

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
REGIONAL METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102
May 22, 2025
8:30 a.m.**

MINUTES

The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority of Omaha Board met on Thursday, May 22, 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 May 16, 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 (Virtual)
W. Clingman, Finance Director
J. Willoughby, Senior Project Manager (Absent)
A. Johnson, Civil Rights & Inclusion Director (Virtual)
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 8:30 am.

Notice of the Regular Meeting was published in the Omaha Daily Record on May 16, 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 the Previous Meeting

The first order of business is the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.

- a. Regular Meeting: April 24, 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 Local Transport Workers Union 223

Mr. Nanke stated that Metro does not recruit or train enough drivers. He asked the Board to be aware that the drivers at Metro are coming to work, but there is a need for more drivers.

Board Chair Curt Simon indicated that during his tenure as CEO of Metro, keeping staff has always been an ongoing issue. Over the last decade, however, the situation has worsened.

Ms. Cencic did inform the Board that this is an issue that they keep at the forefront and have researched this issue industry-wide to help with improving Metro's retention.

Agenda Item #4 Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic began her report to the Board with ridership. Systemwide in April, Metro carried 315,926 trips, and that is the second highest single-month ridership since before the pandemic, only higher month was last October.

She reported on the preliminary numbers from the Bus to Ballot initiative on May 13th for election day. Metro saw approximately a 30% increase in average ridership on that Tuesday.

K-12 Rides Free Program in April saw a ridership total of 63,140. For the 2024/2025 school year, there were 577,319 riders, with a program total since the inception of 1,672,392. She noted to the Board that the agreement for this program will end on July 31st of this year. Metro is looking to renew that agreement.

Ms. Cencic informed the Board of the current projects happening at Metro. The Sustainability Project will be completed by the end of summer. Metro is also in the process of replacing the bus wash and will bring that procurement to the Board in the next couple of months. Metro currently has a third-party contractor for customer service to answer the phone, handle lost and found, and book the MOBY trips. Metro currently has a competitive procurement process active to renew the customer service contract. Metro is actively working on design and engineering for improvements to the North Omaha Transit Center (NOTC), and on the Board agenda today, Metro will be asking for approval to begin design and engineering at the South Omaha Transit Center (SOTC). Another project that is happening behind the scenes will be replacing the boiler and electrical switch gear in the building.

Lastly, Ms. Cencic updated the Board regarding microtransit. Metro is working very closely with the chosen vendor and trying to figure out all the logistics. Metro is on track to launch service late summer or early fall of this year. Most excitingly, there is now a name for the pilot project: Metro Flex. This embodies microtransit's ability to bring people closer to the fixed route system in an adaptable and customized way. Metro Flex is modern, memorable, and implies movement, making it a strong fit

for the brand of a dynamic, rider-focused service. Ms. Cencic concluded her report and opened the floor to the Board for questions.

The Board did have a few questions for Ms. Cencic. It was noticed that the passengers per revenue hour had increased, and they asked what could be attributed to this. It was also asked if the current customer service vendor is expected to bid for consideration to continue providing services.

Ms. Cencic said ridership is up, but because of the high service interruptions last year, there were some service adjustments, so revenue hours have actually decreased slightly, contributing to the increase in passengers per revenue hour. Ms. Cencic also confirmed that the current vendor for customer service is expected to bid, and that overall, there is a lot of interest from numerous vendors.

It was discovered that prior to Ms. Cencic's report, others intended to come before the Board during the General Comment Period. The floor was open to any others who prepared to speak before the Board.

Tuahe Chang, Metro Bus Operator for 9 years

Mr. Chang wanted to express his concerns regarding the K-12 Rides Free Program. His suggestion was to limit the times kids can ride, e.g., during school hours, before and after using the program, but after hours in the evenings and weekends to ask for payment. He feels this program enables truancy and an increased influx of public nuisance behavior.

Ms. Cencic further explained that the program is also for after-school availability as well as field trips. She expressed that Metro is very aware of the concerns presented before the Board.

Ric Overman, Vice President of TWU and Metro Bus Operator

Mr. Overman stood before the Board to share his thoughts on the aesthetics of the buses.

The Board asked if increasing the maintenance staff would help with the buses. They also asked if there was an issue with the supply chain that was prohibiting buses from being fixed, and could part-time staff be added to assist. Lastly, the Board wanted to know whether there is a list of how many buses require repair.

Ms. Cencic reported that Metro recently hired a body shop mechanic after a vacancy caused by retirement. The new hire is actively working to address the backlog of fleet repairs. She noted that new buses have been ordered, with the first set entering the assembly line this week. While supply chain issues have contributed to delays, the absence of a body shop mechanic was a significant factor.

