

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102
February 27, 2025
8:30 a.m.**

MINUTES

The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Board met on Thursday, February 27, 2025, 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 21, 2025, 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 were in attendance at the meeting:

Authority Board:

Mr. Curt Simon, Board Chair
Mr. Daniel Padilla, Vice Chair
Mr. Josh Corrigan
Ms. Clarice Dombeck
Ms. Yanira Garcia
Mr. Tim Lonergan
Mr. Cornelius Williams

Authority Staff:

L. Cencic, CEO/Executive Director
K. Pendland, Deputy Executive Officer
D. Grant, Human Capital, and Talent Development Director
E. Simpson, Legal Director (Absent)
W. Clingman, Finance Director
J. Willoughby, Senior Project Manager
A. Johnson, Civil Rights & Inclusion Director
J. Beverage, Maintenance Director (Virtual)
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 February 21, 2025. 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 order of business is the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.

a. Regular Meeting: January 23, 2025

Motioned by Lonergan; Seconded by Dombeck
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, 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.

Chris Nanke, President of the Transport Worker Union (TWU), Local 223 of Omaha

Mr. Nanke congratulated the newly elected Board and introduced himself and Ric Overman the Vice President of TWU. Representing over 200 union members, along with ten other elected officials, he informed the Board that they are available at any time to answer or discuss matters relating to Metro.

Clyde Anderson 7020 Burt Street, Omaha, NE 68132

Member of Omaha Metro Transit Advisory Committee (TAC). His purpose was to present TAC's official statement regarding the Microtransit Project. He expressed that Metro has done an amazing job educating and informing the community regarding this project after collecting community feedback and conducting a thorough analysis of the need for this project and the benefits it will bring to the community. He informed the Board that TAC wholeheartedly supports this pilot project and believes in its potential to address equity needs with the Omaha transit system. He asks that other TAC members and volunteers assist with implementing this pilot project.

Lee Myers 105 South 9th Street

Mr. Myers also spoke in favor of microtransit; however, he feels it is lacking in coordination with the other types of transportation services currently servicing the Omaha area e.g. MOBY, Immanuel Community Center, and most senior centers. He asked for a thorough analysis of which microtransit details fit the Omaha community. Mr. Myers feels the equity analysis, presented later in the agenda, was focused in the wrong direction and the service will only serve half of the community.

Agenda Item #4 Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic began her report by informing the Board that in January Metro carried over 262,000 rides, which is 24% more rides than the previous year, but she emphasized those numbers occurred last month while working against some major weather events.

ORBT carried over 43,000 riders and that is the highest ridership for the month of January since its launch.

K-12 Rides Free remains strong carrying over 52,000 riders with a program total of over 1.5 million riders since its inception.

Ms. Cencic reported on a recent Winter Mixer held at Metro to honor and thank staff for all their hard work. There were snacks, contests, and games, and the current quarterly newsletter was distributed.

The Sustainability Facilities Upgrade Project continues to make progress. All skylights in Maintenance have been replaced, allowing more natural light in that department and a cooling tower to provide conditioned air is on the roof awaiting installation. Metro is nearing the end of the fire alarm system replacement, in the process of installing the solar panels, and waiting on the completion of the parking lot which is dependent on the weather.

Ms. Cencic explained that there are several microtransit items on the agenda. The master services agreement lays out the conditions; however, the price and operations details are still in the final stages of negotiation. Metro staff continues to work hard on presentations and informative sessions focusing on community input, educating, and keeping the public informed on its status.

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

The Board asked to what extent the federal freeze on grants affects Metro purchases and projects and if there's been a pause in grants offered.

