

Meeting Minutes – February 25, 2021

MINUTES

**REGULAR MEETING
TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF OMAHA
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102
February 25, 2021
MINUTES**

The Transit Authority of the City of Omaha Board met in Regular Session on Tuesday, February 25, 2021 at 8:30 a.m., virtually instead of in the Authority's Administration Building, 2222 Cuming Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68102, 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:

Mr. Jay Lund, Chair
Ms. Julia Plucker, Vice Chair (Absent)
Ms. Amy Haase, Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Daniel Lawse
Mr. Othello Meadows

Authority Staff:

L. Cencic, CEO/Executive Director
E. Simpson, Legal/Human Resource Director
D. Finken, Finance Director
D. Jameson, Safety Director (Absent)
K. Shadden, Operations Director
L. Barritt, Marketing Director
G. Bradley, Maintenance Director
K. Pendland, IT Director (Absent)
J. Willoughby, Senior Project Manager Engineering/Transportation/Planning (Absent)
J. Rumery, Grant Administrator (Absent)
Rebecca Mahr, Recording Secretary (Absent)

Others Present:

Other Metro staff
Marissa Martinez
Curt Simon
Other members of the public

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Agenda Item #1: Call to order

Mr. Lund called the meeting to order at 8:39 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 the Agenda is published on the display in the facility lobby.

Agenda Item #2: Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

Mr. Lund entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Board Meeting on January 28, 2021.

Motion by Mr. Lawse; Second by Mr. Meadows

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.

Agenda Item #3: Resolution #415 – Recognition of Curt Simon

RESOLUTION NO. 415

Resolved by the Transit Authority of the City of Omaha Board

- Whereas,** Curt Simon continually and faithfully served as an employee the Transit Authority of the City of Omaha from April 15, 1987 until February 8, 2021, the last 16 years of which have been as Executive Director; and
- Whereas,** Mr. Simon oversaw and contributed greatly towards numerous projects, initiatives and improvements including construction of multiple transit centers, upgrades to the bus fleet, installation of bike racks on buses, development of pass programs and partnerships, rebranding the agency and the launch of ORBT, the Authority’s first Bus Rapid Transit line; and
- Whereas,** Mr. Simon demonstrated leadership, good humor, commitment and integrity in the fulfillment of his duties; and
- Whereas,** Mr. Simon’s knowledge, guidance and dedication over the past 34 years has immeasurably benefited the Transit Authority of the City of Omaha and its customers and employees.

Now, therefore be it resolved by the Transit Authority of the City of Omaha Board:

That Curt Simon is hereby commended for his service to the Authority and that his contributions to the success of the Authority in its endeavors to continually improve transit service in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area are deeply appreciated.

Discussion was had.

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Agenda Item #4a: Administrative Reports

(E. Simpson)

- Metro continues to recruit for a number of positions at Metro. Applications for employment remain quite low.
- Metro submitted its annual report for the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Court in January. The process for renewal of Metro's Workers' Compensation self-insurance continues.
- I had a teleconference with Douglas County Health Department this week regarding COVID vaccines for staff. Vaccine supplies are still low. Public transportation is in the last tier of Phase 1B. DCHD anticipates that vaccines may be available to staff in May 2021.

Agenda Item # 4b: Administrative Reports

(L. Cencic for D. Jameson)

Two weeks ago, we held two an in-house maintenance training session on Voith transmissions. This week we are having an in-house, 3-day, 24-hour multiplex system training facilitated by New Flyer(NF). We continue to investigate additional training opportunities for Metro maintenance staff in the coming months.

Metro continues the purchase process for additional special tools for the Maintenance department from the manufacturers.

Bus Operator Barriers. Shipments will continue for the NF buses over the next few weeks until fulfilled. Gillig barriers should be re-shipped soon. We are still waiting on an ETA for the Alexander Dennis bus barriers, hopefully they will ship in in the next 60 days or so.

The final 6 NF buses are all on the assembly line. The first bus is scheduled to arrive within the next 10 days or so. They are all scheduled to arrive before the end of next month.

Dialogue continues with NF on the pre-production process for the 3X 40' electric buses, we are expecting a build number assigned soon. The buses remain on schedule for delivery Q4, 2021 at this time. We continue working with our Engineering Team along with NF Engineering Team, so that Metro is prepared to support the electrical charging needs of these buses.

Metro's COVID-19 mitigation continues with building and vehicle fleet sanitation every day. Buses continue to be traded out mid-day, weather conditions permitting. Our daily building mitigation efforts include fogging all areas within the administration areas, the vehicle fleet, re-wiping down the entire operator's compartment, removing & cleaning the passenger fabric seat inserts, wiping down hard surfaces, doors and door handles, hand railing, all common areas and bathrooms.

Metro started ORBT refresher training this week. Emphasis is being placed on station parking and OTP. NF new model training will start within the next couple of weeks.

Last week Metro supplied 2 buses at request of the Omaha Fire Department as they were battling a large fire and requested assistance from us so their staff could warm up.

Finally, I again wish to thank all staff for their tireless extra effort during the recent snow storms. It has certainly been a challenging winter to date.

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Agenda Item # 4c: Administrative Reports

(E. Schweitz)

Metro is starting a planning & public engagement initiative called MetroNEXT. Our agency is constantly looking toward the future, and with so many changing dynamics, now is a perfect time to explore this topic in depth. Past efforts have included the Transit Development Plan, consideration of transitioning to a Regional Transit Authority, and efforts by the Omaha Chamber on ConnectGo. As the Chamber concludes their work on ConnectGo, MetroNEXT will explore how the resulting transit recommendations can be applied to our community. Our process will include the following considerations:

- More frequent bus arrivals
- Better bus stops & passenger information
- Future ORBT lines
- Different service types to connect the region
- Potential service expansion

The MetroNEXT timeline is as follows:

- Spring – Understanding the Landscape: We will reflect on how demographic and ridership patterns have changed, and other factors that may influence the level and types of service we offer in different areas.
- Summer – Framing the Transit Network: Once we have a good understanding of our market area, we can identify where it makes sense to develop high-capacity transit and any ORBT expansion, and can begin to set up a framework for connecting our region overall.
- Fall – Supporting Additional Connections: We will look at bus stops, wayfinding amenities, and how we can better meet the needs of certain areas through vanpooling, microtransit, TNC vouchers, etc.
- Winter – Finalize Our Path Forward: We plan to develop multiple scenarios based on the level of investment we feel is most appropriate for our community.
- 2022 – Publish the Final Plan and Begin Phased Implementation: This will become the document that guides us for the next 5 to 10 years.

Phase 1 will include 3 virtual meetings, offering several different days and times virtually. We will do these as live virtual meetings and then offer a 2-week period following the meetings for people to submit feedback. We expect a similar series to occur during each phase of the project, with the hope to offer in-person meetings as well when it is appropriate to do so.

Today is the first announcement, and a press release will go out this afternoon. As we get closer to these dates, we will be promoting them more on social media and through news outlets. We will also engage with our partners to get the word out as well.

Agenda Item # 4d: Administrative Reports

(J. Rose)

- Metro continues to see an increase in social media followers across all channels
- We had an uptick in posts this month due to weather events; during the winter months, especially December, January, and February, much of our digital bandwidth addresses weather

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- We've been promoting the installation of ORBT Shelters, which are now installed and in service
- Our team is preparing content for ongoing messaging on existing ORBT Kiosks, as well as new signs that will be installed at ORBT Stations and transit centers
- We're preparing for paid and earned media efforts surrounding MetroNEXT, especially as we near the weeks before the first virtual meeting; for each round of input, we'll utilize virtual meetings, digital surveys, in-person survey canvassing, community partnerships, social media, and other tools to engage the community

Agenda Item #5: Request Approval of Resolution #416 – Approval of Federal Certification & Assurances

(L. Cencic)

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&A) that required federally mandated programs and requirements will be followed.

