

Meeting Minutes – September 23, 2021

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF OMAHA
2222 Cuming Street
Omaha, Nebraska, 68102
September 23, 2021
MINUTES**

The Transit Authority of the City of Omaha Board met in Regular Session on Thursday, September 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
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
C. Distefano, Finance Director
L. Barritt, Marketing Director
K. Pendland, IT Director
J. Willoughby, Senior Project Manager (Absent)
J. Rumery, Grant Administrator

Others Present:

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 8:32 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 #2: Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

Ms. Haase entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Board Meeting on August 26, 2021.

Motion by Mr. Lund; Second by Ms. Plucker

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.

Agenda Item #3: Administrative Report

(L. Cencic)

Ms. Cencic updated the Board on the newly launched Umo payment system. This system was launched to the general public on Monday, September 20, 2021. Many people are expressing interest and outreach efforts are going well. Metro has many employees who are out in the field doing outreach for Umo as ambassadors, and Ms. Cencic thanked those staff members for their hard work and efforts in getting the information out to Metro riders. Umo ambassadors have been connecting with riders at transit centers and on buses, talking with people, and handing out the new smartcards. Outreach has been focused on ORBT routes and Westroads Transit Center for the initial push, along with some outreach at North Omaha Transit Center. ORBT is the only line in the system that will use Umo exclusively, but other routes will continue to allow for all forms of payment accepted currently plus Umo. Every day this week, Metro staff have gone out to talk with riders beginning at 6:00 a.m. and this effort will continue into October.

Ms. Cencic informed the Board that the first electric buses that were scheduled to arrive in the second half of December 2021 have been delayed in production and are now expected to arrive in January. This will allow Metro staff more time to prepare and to make sure chargers are installed and ready for when the new electric buses arrive. Metro staff will also travel to StarTran to visit their electric bus facilities and talk with StarTran staff about their experiences with electric buses in their fleet.

Ms. Cencic updated the Board that Metro has seen an increase in ridership during the month of August. The month of August had the highest system-wide ridership since March of 2020. Ridership is only approximately 10% lower than the pre-pandemic March 2020 numbers. Metro is also carrying more people system-wide on Saturdays and Sundays. Demand seems to be returning the strongest over the weekends. In fact, Metro has over 10,000 riders on ORBT during the month of August, which is more ridership than Metro saw on the Dodge line during the previous two decades.

Discussion was had.

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Agenda Item #4a: Administrative Reports

(L. Cencic for E. Simpson)

- Ms. Simpson welcomed Mr. Jordan to Metro as the new Fleet Maintenance Manager.
- Metro will also welcome a new fixed route operator who is scheduled to begin training on October 1, 2021.
- Metro continues to recruit for a number of positions, but applications also continue to remain low.
- Metro also continues to monitor the COVID situation and to track potential COVID exposures.

Agenda Item # 4b: Administrative Reports

(I. Maldonado)

Metro wants to congratulate our staff for performing a fantastic job in the identification, collection, and disposal of potential hazardous materials from our fleet and building maintenance facilities. Ninety-eight percent of all potential hazardous materials have been properly removed and disposed of through a third-party vendor.

Metro is excited that Keith Jordan is our new Fleet Director. He comes to us with a diverse background in the management of heavy fleet maintenance, including the maintenance oversight of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), diesel, gasoline, and electric vehicles. Since his arrival, Mr. Jordan has held meetings with maintenance supervisors, members of the union and has held two meet and greet meetings with all available maintenance personnel, to which Mrs. Cencic and I were in attendance. Two additional meetings are scheduled to take place this Friday, where various maintenance related topics will be discussed.

In the later part of August, Mrs. Cencic and I met members of the Heart Ministry's leadership team to discuss potential partnership opportunities. We toured their facilities and learned of the various services that Heart Ministry provides including the referral of candidates for employment opportunities.

New operator schedules will start Sunday, October 3rd. As a service enhancement we will add an additional ORBT bus during peak times to our Sunday schedule and will adjust times to allow additional recovery time to operators. This would improve on time performance and ultimately improve our employee and customer's experience.

On October 23rd from 6:45 to 3:00 pm, Metro will participate in an Omaha Airport Authority-Veteran's Hospital multi-agency emergency management exercise. During this exercise, Metro will assist with the transportation of event participants.

This concludes my presentation. I would be glad to answer any questions that members of the Board may have. Thank you.

Discussion was had.

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Agenda Item # 4c: Administrative Reports

(J. Rose)

Metro' social media presence continues to grow across all platforms, with focuses on K-12 Rides Free as the school year starts and Umo as we prepared for the launch of the system. This includes paid advertising campaigns across all platforms.

Metro had three ORBT-focused stories in the news in August and 11 in September so far (mostly focused on Umo) – two of these were in national publications.

The team's primary focus has been around the public introduction of Umo, which included a 6-week focus group with 40 participants, the education and training of the public, and the creation and production of all communications and marketing touchpoints.

Agenda Item #5: Board Chair Report

(A. Haase)

From the Operations Committee, this new format is allowing for staff to interact more with Board members and talk about facility upgrades that are coming. There is no tangible update at this time but it is helpful for staff to have updates, share ideas with Board members, and hear feedback on those ideas.

From the Programs and Policy Committee, the focus recently has been on updating current policies and creating new policies. Currently, the committee is updating Metro's Equity and Inclusion policy and Metro's Climate Resiliency policy and will have more to share next month.

Mr. Lawse shared a presentation with the Board, Metro staff, and attendees regarding Climate Change impacts.

Discussion was had.

Agenda Item #6: Date, Time and Place of Next Board Meeting

Thursday, October 28, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at Metro Transit Authority's Administrative Building.

Agenda Item #7: Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was entertained to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 a.m.

Motion by Mr. Meadows; Second by Mr. Lawse

ROLL CALL:

UNANIMOUS; MOTION CARRIES.

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Ms. Amy Haase – Chair

Recording Secretary