Ms. Cencic responded that she and staff are currently monitoring funding, but it has not affected Metro at this time. She further explained how federal funding applies to Metro. Metro pays upfront for all projects and then submits drawdowns for reimbursement to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). During this uncertain time, Metro is making more frequent drawdowns to ensure there is not a large outstanding balance for reimbursement. Metro receives two primary types of federal grants; one is the formula grants, and the other is discretionary (competitive) funding. The formula grants are Metro's grants for programs, projects, and general year-to-year activities. The bus purchase and sustainability project were competitive grants and at this time there are enough projects in the pipeline. She does expect possible changes to priorities and the timing of when proposals for grants will be released. In most cases when applying for a competitive federal grant it's for a project that will start in two, three, or four years from the time the application is submitted.

There were no further questions from the Board.

Before proceeding with the administrative reports, the Board allowed a member of the public, who had missed the designated public comment period, the opportunity to share their remarks.

Joyce Vondrasek 617 South 37th Street

Head bike mechanic for Heartland B-Cycle. Mr. Vondrasek shared that while light rail and commuter trains to Lincoln are not on the agenda, he wanted to inform the board that people are out in the community organizing for this to come to fruition. He also expressed that he appreciates public transit and Metro.

The meeting proceeded to the next agenda item.

Agenda Item #5 Administrative Reports:

Administration/Human Resources

(D. Grant)

Mr. Grant began his report with recruiting. In January, Metro welcomed ten new hires to the team; nine are bus operators and a mechanic strengthening the maintenance team. Five bus operators have successfully graduated from training. 11 candidates are starting throughout February ensuring a continued pipeline of talent. A quarterly newsletter was given to the Board which provides updates on projects, and initiatives, educates staff, covers coworker spotlights, and

highlights retirements and employee work anniversaries. Mr. Grant highlighted a significant milestone—Mr. Kelly Benesch's 35 years of service with Metro, a remarkable achievement.

Mr. Grant concluded his report and opened the floor to the Board for questions

The Board asked for confirmation of how many staff there are in training and if veterans are sought after for the positions of bus operators.

Mr. Grant reiterated that nine new hires just began their training program; however, there are new hires still in training who started in December. Altogether there are 15 staff who are currently in training. Mr. Grant responded that Metro does actively recruit veterans, however, many apply for the role of mechanics as opposed to bus operators.

There were no further questions from the Board.

Programs/Operation

(K. Pendland)

Mr. Pendland began his report by informing the Board that customer service numbers remained steady in January with 11,449 calls answered providing a 95% service level. The average queue times remained at less than one minute.

Fixed Route Revenue hours in January were 23,858, which reflects an increase in service delivery of about 2,000 additional hours compared to January 2024 and represents the highest revenue hours for January over the past four years.

Fixed Route Passenger Trips in January were 262,067 which is a substantial increase from January 2024 of nearly 51,000 trips. A large portion of this increase can be attributed to Metro's K-12 Rides Free program which showed an increase of just over 20,000 trips from January 2024. These factors then contributed to an average route productivity of 11 passengers per revenue hour across all fixed routes. This is the highest productivity level we have seen in January in seven years.

On-Time Performance (OTP) in January averaged 3.9% early departures, and 13.1% late departures, with an on-time departure rate of 83%. This is an overall increase in OTP over the previous month.

In January Service Interruptions accounted for 2.2% of our revenue hours. Most of those interruptions are due to operator availability. February has seen those numbers rise due to weather events and the temperature extremes that have been experienced.

For paratransit operations, Mr. Pendland apologized and clarified that two of the graphs in the Board packet for MOBY Operations listed December in the title but do show the data for January. He went on to report that MOBY completed a total of 7,341 trips in January which is an increase of over 1,000 trips from January 2024. The average passenger per revenue hour increased to 1.9%, which represents higher efficiency for our MOBY service.

Mr. Pendland closed his report by informing the Board that Gregg Stotts Metro's Safety and Security Specialist has completed his third-party certification for providing Commercial Driver's License (CDL) testing. Metro's goal is to provide CDL testing in-house.

Mr. Pendland concluded his report and opened the floor to the Board for questions.

