frequent also her team is involved in the training for new operators so they can learn the tools necessary to inform riders firsthand.

Mr. Lawse, a rider himself, met a rider who did not know how to check the live updates on MyRide, he asked if there was anything other than checking their phones available to Metro riders. What was done prior to this tech? What could be done above and beyond? It's a big enough problem that we should make sure we are making riders aware, especially since this is something that will be an issue for another month.

Ms. Ebat explained Metro continuously reaches out to partners to amplify communications with customers. Consistently trying to work with the community.

Ms. Cencic included that Metro is also currently working to train and make sure customer service is aware of any service interruptions and able to communicate with the customer.

Mr. Lund stated that there is an overreliance on digital advertising and social media. It's difficult to get messages through and he can see the move back to the ways of the past. Reminder signs are still great!

Ms. Ebat indicated phone numbers are displayed at the bus stops as well as all shelter locations with the website information and how to receive SMS messages.

Communications Report

The Communications Department attended the APTA Communications Conference and sat in on the Communications and Customer Experience workshop last week and learned from some of the giants in the industry as well as system sizes of the same kind experiencing the same issues. Staff took away unique lessons and tools and saw how they could work with Metro's system.

Transit Advisory Committee or TAC held its first official meeting. During this meeting, TAC voted and seated the chair and vice chair. This committee is a refreshed and reinvigorated group of people who care about transit in our community. Metro has been invited to speak at a conference in April about how we worked to reactivate TAC and how we will use it in our outreach plan.

Transit week is coming up and the activities are being planned with over five community partners to include over the course of six days. More will be shared once the calendar has been completely set.

The board thanked the department for their efforts.

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

Agenda Item #6 Resolution 2024-02: Resolution to Amend Hourly Employees' Pension Plan

(W. Clingman)

Staff is requesting approval of a resolution to update the Hourly Employee's Pension Plan with the new employee contribution rate from the recently adopted union contract. This will be an increase of 0.50% moving the contribution rate from 7.75% to 8.25%. The employer match will also increase to the same percentage.

The Hourly Pension Committee was notified of this change prior to the Board Meeting.

Staff Recommends Approval

Motioned by Plucker; Seconded by Lund

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS ABSENT, HAASE ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #7 Resolution 2024-03: Resolution to Amend Operating Policy 3 Disadvantaged Business Enterprise

(A. Johnson)

Staff recommends the revision of Operating Policy 3, which addresses Metro's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program in accordance with regulations of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), 49 CFR Part 26. Operating Policy 3 was last amended in March 2011. The proposed revisions include updating the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Liaison Officer (DBELO) to the Civil Rights and Inclusion Director and noting Metro's participation in the Nebraska Uniform Certification Program. Redlined and clean copies of the proposed policy are included in the Board packet. The proposed revisions to Operating Policy 3 were discussed with the Planning & Policy Committee.

Staff Recommends Approval.

Motioned by Lund; Seconded by Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS ABSENT, HAASE ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #8 Board Chair Report

(D. Lawse)

Mr. Lawse reminded everyone of the March 1st deadline for Metro's Elected Board. If you want to serve on the board, you can file and run a campaign.

Agenda Item #9 Executive Session

Executive Session was moved to the March Board Meeting.

Motioned by Plucker; Seconded by Lund

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS ABSENT, HAASE ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #10

Date, Time, and Place of Next Regular Board Meeting

Thursday, March 28, 2024, at 8:30 a.m.

Authority's Administrative Building

Agenda Item #11 Adjournment at 9:16 am

Motioned by Lund; Seconded by Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (MEADOWS ABSENT, HAASE ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES