

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102
March 28, 2024
8:30 a.m.**

MINUTES

The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Board met on Thursday, March 28, 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 March 22, 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
Mr. Jay Lund (Absent)
Ms. Amy Haase
Ms. Julia Plucker (Absent)

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 (Absent)
D. Kelsey, Operations Director (Virtually)
J. Willoughby, Senior Project Manager (Absent)
R. Sherping, Safety Director (Virtually)
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 at 8:32 am

Notice of the Regular Meeting was published in the Omaha Daily Record on March 22, 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: February 22, 2024

Motioned by Meadows; Seconded by Haase

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, PLUCKER 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.

Mike Mullen, Attorney – 14707 California Street, Suite 1, Omaha, NE 68154

Written notice of a claim was faxed in May 2023. Mr. Mullen is attending the March Board meeting to provide the notice.

Ms. Cencic clarified that written claims are to be addressed/sent to herself and/or the Board of Directors. They can only be sent in writing.

Agenda Item #4 Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic shared an update about Metro's ridership.

Ridership:

February 2024 carried 270,000 rides. Comparatively, it was 216,000 rides in February of 2023. The weekly average was about 66,000 trips.

K-12 Rides Free Program: Total ridership of 937,000 trips with nearly 55,000 of those occurring in February 2024.

During February many meetings occurred with staff and the community:

75 North - Ms. Cencic met with the CEO and staff to discuss helping residents and businesses use Metro's services as well as some potential future partnerships.

Ms. Cencic and Ms. Ebat participated in Legislative Day in Lincoln. The Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers began with a Senator's breakfast, training session, and networking and Ms. Cencic shared with other providers what bills were being monitored by Metro.

Ms. Cencic met the Superintendent of OPS, Matt Ray, about the K-12 Rides Free Program as well as some other partnerships.

Staff regularly meets with Omaha 360, but Ms. Cencic attended two meetings this month. These discussions are focused on safety and security issues at North Omaha Transit Center (NOTC). Metro has currently hired a security company to assist during peak hours in the afternoons. This is a short-term contract through the rest of

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the school year as a long-term solution is being discussed. The contract is under Ms. Cencic's authority under the purchasing policy.

Ms. Cencic is currently having ongoing conversations with the City of Omaha, Omaha Streetcar, and Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) regarding long-term governance. Ms. Cencic also recently met with MAPA and the City of Council Bluffs regarding a long-term planning and environmental linkage study on the feasibility of a bridge and streetcar extension into Council Bluffs. Metro Planning staff will be heavily involved, but Ms. Cencic plans to also be involved in the strategic direction.

Ms. Cencic had a meeting with ROAM Bikeshare on a potential partnership and ways to support each other.

Ms. Cencic also did a presentation to the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors on the future elected board seats.

Metro hosted a peer site visit with the General Manager of Mobile Alabama who was very impressed with the ORBT stations.

Ms. Cencic will be presenting on a government contracting panel at the Nebraska Supplier Diversity Trade Conference. The purpose of the conference is to encourage small, emerging minority businesses to participate in government contracting options.

Metro held the bid opening for the sustainability project. Four bids were received but only three were for the full project. Staff is currently going through federal requirements to determine the responsiveness and responsibility of the bid and expects to bring it to the board in April's meeting. This construction project will upgrade Metro's building including adding solar panels, replacing Metro's parking lot and the water retention underneath it, adding conditioned air to the maintenance shop, updating the building fire panel, and completing electrical upgrades that are needed.

Metro is tentatively recommending service changes that would reduce service beginning in May to improve service reliability due to an operator shortage. These would be temporary reductions in our service. This will reduce the number of service interruptions while recruiting and training additional operators. Ms. Ebat will further report on the communications being made with the public and stakeholders on these changes.

One of the bills currently being monitored is LB388, in which change is centered around property and sales tax. The vast majority of Metro's funding is from property taxes. Currently, this bill currently does not impact Metro but is still an evolving bill. The vote has been postponed for now.

Ms. Cencic concluded her report and opened it to the Board for questions.

