

Meeting Minutes – December 23, 2021

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF OMAHA

2222 Cuming Street

Omaha, Nebraska, 68102

December 23, 2021

MINUTES

The Transit Authority of the City of Omaha Board met in Regular Session on Thursday, December 23, 2021 at 8:30 a.m., in person at the Authority's Administration Building, 2222 Cuming Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68102, and virtually due to COVID-19. Notice was given in advance of the meeting by publication in the Omaha World Herald. 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:

Ms. Amy Haase, Chair

Mr. Othello Meadows, Vice Chair (Absent)

Mr. Jay Lund

Mr. Daniel Lawse

Ms. Julia Plucker

Authority Staff:

L. Cencic, CEO/Executive Director

I. Maldonado, Deputy Executive Officer

E. Simpson, Legal/Human Resource Director (Absent)

L. Barritt, Experience & Engagement Director

K. Pendland, IT Director (Absent)

J. Willoughby, Senior Project Manager

J. Rumery, Grant Administrator

Others Present:

R. Johnson

Other Metro staff

Members of the public

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Agenda Item #1: Call to order

Ms. Haase called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. For the benefit of the public in attendance, a copy of the Open Meetings Law has been posted in the meeting room and is available online at ometro.com, and the Agenda is published on the display in the facility lobby.

Agenda Item #2a: Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

Ms. Haase entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Board Meeting on November 15, 2021.

Motion by Mr. Lawse; Second by Mr. Lund

**ROLL CALL:
UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.**

Agenda Item #2b: Approval of Minutes of Public Hearing Meeting

Ms. Haase entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing Meeting on December 22, 2021.

Motion by Ms. Plucker; Second by Mr. Lawse

**ROLL CALL:
UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.**

Agenda Item #3: Request to be Heard – R. Johnson

Mr. Rodney Johnson introduced himself and informed the Board that he had a series of questions to ask Metro. The Board expressed that some of the questions may need to be addressed to Ms. Cencic.

Mr. Johnson asked the Board the following questions: Why are the amenities at NOTC locked and unavailable for public use? Will the Benson Transit Center ever reopen? Will the fleet interior cleaning contract be going out for rebid in the near future, as the current contract and renewal contract have both expired? And finally, who is performing the fleet interior cleaning and cleaning of ORBT stations?

Ms. Plucker addressed Mr. Johnson's questions regarding contract bidding by sharing that the cleaning contract will go out for bid soon, as this was included in the most recent budget meeting. Ms. Cencic added that although the exact date for going out for bid has not been determined yet, staff is actively working on this project. Ms. Cencic addressed Mr. Johnson's other questions and shared that the amenities at NOTC were originally closed due to safety concerns, that Metro is looking to address. Ms. Cencic also shared with Mr. Johnson that Benson Park Transit Center was closed to a construction challenge. Mr. Lawse added that when the transit center was closed, Metro redesigned the stop locations in the area to make connections on the street more streamlined. Ms. Cencic also shared that Metro staff is performing the cleaning at ORBT stations and that ORBT interiors are part of the cleaning contract that includes regular buses as well, which will all be going out for bid in the near future.

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Mr. Johnson thanked the Board and Metro staff for their time.

Agenda Item #4: Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic informed the Board that Metro is making progress on the ORBT station at 8th and Farnam. Staff is working with Region 7 of the Federal Transit Administration on the NEPA review for that location. Metro expects environmental approval in early January so work can begin with MECA to build the station.

Ms. Cencic updated the Board that DI Build will return on Monday of next week to finish installing digital signs and cameras at the North Omaha Transit Center and the Westroads Transit Center.

Ms. Cencic informed the Board that the electric buses have been somewhat delayed and are now expected to arrive in mid-January. Since the last Board meeting, contractors have made significant progress on the charging stations. Electric bus charging stations are almost complete, and Metro is waiting now for the final piece to be shipped from the manufacturer, which is expected in the next two weeks.

Ms. Cencic shared with the Board that Metro is also working on office reconfiguration. Metro now has 90% engineering drawings. What was previously the old IT Room, which was underutilized and had turned into a storage area, is being updated to a more formal conference room. Three new offices are being added in that space as well to help accommodate Metro's growing staff.

Ms. Cencic updated the Board that Metro is partnering with the Union to bring the Pancake Man in early January for staff. That event is currently scheduled for January 11, 2022. The Union specifically requested that Board members be invited to this event.

Lastly, Ms. Cencic wished the Board members Happy Holidays. Metro is excited about the progress that has been made during this past year. Staff has done a fantastic job pulling together and accomplishing quite a bit over in 2021.

Discussion was had.

Agenda Item #5b: Administrative Reports

(I. Maldonado)

Several activities and events took place since the last Board meeting. Our entire team focused their efforts on maintaining proper service levels, reliable on-time performance, and safe transportation. As you all know, on December 15, 2021, based on a severe weather forecast and communications with the county emergency office, Metro ended services at 1:00 p.m. As for Federal Transit Administration Safety Guidelines, all transit systems must stop services when sustained winds of more than 39 miles per hour are expected. That afternoon forecast anticipated sustained winds in excess of 60 miles per hour and gust winds up to 85 miles per hour. All fixed route buses returned to the garage by 2:00 p.m. and all MOBY buses returned shortly thereafter. This took a great deal of effort from staff, coordination, internal and external communication. Information was posted on the Metro website, social media, the MyRide app, and disseminated to the Customer Service Center and Dispatch teams.

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Metro staff called all paratransit customers who had afternoon scheduled trips and adjusted their trips as needed. At the end of our services, Dispatch used two paratransit buses to transport any customers who may have been affected. Our Customer Service team maintained communications with customers and continued to monitor calls throughout the day and evening. A limited number of operational staff remained on site to ensure everyone's safety and the safety of our facilities. I am happy to inform the Board that to the best of our knowledge, none of Metro's staff were affected and no damage was sustained to Metro facilities.

Since the last Board meeting, our leadership team worked closely with Metro's finance team to develop a sound Operational and Maintenance budget. Our leadership team and planning staff attended a macro-transit workshop that was coordinated by MAPA where we learned of best practices from other transit systems as to how they are meeting the transportation needs of their respective communities.

For unfortunate reasons, we began to experience an increased number of suspension system failures on our ORBT articulated buses, which is why there were times when we did not have many articulated buses out on the street. Our maintenance team has worked hard with the vendor to be able to recover quickly and to rectify the issues with the suspension systems. Currently, we are waiting for parts for two out of the ten buses in order to get those buses back into service.

Metro staff members hosted area MetroNEXT virtual and public meetings. Some of the public meetings took place at the Charles B. Washington Public Library, South Omaha Metropolitan Community College, and the Westroads Mall. Metro also held an employee safety meeting in which the main topic was safe snow operations. Also, our Safety Committee of internal stakeholders met to share ideas as to how to improve safety and security. This committee investigated concerns about limited visibility of the safety lighting of one of our service vehicles and identified the need for additional lighting on vehicles with trailers, as the trailers themselves interfere with the visibility of safety light bar. We have added a portable safety light with a magnetic plate that are placed directly at the back of the trailer each time that custodial staff stop along the street to service bus stops and ORBT stations.

I would like to thank our staff for the great work that they perform daily in spite of the challenges faced by the pandemic. I would be delighted to answer any questions that members of the Board may have. Thank you.

Discussion was had.

Ms. Haase indicated that item 5a on the agenda was skipped accidentally, and asked Ms. Cencic to give this report in Ms. Simpson's absence.

Agenda Item #5a: Administrative Reports

(L. Cencic for E. Simpson)

- Metro is excited to welcome 4 new bus operators who have recently started. Metro also has several additional candidates who are going through the application process at this time.
- Metro has now hired a full-time Payroll and Benefits Coordinator. Metro has also hired a new Diesel Tech Intern who started recently and has made two conditional offers of employment for two other positions, pending employment screening approval. Metro looks forward to welcoming a new Finance Director on January 4, 2022 and a new Stores position in the Maintenance Shop.
- Metro has recently made a lot of progress on the search for the new Human Capital and Talent Development Director as well as the Operations Director, and Metro looks forward to returning in January with more positive results to report.

