

REGULAR BOARD MEETING
REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102
December 19, 2024
8:30 a.m.

MINUTES

The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Board met on Tuesday, December 19, 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 December 13, 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
Ms. Amy Haase
Ms. Julia Plucker

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 (Virtual)
A. Johnson, Civil Rights & Inclusion Director
J. Beverage, Maintenance Director (Absent)
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 8:34 am

Notice of the Regular Meeting was published in the Omaha Daily Record on December 13, 2024. 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.

Agenda Item #2 Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

- a. Regular Meeting: November 19, 2024

Motioned by Plucker; Seconded by Haase

ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS (Meadows 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.

Clyde Anderson, 7020 Burt Street Omaha, Vice Chair of the Transit Advisory Committee and Mode Shift Omaha member.

Mr. Anderson thanked the Board for their service on their last Board meeting. He wanted to make the Board aware that Bike Walk Nebraska put out an analysis that received a spot on the news outlets last evening. He feels Metro should be aware of and be an advocate of other modes of transportation such as biking and walking. He has asked communications to make this available on Metro's website.

The Board appreciated Mr. Anderson's bringing attention to this study.

Curt Simon, 16705 Martha Circle in Omaha, thanked the Board for their many years of service. He appreciated working with them over the years as the former CEO of Metro.

Agenda Item #4 Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic began her report with ridership numbers for the month of November. Metro carried 274,000 trips with a weekly average of 67,000 and to date just shy of 3 million trips.

K-12 Rides Free Program has carried 54,000 riders and during the current school year a total of 321,000. Since its inception, the program total is currently over 1 million trips.

Ms. Cencic further reported recently sitting on a panel for the nonprofit Inclusive Communities and the topic was Addressing Barriers to Accessible Transportation. The panel was made up of the CEO of Spark, the Executive Director of One Omaha, and a future Board Member for Metro. It was an excellent opportunity to talk about the programs here at Metro making transit more accessible.

Ms. Cencic was proud to announce that staff have been working hard through the Safety Committee on complying with the Federal Directive 24-1. A Federal requirement that all transit agencies work through their safety committees which involves conducting an analysis and mitigation measures on assault on transit workers. The Safety Committee is equally comprised of union representatives, as well as administrative and management representatives. This is due to FTA at the end of the year, being completed just yesterday is on track to meet that deadline.

The 2024 Metro Leadership Academy (MLA) Cohort held its graduation ceremony yesterday. Ms. Cencic is pleased to announce that 14 out of 15 participants presented their Capstone Projects and completed the program. Capstone Project topics included Fare Free Program, Community

Engagement, Customer Service, Safety for Women in Transit, and Training and Morale. One participant left employment with Metro during this cohort and did not complete the MLA.

Metro is pleased to inform the Board that the next 15 participants have been chosen for the 2025 MLA cohort which will begin in January.

Later today, Ms. Cencic will hold an orientation for the new Board from 4 pm to 8 pm. This was rescheduled for December 14th due to the major weather occurrence the day before.

On a personal note, she expressed her excitement for the new incoming Board but also extended her heartfelt gratitude for the Board sitting here today.

Ms. Cencic concluded her report and opened it to questions from the Board. There were none.

Mr. Meadows thanked Ms. Cencic for all the work she had done.

There were no other questions or comments.

Agenda Item #5 Administrative Reports:

Administration/Human Resources

(D. Grant)

Mr. Grant also thanked the Board of Directors for their work over the years.

Mr. Grant began with his recruitment report. In November, 11 individuals were identified to fill roles here at Metro. Five of the 11 were bus operators and two were paratransit operators.

Metro has made significant improvements to fill Metro's administrative roles. Only one position remains open. In November, Metro hired a paratransit dispatcher, filled the project manager position, and promoted several individuals from within. Sander Scheer is now the Safety and Security Director and Hank DeWild is the new Facilities Manager.

Mr. Grant expressed his excitement for the new people who joined but also for those who have been promoted from within the agency.

Mr. Grant concluded his report and opened it to questions from the Board. There were none.

Programs/Operation

(K. Pendland)

Mr. Pendland reported for November that early departures have remained at or below 4% and are still holding steady at 4% for December thus far. Service interruptions have increased due to Operator availability, he explained that this is not entirely unexpected when considering the holiday season and a slight increase in sick days due to weather and the flu season.

Mr. Pendland also contended that, in review, 2024 has been an interesting year. Challenges with vehicles and early departures, coupled with major construction projects and an influx in detours, resulted in a rocky start. However, through innovative approaches and data-driven decision-making, he went on to say that Metro is building a solid foundation for success in 2025.