Regarding part-time staffing, Ms. Cencic explained that hiring part-time personnel is permitted under the current collective bargaining agreement with the Union. However, training part-time employees would be challenging given the number of hours required to bring someone up to speed.

Ms. Cencic confirmed that all preventive maintenance is up to date and that the maintenance department is meeting pull-out requirements. Current priorities include ensuring all buses have functional air conditioning.

Cindy Wheeler, Metro Custodian

Ms. Wheeler expressed that her biggest concern is safety. She specified a number of issues with security, the number of people walking through the parking lot at night, and intruders entering the building.

The Board asked additional clarifying questions, but also indicated it would be further discussed during the resolution on today's agenda regarding security.

Brian Metro Class 3 Mechanic

Brian informed the Board that for two to three months, he has been working nights on the weekends. He was concerned about the lack of staff when he was working on road calls alone.

Agenda Item #5 Administrative Reports

Administration/Human Resources

(D. Grant)

Mr. Grant reported that for April, Metro hired 11 new employees: six bus operators, two paratransit operators, a mechanic, a custodian, and a scheduling supervisor. Mr. Grant responded to the general public comments earlier by stating that most turnover occurs while operators are in training. This is designed purposefully. The job as a bus operator is not for everyone, and he feels it is best to know this during training, as opposed to once they graduate as a bus operator.

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

The Board asked what the maximum number of bus operators needed to be fully staffed.

Mr. Grant informed the Board that the goal is to have 173 bus operators on staff. Currently, there are 175 bus operators, but what can be misunderstood is the difference between the number of bus operators employed versus the number who are available to drive. That number fluctuates by FMLA, vacation, discipline, sick time, etc. This is something that can't be controlled by Metro.

The Board further inquired whether the unavailability of bus operators, for the reasons mentioned above, indicates that there are not enough operators hired to cover the service.

Mr. Grant responded that Metro does have enough operators and maintains an extra board to cover instances when drivers are unavailable. Ms. Cencic added that 126 bus operators are required to meet regular service levels, while a total of 175 include coverage for vacations, FMLA, and other absences. She noted that Metro aims for a 20% extra board to ensure adequate coverage.

The Board asked whether the specialist and manager positions are being hired to improve the system and whether these are entirely new roles or existing ones.

Mr. Grant explained that it is a mix of both. Most of the positions are replacements for existing staff. However, some roles—particularly those related to microtransit—are new due to the pilot program. The only other newly created positions are an in-house attorney to assist with contracts and a part-time communications specialist.

There were no further questions or discussion.

Programs/Operation

(K. Pendland)

Mr. Pendland began his report with customer service numbers. He informed the Board that the numbers remained steady in April, with 10,686 calls answered, and our service level remained at an overall average of 85%.

Fixed route revenue hours were 23,786, which reflects a slight decrease in service delivery by 724 hours compared to April 2024. Passenger trips, however, were at 315,826, which is the highest we have seen in the last 6 years. This led to a route productivity level of 13.3 passengers per revenue hour across all fixed routes, which represents the highest productivity level over the last 6 years for the month of April, and the highest we have seen overall since 2017.

On-time performance averaged 4% Early Departure, 16% Late Departure, with an on-time departure rate of 80%.

Service interruptions accounted for 2.4% of our Revenue hours. This shows a reduction in service interruptions from April of 2024 by 1.4%. Metro is experiencing an influx of service interruptions due to operator availability.

For paratransit operations, we completed a total of 7,906 trips in April, which is an increase of 1,024 trips from April 2024. The average paratransit passengers per revenue hour in April remained at 1.9, which continues the trend of the highest productivity level over the past 5 years for the current month.

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

The Board asked how Metro forecasts, anticipates, and prepares for operators taking more time off in the summer months for vacations.

Mr. Pendland informed the Board that vacations are a part of a bid process, and there are times available for day-at-a-time time off. There are options for operators who can accumulate points for days off, but they are not counted as a vacation. Ms. Cencic added that over the next month, for operator vacations, between three to twelve operators are off per week.

The Board asked if there was still an active safety committee that was meeting monthly, and if the matters dealing with safety had been communicated with the committee.

Mr. Pendland responded yes to the committee still being active and that it meets monthly. Security is a continuing agenda item for that committee, and he further informed the Board that the resolution regarding security services is directly related.

There was further discussion as it related to the aesthetics of the fleet and the increase in ridership.

There were no further questions or discussion.

