Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, NE 68102
402.341.0800
Fax: 402.342.0949
ometro.com

Regular Meeting of the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha (dba Metro Transit) Transit Advisory

This regular meeting of Metro Transit's Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) was held on October 14, 2026 from 6:30 p.m. to 7:36 p.m. and was open to the public online and in-person at the Metro Transit Administrative Building (2222 Cuming Street). Notice of the meeting was published in the Omaha Daily Record on October 7, 2026, in advance of the meeting. For the benefit of the public in attendance, a copy of the Open Meetings Law was posted in the meeting room, and the agenda was on display in the facility lobby.

Attendance

The following were in attendance at the meeting:

Transit Advisory Committee Members

- Joichiro Yamada, TAC Chair
- Clyde Anderson, TAC Vice Chair
- Raymond Williams
- Gab Rima
- Rondae Hill
- Alex Mendoza
- Brian Neely (online)

Metro Transit Staff

- Nicole Ebat, Senior Manager of Communications and Community Relations
- Bridget Battafarano, Community Mobility Coordinator

Others Present

- Rob Sembrat
- Joe Sparano
- Lucas Lee

Agenda Item #1 - Call to Order

Chair Yamada called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Agenda Item #2 - Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the September 2026 meeting were sent to all committee members in advance and are available at ometro.com/tac. No corrections were made.

Motion to approve: Anderson; Seconded by Rima
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.

Rob Sembrat, Midtown Resident

Member of the public Rob Sembrant made a comment on Micro Flex // driven by Metro. He has experienced what he described as inexact pick-up and drop-off locations within parking lots, specifically when he has taken Micro Flex to One Pacific Plaza in Regency. He described a time when a driver had difficulty finding where he was located within the shopping center. Staff advised that the app has a method for the rider to call the driver. Staff advised that the app should show the exact address for pickup and staff will follow up to be sure that this is the case.

Agenda Item #4 – Committee Report on Public Feedback

This is an opportunity for members of the Transit Advisory Committee to share feedback they have received from members of the public regarding topics related to the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha, or to share feedback about their own ridership experiences.

Clyde Anderson

Vice Chair Anderson asked if half-fare Umo cards are available at Ticket Vending Machines and if the Umo tokens are the paper tickets that are scanned on the Umo reader. Staff advised that the half-fare Umo cards require pictures, so riders need to come to Metro's Administrative Office for them and confirmed that the tokens are paper tickets connected to the Umo system.

Gab Rima

Member Rima reported that the 13th & Jackson bus stop was not marked as closed on Umo and the digital clock on bus 2508 was an hour off the actual time. Member Rima also shared that they received a report from a medical social worker that a patient expressed frustration with the five-minute wait period and with MOBY drivers who arrive earlier or later than they are supposed to and do not contact the rider. Staff asked Member Rima to forward the information for review. Staff noted that MOBY riders may request a reasonable modification to the policy and that the five-minute clock begins at the start of the 30-minute pickup window or upon vehicle arrival and ends once the

person is heading toward the vehicle. Staff also shared that MOBY riders can sign up to receive a text alert five minutes before the start of their 30-minute pickup window reminding them their pickup window is about to begin.

Rondae Hill
TAC Member Hill shared that two of her MOBY trips from Outlook Nebraska were approximately 15 minutes late in the last few weeks. She acknowledged that it may be due to a shortage of drivers or construction, but she had to cancel one of those trips and arrange another ride to avoid missing an appointment. Staff requested trips details to follow up on the concern after the meeting. TAC Member Hill thanked staff for following up on a previously shared concern and shared that the individual felt heard.

TAC Chair Yamada invited public comments.

Public Comments
There were none.

There were no further questions or discussion.

Agenda Item #5 – Committee Report on RMTA Board of Directors (C. Anderson)

Vice Chair Anderson thanked the Board members for attending the September 9th TAC meeting during the September 17th Board meeting. He shared that the TAC appreciated the presentation on service changes that are proposed to go into effect in December and that the TAC did not have negative feedback about the proposed changes. Vice Chair Anderson shared with the Board Rob Sembrat's comment about the Micro Flex // driven by Metro service needing more publicity. He noted that the service has been added to the home page of Metro's website. Lastly, Vice Chair Anderson shared TAC Member Mendoza's suggestion with the Board that Umo cards be available at the Central Library and that staff shared there were some logistical issues but that they are in touch with Library staff.

Vice Chair Anderson noted that the TWU President spoke at the Board meeting during the public comment period about contract negotiations going on for a year and that hourly employees have been working without a contract since December 31, 2025. Metro's CEO Lauren Cencic shared during the Board meeting that there were two full days of negotiations scheduled for the following week.

Metro's Deputy Executive Officer Kevin Pendland provided statistics on Micro Flex ridership during his report to the Board. Vice Chair Anderson shared a paper version of the report during the TAC meeting. Additionally, the Board approved the 2027 tax levy and budget and the renewal of the Umo contract. Vice Chair Anderson noted that Metro

pays $55 per month per bus for the Umo contract and shared curiosity about the cost of going fare-free given the large expense of fare collection.

Chair Yamada invited TAC member discussion and public comments on Vice Chair Anderson's report.

TAC Discussion
There was none.

Public Comment
There were none.

There were no further questions or discussion.

Agenda Item #6 – Metro Transit Staff Report (B. Battafarano)

Battafarano shared the following updates:

- Staff attended Fall Fest in the Village hosted by Empowerment Network at 24th and Lake on September 10. Metro provided service information and crafts to kids and their families.
- Metro Transit and Via staff conducted several outreach events for Micro Flex, including an information session at the Metro administrative building for community agencies.
- Submissions for new TAC members closed on October 1st. There were 19 applications submitted. Selections will be made by mid-November.
- Metro CEO Lauren Cencic will speak at the Bike-Walk Nebraska Summit and staff will have an information table at the event.
- Metro staff will attend a Leadership Omaha session to show participants how to make bus riding a part of their day.
- Metro Transit will participate in the upcoming Veterans Day Parade on Saturday, November 7th. TAC members and their families are invited to stroll with Metro in the parade.
- Metro Community College South Transit Center reopened on September 21st.
- The Request for Proposals to study the 24th Street Corridor for transit enhancements received three bids. The contract is tentatively scheduled to be awarded at either the October or November Board meeting.
- The Board of Directors will vote on a date to change the November meeting since it falls on Thanksgiving.
- Staff are launching a new system to improve accessibility and wayfinding, which was discussed during the next agenda item.

- MAPA is partnering with the City of Omaha to study ways to reconnect the Highway 75 Corridor. They are partnering with Spark and One Omaha for community input and outreach. There will be community meetings and input sessions and information is available on the respective websites.

TAC Discussion
TAC Chair Yamada invited TAC member discussion and public comments on Battafarano's report.

Chair Yamada asked when the Wheel Appeal student art contest winner will be announced. Staff advised that the committee, which will include local artists and people representing artistic institutions in Omaha, is being pulled together and the winner will be revealed at an event a few weeks after the committee meets.

Staff were asked if Metro has been working with employers to establish a pass program for Micro Flex. Staff shared that most of the outreach has been to nonprofits and that there has been outreach to businesses off McKinley Road. Metro has discussed adding bus service along McKinley Road for a long time, but there continues to be a lack of pedestrian infrastructure making it unsafe for riders at this time.

TAC Member Rima asked where and when to find the MAPA public comment details for the Highway 75 Corridor study. Staff recommended that TAC members monitor the One Omaha and Spark websites for information. A follow-up question was asked whether the grant had already been awarded. Staff said yes, and that City Council passed matching funds.

Public Comment
There were none.

There were no further questions or discussion.

Agenda Item #7 – Parakeet Device Introduction – N. Ebat

Metro Staff member Nicole introduced a new device Metro ahead of Metro installing the 14th & Dodge layover location.