Mr. Pendland mentioned during his time as Interim Deputy Executive Officer he has discovered several oversights and has been able to participate in resolving many of them. He remarked that the

one pleasantly surprising thing is the dedication of staff being good custodians of Metro's mission, and values. This dedication was especially highlighted during stressful situations like those experienced last Friday and Saturday when Omaha experienced an ice storm. Metro's operations, maintenance, planning, communications, managerial, and executive staff all pulled together with a common goal which was to provide as much service to the public as the conditions allowed.

Operators braved the icy road conditions and patiently made their way on their routes. Maintenance teams worked tirelessly to keep vehicles in service and to help pull them in when the situation became untenable. Facilities teams managed to get sand down and provided the necessary support. Even Metro's CEO, Ms. Cencic, took on a dispatcher role to help with communications and routing of vehicles. He further expressed that he hopes that this situation remains a rare example, however, they are some of the moments that make him proud to work at Metro.

Lastly, Mr. Pendland took a moment to thank all of the Board Members who have served on Metro's Board. Their devotion and council will be missed.

Mr. Pendland concluded his report and opened it to questions from the Board. There were none.

Communications

(N. Ebat)

Ms. Ebat started with an overview of Communications while working through an ice storm last Friday and Saturday. She talked about the test and launch of a culmination of a nine-month effort executed for the first time during this weather event. Working with multiple departments the purpose is to disseminate information during weather events such as snow routes, service cancellations, etc. This allowed messaging to be distributed to the public regarding service alerts and snow route options. Metro used its internal messaging for staff as well. There are some adjustments but so far positive feedback.

Ms. Ebat reported participation in a very heavily attended Christmas in the Village event that is held annually in North Omaha. It's a chance to chat with people who have questions about transit, whether people who have never been on a bus or who are pros. It's an opportunity to share more information about programs at Metro.

As Ms. Cencic mentioned in her report, she participated in the Inclusive Communities Table Talk on the panel, but staff also provided a table at the event.

Metro's Community Mobility Coordinator conducted a training with Charles Drew Health Case Management staff in November as well.

Metro is continuing to work with the Omaha Symphony on background video production that will be shared once finished. The focus is on how people can take transit to the symphony for shows and why it provides a more relaxing experience. Metro is also working with One Omaha on a series of community engagements. More information to come.

Next month, various events are planned, most of them focusing on school-aged children and the K-12 Rides Free Program.

Ms. Ebat concluded her report and opened it to questions from the Board. There were none.

Agenda Item #6 Civil Rights and Inclusion Updates

(A. Johnson)

Dr. Alicia Johnson presented an overview of what Metro has accomplished in the last few years as it is related to civil rights and inclusion. She gave credit to Metro's employees across every level of the organization, many of whom have led the efforts highlighted.

The protected classes currently include race, color, ethnicity, national origin, persons with limited English proficiency, religion, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and low-income populations. These classes are protected by numerous federal laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, the FTA Master Agreement, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Americans with Disabilities Act, Federal Transit Laws, Environmental Justice Orders, Metro Operating Policies, and the two collective bargaining agreements.

The Board of Directors, unanimously passed a resolution in October 2021 titled, "Board Action in Support of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Justice."

In the fall of 2021, Metro launched Umo, the online fare payment system. This allowed Metro to implement a fare-capping policy, giving all individuals the ability to access the cost savings of a monthly pass, not just those who have \$55 at the beginning of the month.

In November 2021 Metro was awarded a RAISE grant to study the 24th Street Corridor for enhanced transit service.

The first electric buses were put in service in March 2022.

In April of 2022, MetroNEXT was published, and "addressing equity in the region" was one of the five goals of the strategic plan that will guide Metro through 2030. Equity is also a focus within other goals, such as in promoting environmental stewardship.

Metro converted to the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority in June of 2022, paving the way for a more connected region.

In October of 2022, the Board approved revisions to Metro's major service change, disparate impact, and disproportionate burden policies to a threshold that prompts more frequent equity analyses.

Metro has also instituted paid parental leave, inclusive of foster placement and adoption, for all employees. This is a policy approved by the Board of Directors. It went into effect in November 2022 for administrative employees and October 2023 for all other employees upon the passing of the collective bargaining agreements.

Metro's first Civil Rights and Inclusion Director started in January 2023.

In March of 2023, Metro signed the Greater Omaha Chamber's Commitment to Opportunity, Diversity, and Equity, or CODE, Pledge.

Metro set up a permanent lactation space for the building in April of 2023, which is available to all agencies who use the building.

In June of 2023, Metro launched an internal ADA Committee to ensure cross-departmental understanding of and adherence to ADA-related compliance requirements.

That same month, Dr. Johnson conducted an employee experience survey to assess workplace culture, which provided a good follow-up to Project Phoenix. 86% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they consider at least one co-worker a friend, which is a key indicator of belongingness. 83% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that Metro's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is important to them as an employee. This compliments a finding from the Greater Omaha

Chamber's recent Young Professionals Survey where 93% of participants indicated that focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace is a good thing.