Staff is requesting authority to authorize the CEO/Executive Director and Attorney to execute the 2021 C&A.

Resolution #416 authorizing the same is included in the Board packet. Recommend full Board approval.

Discussion was had.

Motion by Ms. Haase; Second by Mr. Lawse

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.

Agenda Item #6: Request Adoption of Metro's Mission Statement

(L. Cencic)

Building upon the work of Project Phoenix, staff has developed a proposed mission statement to capture and reflect the aims and values of Metro. This mission statement incorporates the input of numerous staff and Board Members and is intended to reflect Metro's role in the community. The proposed mission statement is: "Metro connects people, places and opportunities through quality transit services."

Board adoption will allow Metro to formalize this mission statement, which will be used in communications with the public, staff and on agency documents.

Recommend full Board approval.

Discussion was had.

Motion by Mr. Lawse; Second by Ms. Haase

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ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.

Agenda Item #7: Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic informed the Board that Metro staff are excited about the newly installed ORBT stop canopies. Metro will finish B-Cycle station installations and station art installations once the weather warms up enough to do so.

Ms. Cencic updated the Board that Metro staff are monitoring the current legislative bills at the State Legislature. If the COVID relief bill is passed, Metro would be set to receive another round of stimulus funding. In addition to this bill, staff is also monitoring LB 661 which would make it a felony for anyone to physically assault bus operators and other emergency response workers. A hearing was held in Lincoln yesterday, and four Metro operators attended and testified at that hearing in support of the bill.

Ms. Cencic informed the Board of the challenges Metro faced during the extreme temperatures recently. All CNG fueling stations in Omaha including Metro's were temporarily shut down during the cold weather. In response, Metro along with a variety of Omaha businesses who rely on CNG fuel were directed to fuel all vehicles at the CNG fueling station in Council Bluffs. Some Metro staff volunteered to assist in the efforts of transporting Metro vehicles over the river and getting them fueled so that Metro could continue to operate scheduled bus service. Ms. Cencic thanked those employees for their extra efforts, and thanked MUD for doing everything they could to help Metro through this situation.

Ms. Cencic updated the Board that Metro has occasionally had challenges with sensors on the new ORBT buses and is working with New Flyer to repair the sensors and mitigate the situation since these buses are still under warranty. In cases when Metro has had to pull ORBT buses out of circulation due to these issues, they are using regular buses to fill in but have developed hood signs to make them identifiable to customers as buses on the ORBT route but are certainly trying to minimize the need to do this.

Lastly, Ms. Cencic informed the Board that the Triennial Review and Annual Audit are both underway. Ms. Cencic thanked staff for their work on these efforts, and thanked D. Finken specifically for her close work with the auditors.

Discussion was had.

Agenda Item #8: Board Chair Report

(J. Lund)

Mr. Lund informed the Board that the Board continues to work with Dennis Johnson from Sort Sol Group on Board job descriptions and committee descriptions. They are still working on finalizing the bylaws. The hope is to get the bylaws wrapped up as soon as possible. Mr. Lund also stated that he is doing what he can to assist Ms. Cencic with everything she has currently going on. Mr. Lund stated that he saw a preview about the MetroNEXT project and he is very excited about Metro's future.

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Agenda Item #9: Executive Session

Mr. Lund entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session at 9:32 a.m.

Motion by Mr. Meadows; Second by Ms. Haase

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

Mr. Lund entertained a motion to return to Regular Session at 11:22 a.m.

Motion by Mr. Lawse; Second by Mr. Meadows

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

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

Tuesday, March 25, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at Metro Transit Authority's Administrative Building.

Agenda Item #11: Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was entertained to adjourn the meeting at 11:22 a.m.

Motion by Mr. Meadows; Second by Ms. Haase

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

Mr. Jay Lund – Chair

Recording Secretary