Ebat began by explaining that the way the buses pull up to the area of 14th & Dodge will not be changing, but that metro created specific Zones to help make understanding which block which routes will pull up to easier to understand. Zone A: midblock on Dodge street in between 14th & 15th for routes 15 and 18; Zone B is on 14th street serving routes 4, 13, and 106; and Zone C is on Dodge to the east of 14th and serving Routes 11, Blue, Yellow, 120 and express routes 93, 94, 95, and 97.

Ebat explained that additionally Metro will be deploying devices that were researched as part of a Metro Leadership Academy capstone project. The devices are call Parakeets and are motion activated speakers that can be programmed with any audible message. Ebat explained they are a fairly inexpensive, flexible option that will be on poles near the different zones. If somebody walks by, it plays a message about which zone it is in, so it will help in wayfinding for those who are blind or low vision.

Ebat explained that, if these are found to be helpful for navigating in the 14th & dodge layover, it's possible they could be expanded to other areas

TAC Question:

TAC Discussion
TAC question: How are they powered?

Ebat: Batteries that are rechargeable, the device itself is not rechargeable. Ebat explained this project was pitched with the Buildings, Grounds, and Facilities crew in mind because changing the batteries would be largely their responsibility.

TAC question: Will it continuously make announcements 24/7 or does it stop after a certain time?

Ebat: It goes off everytime someone moves by it. Luckily there's no residential at that corner, so we feel confident that we're still being good neighbors. We're also being strategic about where they are placed, closer to the benches where people waiting for the bus are more likely to be.

TAC question: Which languages are being represented?

Ebat: We're starting with English, we are talking about adding Spanish as well

Ebat explained that a map with the zones will be up on the website and the MyRide OMA app will be updated to reflect which route stops in which zone at the layover

TAC question: When you load audio or update audio do you need to physically be there?

Ebat: It uses an SD card, so we upload audio to the SD card and then we'll be able to hand those off to our crews and they can flip them out if need be. It's a very low key device. It's basically a speaker with an automatic sensor in front of it

TAC comment: Thank you very much for keeping the blind and low vision in mind with all of this and taking that step to have the audible available. It's fantastic to hear that we're being remembered and thought of in those aspects

TAC question: Question about the layover, they were moved over when the construction of the streetcar began or maybe it was when the mutual building started, but how permanent is the 14th & Dodge layover?

Ebat: The answer is that we don't own this propertt so we are here at the kindness of the city until we're not

TAC question: Are there any plans of moving back to the Farnam layover?

Ebat: I think we hope to get back into where we were, but I don't know for sure
TAC question: How often are the batteries needing to be changed?

Ebat: Every two weeks

TAC question: Is there a solar panel option?

Ebat: No, but from the research we did these devices stand up pretty well to the cold and snow, that was one of the biggest concerns

Public Comment

TAC Chair Yamada invited public comments.

Joe Sparada- Commented that the 14th & Dodge intersection is confusing. He commented that labeling the zones alone will be an improvement, but he thinks the Parakeets will be an additional bonus

Agenda Item #8 – Approval of TAC Representative and Topics for the October 2026 TAC Report to the RMTA Board of Directors (J. Yamada)

TAC representatives discussed what they wanted to include in their monthly presentation to the board including the possibilities of: excitement about the parakeet program, appreciation to Metro for thinking of the blind and low vision community “as well as everyone else in that area”, a record high for new TAC applications, Interest in MAPA North Freeway study, and the number of events in the last month Metro's outreach team attended. The final decision was to present excitement over the parakeet, the number of TAC applications received, and interest in the MAPA freeway study.

Clyde will be the representative

There were no further questions or discussion.

Motioned by Rima; Seconded by Hill
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #9 – Date, Time, and Place of Next TAC Meeting

Wednesday, November 11, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at the Metro Transit Administrative Building and Online

Agenda Item #10 – Adjournment at 7:36 p.m.

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