The Board asked several questions regarding Mr. Pendland's report on programs and operations. They inquired whether Metro anticipates an increase in MOBY-eligible riders impacting service. Additionally, they asked if the increase in service hours was due to Omaha's favorable weather and whether flu season has contributed to service interruptions and operator availability. Lastly, the Board questioned whether impacted revenue hours are related to mechanical issues—specifically, whether they stem from a shortage of mechanics, bus breakdowns, or service challenges.

Mr. Pendland responded that the increase in MOBY-eligible riders will impact service if Metro is unable to meet vehicle and operator requirements. However, depending on the locations of rider routes, there may be opportunities to batch trips, reducing the need for additional vehicles and operators. This approach would allow Metro to optimize existing staffing and vehicle levels. He further noted that the impact will depend on how passengers are distributed across the city and the when and where of the trips.

Mr. Pendland concurred that favorable weather has contributed to increased service hours but also pointed out that there has been an increase in weekday service.

Regarding the flu season, he noted that its effects have been more pronounced in February than in January and that it will likely be listed as a contributing factor in the next Board report.

He also explained that many impacted revenue hours are due to road calls—issues that arise with vehicles while they are in service. Weather conditions have played a role in these vehicle issues, contributing to service disruptions

There were no further questions from the Board.

Communications

(N. Ebat)

Ms. Ebat reported there were at least 18 media hits since the last Board meeting that were through print and broadcast. There are possibly more mentions on broadcast; however, Metro doesn't currently have media monitoring software that can track each one. At least 9 of the above were alerts about weather-related service changes. She feels this shows how Metro leverages the various media tools available to inform the public. Communications also sent out 19 alerts on ometro.com, and 57 on the MyRide website and tracking app. Most alerts were weather-related, some others may be if Metro is switching to a detour or snow route and when going back to the regular route.

The official Train the Trainer Program has been off and running conducting practice sessions over the past few months. The first was held in February at a nonprofit with a classroom overview, basic tricks and tips on how to navigate the system, and maps along with a practice bus ride and a transfer for a hands-on guide on how to ride the bus. The training emphasizes the best approaches to educating clients and how best their clients can use Metro's app. Also held was a Spanish-speaking class for a nonprofit with the assistance of a translator.

Over the last month, Metro's Planning Department and the Civil Rights and Inclusion Department have provided presentations for new hire classes. The goal is to get new operators familiar with how Metro functions as a government agency, who we are as an agency, some basic transit

planning how street design and development impact transit, and the types of tools offered to riders when it comes to receiving notifications and trip planning. Metro strives for its operators to have a basic understanding of the tools riders have available to them, that way they can answer basic questions riders will have.

Two members of Metro staff will be presenting a webinar on March 12th at noon with the International Association for Public Participation Midwest chapter. Details will be posted once the link has been received from the association.

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

The Board inquired about community outreach events, whether organizations reach out, if there are ongoing partnerships Metro works with, and if there have been any specific discussions with the vendor regarding communications with Metro's customers on microtransit.

Ms. Ebat responded with community outreach it's a little bit of both Metro reaching out and the organization contacting Metro. The Communications Department will then monitor and track what organizations are asking for and cater the outreach to accommodate that request. Ms. Ebat indicated that they normally do about two presentations per month staying within their capacity. The Train the Trainer Program is designed to train nonprofit staff to then educate their clients, which helps get the word out without stretching staff capacity.

Lastly, Ms. Ebat indicated that Metro is still having ongoing communications with the vendor regarding microtransit. Her department is currently working on a public engagement plan and considering what can be done internally. Ms. Cencic mentioned that the vendor has proposed providing some of the engagement and marketing assistance but has not decided on what the details will look like as this is being negotiated.

There were no further questions from the Board.

Agenda Item #6 Resolution 2025-04 Request for Approval of Title VI Service and Equity Analysis for Proposed Microtransit Pilot Program (A. Johnson)

As a recipient of federal funding from the United States Department of Transportation, Metro is obligated to conduct equity analyses for major service changes and fare changes as part of compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and FTA C 4703.1, "Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for Federal Transit Administration Recipients". While the equity analysis requirement is specific to fixed-route service, Metro opted to conduct an equity analysis for the proposed microtransit pilot program due to the introduction of both a new service and new fare even though the pilot will be 100% philanthropically funded.