While there were positive results from the survey, the survey results also indicated areas of growth and opportunity, such as only 53% of participants strongly agreeing or agreeing that there are clear procedures to follow that allow them to do their job well. This is an important part of fostering psychological safety, a precursor to belongingness and inclusion. Developing and documenting procedures is a current focus for Metro leadership.

In August 2023, a Community Development Planner was hired. One key function of this role is to review development plans submitted to the City of Omaha and advocate for consideration of transit. That same month, Metro co-hosted the National Aging Disability Transportation Center's National Symposium on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Transit with MAPA.

In October of 2023, Metro reinvigorated the Transit Advisory Committee, or TAC, which first required a revision of the TAC bylaws by the Board of Directors. TAC is entering its second year with a full committee after receiving more applications than there were voting seats available.

In December of 2023, Dr. Johnson began presenting a civil rights overview to all new operators-in-training to help them understand the reason behind our civil rights compliance obligations.

Also in December, the Board of Directors approved the addition of Juneteenth as a paid holiday for all employees.

In 2024, Metro launched the Metro Leadership Academy. The first cohort graduated yesterday, and Metro Leadership Academy is already gearing up for the start of the 2025 program.

In February of 2024, Metro established a central page on our website for information about accessibility while using Metro services.

Our Community Mobility Coordinator started in March of 2024. A key function of this role is educating the public about riding the bus. Recently added language assistance coordination to this role.

In April of 2024, a Fleet Transition Plan was completed, setting the goal to transition our entire bus fleet to electric buses by 2050.

Throughout the year an audit of every single bus stop in our system was completed, yielding 162,510 data points. This information will be used to advance goals within MetroNEXT, such as revising the bus stop signs and enhancing safety, accessibility, and equity.

Lastly, major updates and improvements to the MOBY Rider Guide were made.

Dr. Johnson ended her presentation by reminding everyone in attendance that equity is not a destination.

She looks forward to working with the current Board now as members of the public and with the newly elected Board of Directors to advance equity, civil rights, and inclusion and continue connecting people, places, and opportunities through quality transit services.

Dr. Johnson concluded her presentation and opened it up to questions from the Board. There were none.

Agenda Item #7 Resolution 2024-34: Request Approval for Pest Control Services Contract

(L. Del Rio Lopez)

Staff sought approval to award a contract for pest control services for three (3) years with two (2) optional one-year extensions. The base contract will be for 2025-2027. The Invitation for Bids (IFB) was published on November 8, 2024, and multiple potential bidders were contacted. Three bids were received by Pest Master of West Omaha, Pest Solutions 365, and Recon Pest Services LLC. One bid was found not responsive to the solicitation. Recon Pest Services LLC was determined to be the lowest, responsive, and responsible bidder. The price is fair and reasonable, and the bid is otherwise per requirements set forth in the IFB.

Staff sought approval for the total amount of a five-year period of \$262,676.00. Board approval will allow staff to award a three-year contract with two (2) optional one-year extensions.

The cost of this contract is funded with preventative maintenance 5307 grant funds, which typically reimburse cost at 80%.

The Board approved unanimously.

**Motioned by Meadows; Seconded by Plucker
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES**

Agenda Item #8 Resolution 2024-35 Request Approval for the Amendment of Operating Policy 48, Administrative/Non-Bargaining Unit Position Employees Retirement Severance Pay Benefit

(W. Clingman)

Staff proposed the amendment and restatement of Operating Policy 48. This policy was formerly titled Salaried Employees Death Benefit. The practice of paying death benefits to salaried staff was discontinued several years ago following a revision to the collective bargaining agreement. This revision adopted into policy the payment of retirement severance to administrative employees when they meet certain eligibility criteria for retirement.

The Board approved unanimously.

**Motioned by Haase; Seconded by Meadows
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES**

Agenda Item #9 2024-36: Request Approval of Standing Purchase Orders FY 2025

(W. Clingman)

Staff requested approval of the standing purchase orders that are in excess of \$25,000.00 for 2025. The Purchasing Policy stipulates that the Board shall approve all Standing Purchase Orders exceeding \$25,000.00 on an annualized basis. A copy of the Standing Purchase Order list was included in the Board packet.

The Board approved unanimously.

**Motioned by Plucker; Seconded by Meadows
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES**

Agenda Item #10 Resolution 2024-37: Approval of the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Collective Bargaining Employee Pension Plan as Amended and Restated Effective January 1, 2025

(W. Clingman)

The Collective Bargaining Employee Pension Retirement Committee met on December 10, 2024, to review changes to the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Collective Bargaining Employee Pension Plan ("Plan"). At this meeting, the Committee voted to recommend approval of the amended and restated Plan to the Metro Board.