Communications

(N. Ebat)

Ms. Ebat began her report with a small story. About two weeks ago, Metro staff attended a large vehicle career day event at an elementary school. There was a truck from OPPD, a cement mixer, and a few others, along with a Metro bus. Out of all the industries and entities represented there, Metro was the only one with an operator who was a woman. As one of the groups walked away, a

teacher asked a girl what she learned about the bus. She told the teacher she learned that girls could drive big vehicles, too.

She shared this story to show the impact Metro has on the community. Engagement events are primarily geared toward education and promoting ridership, but Metro's presence in the community goes much further.

Next, Ms. Ebat discussed the upcoming College World Series (CWS), which is set to begin June 13, 2025. Metro will be extending the green route to make a loop around the north downtown area with connections between ORBT and several other routes. There will be stops within a block of the stadium. An extra ORBT will be waiting at 10th & Capitol after the games. Once full, it will make stops at 12th & Dodge, 15th & Dodge, then go directly to Westroads. The biggest message beyond the ballpark bus is parking for free at Westroads and taking the ORBT downtown

Regarding CWS marketing, the CWS website will include maps and information about the extra service. Metro is working with MECA to have information about Metro services included in any materials regarding getting to the stadium. MECA does have an ADA entrance at the ballpark available for those in attendance, so Metro is working to ensure information related to MOBY is included.

There will be advertisements that start next week and will ramp up in frequency the closer we get to the series and into the first week of it. They'll primarily be broadcast on digital and social channels with a heavy push into Sports podcasts and radio shows. Ads will also run on Spotify that will geotarget people in Omaha, but also be aimed at people likely to come to Omaha soon. Metro's Communications Department is also working with Park Omaha on a joint social media campaign highlighting the parking options in Midtown with close access to ORBT, and as always, working with Heartland Bike Share to highlight how Omaha's transit (bus and bike) systems work well together to get around the downtown area and beyond.

For Media, since the last report, Metro has had 17 stories in 10 different outlets, mostly surrounding the Bus to Ballot initiative and transit's role in the city elections. She further reported that there have been a number of public events across the city, a couple being Sunny Slope's field trip, where a group of preschoolers had the opportunity to come visit Metro. They were able to board a bus and talk with one of our operators to learn all about what they do when they're driving a bus.

Another event was the Big Vehicle Career Day as mentioned earlier. An entire elementary school rotated between different large vehicles representing different industries. Staff were able to talk with Metro's bus operator, tour a bus with the operator, focusing largely on how children can be safe in and around the buses.

Ms. Ebat reported upcoming events. Metro will be attending the following:

- June 14th: Juneteenth Parade-- along 24th street - 10 a.m.
- June 14th: Omaha Freedom Festival- Noon to 5 p.m. at the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation
- June 21st- World Refugee Day- Metro will have a table at the Joslyn Museum
- June 27th- Memorial Park Concert-- Metro will be staging several ORBTs on Dodge just after the fireworks show. This will allow people to head to and from the concert quickly without getting stuck in the post-concert traffic.

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

The Board inquired whether Metro has ever considered offering the same type of bus service for the Berkshire Hathaway event as is provided for the College World Series.

Ms. Cencic responded that she is unsure whether this event has ever been considered or supported with service in the past. She noted that during her tenure, Metro has not been approached to provide service for the Berkshire Hathaway event.

There were no further questions or discussion.

The Board Chair wanted to correct on record the publication of the notice date he mentioned earlier for the current Board meeting, which was May 16, 2025.

Agenda Item #6 Resolution 2025-14 Request Approval to Award Work Order 4- South Omaha Transit Center (SOTC) Pavement Replacement Design Project to SRF (A. Gould)

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 4 – SOTC Pavement Replacement Project includes the design and construction oversight of the removal and replacement of 11” concrete along the bus lane and bus bays on the Metro Community College (MCC) Campus. The construction of this project will be awarded as a separate procurement.

The existing pavement in the drive lanes was installed almost 20 years ago. With the wear and tear of the bus traffic, the pavement has been deteriorating over several years. Metro’s staff have been patching the cracks and holes as needed, but they did not hold up. MCC and Metro split the cost to have the worst areas patched with asphalt this past summer until the new concrete can be poured. The project also includes the installation of ADA truncated domes at the loading zones of each bus bay to bring the transit center into ADA compliance. Metro negotiated Work Order 4 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 the 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 the hours required to complete the Work Order. Metro and SRF agreed on 1,775 hours. The negotiated hours were 5.34% higher than the Independent Cost Estimate developed by Metro. The final step was assigning costs to the direct costs (ODC’s). After negotiations, Metro and SRF agreed to a total fee of \$288,841.41. The negotiated fee amount was 3.88% higher than the Independent Cost Estimate developed by Metro. Staff requested Board authority to enter into Work Order 4 – South Omaha Transit Center (SOTC) Pavement Replacement Project as a part of the A&E IDIQ Contract with SRF for the amount of \$288,841.41

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

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

The Board asked if any other accessibility features would be built into the design of the project other than the truncated domes. Are there any other centers that require ADA compliance upgrades?