Metro proposed a three-zone, three-year microtransit pilot program that would cover 15.52 square miles in North Omaha, 12.70 square miles in South Omaha, and 13.14 square miles in West Omaha.

A Service and Fare Equity Analysis was completed to identify the impact of the proposed microtransit pilot program on minority, low-income, and stated disability populations. The Title VI Service and Fare Equity Analysis found:

- **No disparate impact on minority populations.**
- **No disproportionate burden on low-income populations.**

- **Minority, low-income, and stated disability populations will not be limited by or denied the benefits of the proposed microtransit pilot program.** The percentage of the minority, low-income, and stated disability population in each proposed zone is approximately equivalent to or exceeds the percentage of the minority, low-income, and stated disability population throughout the City of Omaha.
- **The fare rate has not yet been determined.** If utilized, the proposed \$3.00 fare is consistent with the industry standard and is supported by a majority of the public commentators. When the fare media and type are further considered, the needs of the unbanked must be addressed.

The Board's approval will ensure Metro's continued compliance with the Federal Transit Administration's Title VI requirements. The Title VI Service and Fare Equity Analysis is included in the Board of Directors Packet and is additionally available to the public upon request by emailing civilrights@ometro.com.

Dr. Johnson concluded her presentation of the resolution and opened the floor for questions from the Board.

The Board asked if the additional origin points would be used for any of the three zones like Eppley, 33rd Street ORBT, and Open Door Mission or if they are exclusive to North Omaha. Also, was the population data from the analysis used to determine the layout of the zones initially?

Dr. Johnson stated the origin points mentioned are exclusive to North Omaha. She also stated that the zones presented were coordinated with the submissions from the RFP and MetroNext zones then based on the bid that was submitted reviewed and coordinated with the vendor.

The Board invited public comments on this resolution.

Robert Brown Transporter Incorporated.

He informed the Board that Transporter Incorporated partners with the Department of Transportation to provide a similar service to what is being proposed. He expressed that he does not feel this will benefit the low income who reside in North Omaha looking to be transported to West Omaha. He does not believe the microtransit solution will address any of those issues.

There was no further Board discussion necessary. The Board approved unanimously.

Motioned by Lonergan; Seconded by Padilla
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #7 Resolution 2025-05 Request Approval to Award Contract to Via for Microtransit Services

(L. Cencic)

Staff requested approval to award a contract to River North Transit, LLC, a subsidiary of Via Transportation, Inc. for Microtransit services, and to authorize the CEO/Executive Director to execute the same.

Metro released a Request for Proposals for a microtransit pilot project in September of 2024 and received two proposals. The proposals were reviewed by an evaluation team and the proposal from Via Transportation, Inc./River North Transit, LLC was the highest-ranked proposal in terms of the established criteria which included software & data capabilities, operating plan, vendor flexibility, vendor experience, personnel experience, and price.

This resolution authorizes the CEO/Executive Director to execute a Master Terms and Conditions Agreement with River North, LLC/Via Transportation, Inc. for a pilot period of three years with two optional one-year extensions. The specifics of service hours, zones, contract pricing, and expectations would be set forth in future service orders that would fall under this Master Terms and Conditions Agreement.

Ms. Cencic concluded her presentation of the resolution and opened the floor for questions from the Board.

The Board asked for Via's experience and where else in the country they are operating. They inquired if Metro would have access to data relating to microtransit. Lastly, what is the timetable for when more specific tasks will be put forth to the Board?

Ms. Cencic informed the Board that Via is one of the leading providers operating more than half of the microtransit spaces running 750 projects. In particular, they are a provider in Des Moines, at a peer agency we researched. Via comes with expert staff and proven experience in this regard who are very willing to work with Metro. Metro's primary concern is ensuring that microtransit integrates with the fixed route. This will ensure that microtransit is not a competing service with Metro's fixed routes.