Ms. Haase asked if there was anything that could contribute to the increase in ridership numbers for the K-12 Rides Free Program. Ms. Cencic indicated that the growth is likely due to overall awareness of the program and momentum but that staff has heard comments that riding the bus is beginning to be considered cool again among school aged. Certainly, Metro is seeing an uptick in students riding the bus in the evenings.

Administrative Reports:

- a. Administration/Human Resources

(D. Grant)

For February Metro has the following:

- 14 new hires
- 9 bus operators
- 5 facilities teams building and custodians.
- 13 candidates were identified to start in March.
- The Paratransit Manager and Dispatcher positions have been posted.

b. Programs/Operation

(I. Maldonado)

In February

11 new operators in training will be ready to drive on May 10th.

A new class will begin on April 22nd.

Teams are monitoring operator counts, attrition, and foreseeable retirements of our operators.

Parts delivery is averaging between 45-90 days for most parts. Currently Metro has 19 buses waiting on parts, six with major repairs, and four significant body repairs.

A request for formal pricing was sent to the bus vendor to conduct a Buy America audit to start the process of ordering 26 new buses; however, the vendor workload caused a delay to the timeline of the building and delivery of the buses that affected the cost of pricing. Staff is researching and looking at the best alternatives for the acquisition of the new buses.

March 25th Metro facilitated the use of a bus to the Council Bluffs Police Department which conducted emergency services, swat team training, and exercises.

Metro conducted quarterly training where operators gained additional knowledge in topics such as service animals, wheelchair ramps, lift deployments, reasonable accommodations under the American Disability Act, and severe weather preparedness.

April 15th through 19th Metro will host a Transit Safety Institute transit supervisor certification course.

June 10th through the 14th Metro will also host a bus system safety course.

12 employees will attend both meetings.

Mr. Maldonado concluded his report and opened it to the Board for questions.

Mr. Lawse had some additional questions regarding operator count and an indicator of when service could return to normal.

Metro will continue to see attrition which is why hiring continues. Ms. Cencic explained that when it comes to any changes it could take up to 12 weeks to implement therefore it could be September before a return to regular service.

The Board indicated its appreciation for the work being done.

c. Communications

(N. Ebat)

The big focus in Communications has been outreach and public engagement to let people know of the proposed service changes, to get feedback, and if they have other thoughts that can be implemented in the future. The last of four formal public meeting was conducted the night before. Two of the meetings were virtual and recorded

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and able to be viewed online. Metro received good feedback. People are disappointed but for the most part, understand the rationale for the proposed changes and indicated that they are looking forward to better reliability.

Metro is connecting with the community through digital rider alerts, banners, and social media posts. Communications has experienced good engagement and makes a consistent effort to answer questions directly. Printed rider alerts will be available on the buses, legal notices have been posted in papers, news coverage and community partners are being utilized to inform of the upcoming changes.

Communications reported on the various events occurring during Nebraska Public Transit Week the week of April 21st with Fare Free Day on April 22nd. All events for the week can be found on the Metro's website www.ometro.com/metro-news which can be found under News & Events.

Ms. Ebat concluded her report and opened it to the Board for questions.

Agenda Item #6 Resolution 2024-04: Request for Approval of Certifications & Assurances (S. Levers)

Each year, as a part of Metro's receipt of federal grant funding, Metro and its attorney are required annually to sign and file Certifications & Assurances (C&As) that require federally mandated programs and requirements will be followed.

Staff is requesting authority to authorize the CEO/Executive Director and Attorney to execute the 2024 C&As.

Resolution 2024-04 authorizing the same is included in the Board packet. Recommend full Board approval.

Motioned by Haase; Seconded by Meadows

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #7 Resolution 2024-05: Request Approval of Board Recognition of Nebraska Public Transit Week, April 21st through 27th (N. Ebat)

Nebraska Public Transit Week is dedicated to raising awareness of public transportation across the state. Public transit has served the cities of Omaha and Council Bluffs since 1867. Metro's fixed route service operated 3,963,859 miles and 288,920 hours in 2023. Metro's paratransit operated 563,367 miles and 50,388 hours connecting people, places, and opportunities.

This is the 10th year of Nebraska's Public Transit Week, allowing people all over the state to show their support for services that help thousands of Nebraskans stay mobile and have active lives within their communities.