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Discussion was had.

Agenda Item # 6: Request Approval of Revised Operating Policy 20

(L. Cencic)

Operating Policy 20 addresses Metro’s paid vacation leave for administrative employees not covered by a collective bargaining agreement. The policy was last revised and approved by the Board in October 2006. Staff is proposing revisions to the operating policy related to the accrual of vacation time based on completed years of continuous service. The revised policy also establishes a maximum allowable accrued vacation leave cap. Under the proposed policy, if an employee accumulates the maximum allowable accrued vacation leave, that employee would cease accruing additional paid vacation leave until such time as the employee’s total accumulation of paid vacation leave is less than the maximum cap. The revised Operating Policy 20 was provided under separate cover was sent to the Policy/Planning Committee for review prior to the Board meeting.

Discussion was had.

Motion by Mr. Lawse; Second by Ms. Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.

Agenda Item #7: Request Approval of Standing Purchase Orders – CY 2022

(C. Bressman)

Staff is requesting approval of the standing purchase orders that are in excess of \$25,000.00 for CY 2022. 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 is included in the Board packet.

This list was distributed to the responsible Directors for review, then it was sent to the Finance/Procurement Committee for review prior to the Thursday, December 23, 2021, Metro Board Meeting. Staff recommends approval of the Resolution.

Discussion was had.

Motion by Ms. Plucker; Second by Mr. Lawse

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.

Agenda Item #8: Request Approval of the Final CY 2022 Operating Budget

(C. Bressman)

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Staff is requesting approval of the CY 2022 Final Operating Budget. The proposed CY 2022 Final Operating Revenue and Expense Budget is \$37,400,607. This is an increase over the 2022 CY Preliminary Operating Budget of \$411,758 or 1.1%.

A copy of the CY 2022 budget assumptions and the CY 2022 Final Operating Budget - revenue and expense worksheets are included in the Board Packet.

The CY 2022 Final Operating Budget was reviewed with the Finance/Procurement Committee. Assuming Committee concurrence, recommend approval.

Discussion was had.

Motion by Ms. Plucker; Second by Mr. Lawse

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.

Agenda Item #9: Board Chair Report

(A. Haase)

Ms. Haase asked for updates from each Board committee.

Ms. Plucker stated that everything pertaining to the Finance Committee was covered in the previous resolutions.

Mr. Lund updated the Board that the Operations Committee had a preview of some of the successes the Metro team has had on hiring new staff members. These positions are critical to Metro's mission and Mr. Lund thanked staff for all of the hard work put into these hires. Mr. Lund and Mr. Lawse also thanked the Board members and staff who helped with planning for the annual CEO review. The committee will meet again to finalize these procedures and then deliver the final plan to the Board Chair. The Board Chair will then meet with the CEO. This is another positive outcome as a result of the reorganization that has been done over this past year.

Ms. Haase shared with the Board that the Planning and Policy Committee spent some time this past month reviewing the new vacation policy. This committee is also getting ready to move into next year and looking into an initiative around sustainability and climate action.

Agenda Item #10: Executive Session

Ms. Haase entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session at 9:01 a.m.

Motion by Mr. Lund; Second by Mr. Lawse

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.

Ms. Haase entertained a motion to return to Regular Session at 10:50 a.m.

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Motion by Mr. Lawse; Second by Mr. Lund

**ROLL CALL:
UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.**

Agenda Item #9: Date, Time and Place of Next Board Meeting

Thursday, January 27, 2022, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at Metro Transit Authority’s Administrative Building.

Agenda Item #10: Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was entertained to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Motion by Mr. Lawse; Second by Ms. Plucker

**ROLL CALL:
UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.**

Ms. Amy Haase – Chair

Recording Secretary