Via and River North has a lot of data that is proprietary. Their service is centered around technology. However, data sharing will be negotiated with Via to ensure Metro obtains the appropriate information to fully analyze this pilot project to better assist with identifying microtransit's future.

Lastly, Ms. Cencic is cautiously optimistic about bringing the work order with service area, hours, and prices to the board in March with an expectation of being in service a couple of months after.

The Board invited public comments on this resolution.

Mr. Nanke from TWU Local 223 asks how long this project will run before consideration to bring it internally. He would like to know for clarification so that if or when it comes internally after the pilot period operators would have union representation made available.

Ms. Cencic explained that this contract has a two-year base, and the most recent version has possible extensions that could be beyond that. Metro had vendors provide two options for years four and five, one being providing technology only and the other providing both service and technology.

There was no further Board discussion necessary. The Board approved unanimously.

Motioned by Lonergan; Seconded by Corrigan
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #8 Resolution 2025-06 Request Approval to Award Work Order 3 - North Omaha Transit Center (NOTC) Pavement Replacement Design Project as a Part of the A&E IDIQ Contract with SRF
(Joy Willoughby)

The A&E Contract with SRF is split into multiple work orders. These Work Orders are based on each individual project and are negotiated based on the scope of work of the project. Work Order 3 – NOTC Pavement Replacement Project includes the removal and 11" concrete replacement of both drive lanes, removal and replacement of the ADA landing areas at the bus bays, and expanding the employee parking tray by one parking stall. The existing pavement in the drive lanes was installed in 2013. With the wear and tear of the bus traffic, the pavement has been deteriorating over the last few years. Metro's staff has been patching the cracks and holes as needed but they are not holding up anymore. The truncated domes at the ADA loading zones continuously pop up because the bolts no longer have a solid pavement structure underneath to attach to. This causes safety hazards for everyone using the Transit Center. The Operators use an existing parking tray along the south side of the Transit Center because they change shifts with other Operators at this location. The current tray needs to be expanded to allow for more vehicles. The property line is such that only one additional parking stall can be added. Metro

negotiated Work Order 3 with SRF in five steps. The first step was the negotiation of the scope of work which was approved by Metro and SRF to include the design and construction administration of the items listed above. The second step was the negotiation of the fixed fee percentage based on size and type of project. The third step involved verifying that the assigned hourly rates per team member were in the range of industry standards. The fourth step was the negotiation of hours required to complete the Work Order. Metro and SRF agreed on 1,785 hours. The negotiated hours were 4.5% lower than the Independent Cost Estimate developed by Metro. The final step was assigning costs to the direct costs (ODCs). After negotiations Metro and SRF agreed to a total fee of \$265,517.81. The negotiated fee amount was 3.4% lower than the Independent Cost Estimate developed by Metro.

Staff requested Board authority to enter into Work Order 3 – North Omaha Transit Center (NOTC) Pavement Replacement Project as a part of the A&E IDIQ Contract with SRF for the amount of \$265,517.81

This item was forwarded to the Procurement Committee, prior to the Board meeting for their review.

Ms. Willoughby concluded her presentation of the resolution and opened the floor for questions from the Board.

The Board asked what's the life expectancy for the replacement.

Ms. Willoughby indicated 25 years for concrete and 12-15 years for asphalt. The turning lanes for the buses at NOTC are what's causing a lower life cycle.

The Board invited public comments on this resolution. There were none.

There was no further Board discussion necessary. The Board approved unanimously.

Motioned by Lonergan; Seconded by Williams
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #9 Board Chair Report

(C. Simon)

Board Chair Curt Simon had no updates to report for this meeting

Agenda Item #10 Date, Time, and Place of Next Board Meeting

Thursday, March 27, 2025, at 8:30 a.m.

Authority's Administrative Building

Agenda Item #11 Adjournment at 9:40 am.

Motioned by Lonergan; Seconded by Dombeck
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS (Williams Abstained), MOTION CARRIES