This year, Metro will offer rides fare-free systemwide on Monday, April 22nd. To recognize how Metro connects various aspects of the Omaha community, Metro will partner with multiple community groups throughout the week for several events: Earth Day at the Riverfront; reading transit-themed books at several library branches; and participating in April's Millwork Conversation series. Metro will recognize its dedicated workforce with a safety banquet to honor Metro employees.

Recommend full Board approval.

Motioned by Meadows; Seconded by Haase

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #8 Emergency Resolution to Amend the Agenda

The nature of the emergency amendment is because of unexpected federal funding being transferred from the state that is about to lapse. The funds must be programed in the Transportation Improvement Program to avoid being lapsing, which requires Board approval.

Motioned by Haase; Seconded by Meadows

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #9 Emergency Resolution 2024-06: Request for Approval of the 2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

(S. Levers)

Staff requests approval of the amended 2024 element of the 2024-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This amendment is to program funds and create the 2024 Program of Projects (POP).

Staff recommend programming new Bus and Bus Facility Apportionment Funds (5339) in the FY 2024 element of the TIP. These funds will be flexed to Metro from the Nebraska Department of Transportation.

Additionally, staff recommended approval of the 2024 Program of Projects in the following manner:

PROJECT	SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
SUPPORT EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES	5307	Fed: \$4,230,482 Local: \$1,057,621 Total: \$5,288,103	Refresh ORBT Tech, procure video backup storage unit, replace generator, increase security of Admin/Maint. facility.
TRANSIT ENHANCEMENTS	5307	Fed: \$4,484,000 Local: \$1,121,000 Total: \$5,605,000	Begin design and engineering for replacement of road at MCC Transit Center, procure graphics and bus wraps for rebranding.

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UNIFIED WORK PROGRAM	5307	Fed: \$846,400 Local: \$211,600 Total: \$1,058,000	Planning activities for 2024.
CAPITALIZED OPERATIONS	5307	Fed: \$7,599,118 Local: \$1,899,779 Total: \$9,498,897	Preventative Maintenance, partial ADA service, Employee and Staff Training.
PROJECT	SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
ROLLING STOCK	5339	Fed: \$3,190,000 Local: \$797,500 Total: \$3,987,500	Buses
SUPPORT EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES	5339	Fed: \$2,402,469 Local: \$600,617 Total: \$3,003,086	Transit Center upgrades, new lighting in bus barn and admin offices

Board approval allowed the projects to be committed for FY 2024. Projects will be submitted to MAPA for consideration at the March 2024 MAPA Board Meeting. Total encumbrance of federal funds will be \$22,752,469. Total encumbrance of local funds will be \$5,688,117. Total new encumbrance of all funds will be \$28,440,586.

The Board previously approved the 5307 funding in this TIP. Also previously approved was \$1,400,000 5339 Federal funding and \$350,000 local match totaling \$1,750,000. This resolution adds additional 5339 funding to the 2024 TIP in the amount of \$4,192,069 Federal and \$1,048,117 local match totaling \$5,240,186.

Approval ensured Metro’s compliance with FTA planning requirements. News of this funding being available by NDOT was unknown until notification the Monday prior to the board meeting was made through contact/communication with Ms. Cencic.

Motioned by Haase; Seconded by Meadows

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item # 10 Board Chair Report

(D. Lawse)

The Operations Committee met to go over the Annual Performance Evaluation of the CEO and discuss some of the policies currently being worked on by Metro.

Agenda Item #11 Executive Session

This Board reserves the right to enter into Executive Session in order to protect the public interest with respect to discussion regarding litigation, personnel, and other matters listed in the Nebraska Revised Statute § 84-1410.

No official business will be conducted after returning from the Executive Session.

Motioned by Meadows; Seconded by Haase

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Reconvene from Executive Session back to Regular Meeting

Motioned by Meadows; Seconded by Haase

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

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

Thursday, April 25, 2024, at 8:30 a.m.
Authority's Administrative Building

Agenda Item #13 Adjournment at 9:49 am

Motioned by Haase; Seconded by Meadows

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS (LUND ABSENT, PLUCKER ABSENT), MOTION CARRIES

Tentative Resolutions

Award contract for Facility Sustainability Project
Approval of Safety Awards Policy
Title VI Service Equity Analysis