Most of the changes to the Plan serve to clarify what was already stated in the Plan. The proposed amendment and restatement of the Plan did not make substantial benefit changes; however, items of significance are noted below.

- Renames the Plan as the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Collective Bargaining Employee Pension Plan (formerly named Metro Area Transit Hourly Employees' Pension Plan)
- Codifies a 5% interest rate for accumulated contributions. This is the rate that has traditionally been used, but this codifies the rate into the Plan.
- Removes references to leased employees. This does not apply to the Plan but removes it for clarity.
- Updates the mortality and projection tables and includes evergreen language moving forward. This ensures the most current tables are being used when applicable annuity elections are made by participants.

A redline version of the Plan and a "clean" version of the Plan were included in the Board packet for a full review of all changes. The restated Plan will become effective on January 1, 2025.

The Board approved unanimously.

Motioned by Meadows; Seconded by Haase
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #11 Resolution 2024-38: Approval of the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Administrative Employee Pension Plan as Amended and Restated Effective January 1, 2025 (W. Clingman)

The Administrative Employee Pension Retirement Committee met on December 9, 2024, to review changes to the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Administrative Employee Pension Plan ("Plan"). At this meeting, the Committee voted to recommend approval of the amended and restated Plan to the Metro Board.

Most of the changes to the Plan serve to clarify what was already stated in the Plan. The proposed amendment and restatement of the Plan did not make substantial benefit changes; however, items of significance are noted below.

- Renames the Plan as the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Administrative Employee Pension Plan (formerly named Metro Area Transit Salaried Employees' Pension Plan)
- Codifies a 5% interest rate for accumulated contributions. This is the rate that has traditionally been used, but this codifies the rate into the Plan.
- Removes references to leased employees. This does not apply to the Plan but removes it for clarity.
- Ceases Voluntary Contributions. This has not been utilized by any employees and Metro has better options with the 457 plan that is also offered to all employees.
- Updates the mortality and projection tables and includes evergreen language moving forward. This ensures the most current tables are being used when applicable annuity elections are made by participants.

A redline version of the Plan and a "clean" version of the Plan were included in the Board packet for a full review of all changes. The restated Plan will become effective on January 1, 2025.

The Board approved unanimously.

Motioned by Meadows; Seconded by Haase
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #12 Recognition of the Current Metro Board Members

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic presented the Board of Directors with plaques in appreciation of their years of service to Metro. Each plaque bore the following inscription:

"In recognition of your [corresponding number] years of dedicated service and commitment to the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha.

Your leadership, vision, and steadfast dedication have significantly contributed to the advancement of Metro's mission of connecting people, places, and opportunities with quality transit service.

With sincere gratitude,
Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha"

The plaques honored the following members for their service:

- **Amy Haase**, Board Member: 12 years (January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2024)
- **Daniel Lawse**, Board Chair: 11 years (April 20, 2013 – December 31, 2024)
- **Jay Lund**, Board Member: 10 years (February 28, 2014 – December 31, 2024)
- **Julia Plucker**, Board Member: 13 combined years (August 14, 2007 – March 8, 2012; April 13, 2016 – December 31, 2024)
- **Othello Meadows**, Board Member: 4 years (March 23, 2020 – December 31, 2024)

Agenda Item #13 Board Chair Report

(D. Lawse)

Mr. Lawse expressed gratitude to his fellow Board Members for their collaboration and reflected on the transformation he has witnessed during his tenure. He also commended staff at all levels for their dedication to helping the community reach their destinations. In his parting remarks, he shared his hope that the incoming Board will continue building on the progress made, leaving Metro even better for the future.

Mr. Lund thanked Mr. Lawse for his leadership as Board Chair and acknowledged Ms. Haase for her years of service in the role. He highlighted milestones such as ORBT, the hiring of the current CEO, and the Leadership Academy, noting that they've only scratched the surface of Metro's potential. He wished the new Board success and expressed gratitude to the staff.

Ms. Haase reflected on the significant 2016 route changes, particularly their impact on Moby, and praised staff for supporting customers during the transition. She also appreciated Metro's efforts to share its story and communicate the great work being done.

Ms. Plucker expressed pride in Metro's staff's renewed passion, emphasizing their care for riders and the organization. She thanked Ms. Cencic for her leadership and the team's commitment to excellence.

Agenda Item #14 Date, Time, and Place of Next Board Meeting

Organizational Meeting January 9, 2025, Time TBD

Next Regular Board Meeting
TBD
Authority's Administrative Building

Agenda Item #15 Adjournment at 9:35 a.m.

Motioned by Meadows; Seconded by Lund
ROLL CALL: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

Agenda Item #16. Board Reception

Prior to the adjournment, Mr. Lawse announced that immediately following the Board meeting there would be a Board Reception. He informed staff and the public that no official business would be conducted and that the public was welcome to attend.