Ms. Cencic responded that the domes are the primary accessibility feature, but there is limited space available, and the property is not owned by Metro. However, the main issue is the condition of the pavement, particularly potholes. Transit centers are prioritized for improvements with significant improvements planned for Westroads, NOTC, and SOTC.

She also noted that many bus stops could benefit from upgrades. Metro is currently conducting an audit of bus stop conditions, and the results will be shared with the Board once completed.

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 2025-15 Request Approval of the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) (S. Scheer)

Metro is required to have a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Metro Board of Directors first approved PTASP on June 25, 2020. Revisions to the PTASP require Board approval, and the Board last approved revisions to the PTASP on April 25, 2024.

As a part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Metro's Safety Committee is required to review and approve PTASP. Metro's Safety Committee consists of an equal number of management and front-line employees and is tasked with reviewing the PTASP as well as addressing other safety concerns at Metro. The Safety Committee reviewed and approved the revised PTASP on May 7, 2025.

Staff is requesting Board approval of revisions to the PTASP following the annual review by the Safety Committee.

Revisions to the PTASP include:

- Updating the dates to reflect the revisions for 2025.
- Amending the Board Chair to Curt Simon.
- Amending the Safety Director to Sander Scheer
- Updating the Metro Safety Performance Targets as follows:
 - Tables 6 and 7 have been updated to reflect recent years' data and changes to NTD reporting.
 - Table 8 was added to reflect Metro's standing in Safety Performance against industry standards.
- Table 10 has updated Staff responsibilities.
- Safety reporting systems have been updated to include email, paper reporting, and customer complaints.
- Risk assessment numbers were changed to reflect Metro's data more accurately when using the Risk Assessment Matrix for SMS review.

Recommended for approval

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

There was further interaction with the public regarding Ms. Wheeler's earlier statement during the general comment period concerning security. As well as the Board expressing the need to be proactive when it comes to safety.

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

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

Agenda Item #8 Resolution 2025-16 Request Approval of Amended Standing Purchase Order for 2025 Security Services (W. Clingman)

The Board approved standing purchase orders that will exceed \$25,000 for each fiscal year.

For the 2025 fiscal year, a standing purchase order of \$200,000 was approved for security services. It is anticipated that the amount will be exceeded during fiscal year 2025 due to increased security hours throughout the year. To maintain security services through the end of the fiscal year, an increase is being requested.

The security service contractors not only monitor our property but also provide a valuable service in protecting our staff. As Metro has employees working nearly 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Encounters include escorting employees in overnight hours, assisting drivers on route with problem passengers, and interacting with and engaging customers to de-escalate issues.

This increase in the standing purchase order amount is intended to cover security services until the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Security services is put out for publication and awarded later this year. The estimated cost breakdown for the two security companies for the year 2025 is as follows:

- American Security has an average monthly cost of \$9,846, for an estimated annual cost of \$118,153.
- Riley Protection Group has an average monthly cost of \$22,768, for an estimated annual cost of \$274,000.

The requested amended amount for the standing purchase order for security services is \$400,000.

Recommended for approval

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

Clarification was requested and provided to the Board regarding the amount up for approval. In response to a question about current security services, Ms. Cencic stated that while Metro is satisfied with the existing security providers, the agency is committed to being good stewards of taxpayer dollars. As such, Metro is in the process of preparing a request for proposals (RFP) to consolidate the two current contracts into one. Although this service is not funded by federal dollars, meaning an RFP is not required, Ms. Cencic emphasized that pursuing a competitive process is considered best practice.

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

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

Agenda Item #9 Board Chair Report

(C. Simon)

The Board Chair shared that there has been a discussion regarding the time of the board meeting each month. He is encouraging the rest of the Board to look at all documentation provided regarding this issue, which includes public feedback, and will send out a poll.

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

Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 8:30 a.m.

Authority's Administrative Building

Agenda Item #11 Adjournment at 9:56 a.m.

Prior to adjournment, there was further discussion regarding the security of a Metro employee. The Board acknowledged her concerns, however, expressed that since this is not an agenda item, no action can be taken. Ms. Cencic indicated she will address the issue after the meeting has been adjourned.

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