

MINUTES*

MAC MEETING OF NOVEMBER 20, 2019



The METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) met on Wednesday, November 20, 2019, in the METRO Administrative Office located at 110 Vernon Street, in Santa Cruz, CA. *Minutes are “summary” minutes, not verbatim minutes.

1. WELCOME NEW MAC MEMBERS JAMES VON HENDY AND JESSICA DE WIT AND ANNOUNCE THE REAPPOINTMENT OF JOSEPH MARTINEZ

Chair Elsea welcomed the new members upon their arrival.

2. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 6:06 PM.

ROLL CALL - The following MAC Members were present, representing a quorum:

Veronica Elsea, Chair
Joseph Martinez, Vice Chair
Jessica de Wit (Arrived 6:39 PM)
Jason Lopez

Michael Pisano
Becky Taylor
James Von Hendy

METRO EMPLOYEES AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHO VOLUNTARILY INDICATED THEY WERE PRESENT (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER) THROUGH A SIGN-IN SHEET OR VERBAL INTRODUCTION WERE:

Nate Abrego, METRO
Jayme Ackemann, METRO
Isaac Holly, METRO

Leo Peña, METRO
Pete Rasmussen, METRO
Virginia Vaquero, METRO

3. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Pisano broached the topic of employing temporary bus stops on the UCSC Campus. Chair Elsea recommended this item be added to the next meeting agenda to allow the Planning Department an opportunity to review the matter.

Chair Elsea requested METRO check if the “No Smoking” sign is still at the bus stop at Diridon Station. She relayed a recent incident where the signage was either gone or was not being adhered to. Jayme Ackemann, Acting Planning and Development Director, said METRO would check it out and if there is none, METRO will request it through the proper channels at Caltrains.

Chair Elsea also reported an unusual announcement on the new buses. When arriving at the METRO Center, the announcement is “2702 METRO Center”. She asked what is “2702?” Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director, said it sounds like the Stop ID is being called out and that should not be happening. He will look into the matter.

Mr. Lopez noticed the signpost for the Hwy. 17 bus stop at Diridon Station does not have METRO’s schedule on it anymore. Director Ackemann said METRO would look into it.

4. RECEIVE AND FILE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF AUGUST 21, 2019

MOTION: ACCEPT AND FILE THE REVISED MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF AUGUST 21, 2019

Page 4 of the August 21, 2019 Minutes were revised to add in “for Kaiser Hospital” for clarification in reference to Route 71 (attached).

MOTION: PISANO

SECOND: LOPEZ

MOTION PASSED WITH 6 AYES (Elsea, Martinez, Lopez, Pisano, Taylor and Von Hendy)

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chair Elsea expressed concern that the Board of Directors cancelled their December Meeting. According to MAC bylaws, the Chair is to give an oral update of MAC activities in June and December to the Board of Directors. Since the MAC November meeting fell after the Board of Directors' meeting in November, she will give an update at the January 24, 2020 Board of Directors' meeting; thus providing a smoother transition for the new MAC Chair elected for the 2020 term. All MAC members were in agreement with this decision.

6. UPDATE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS (ITS) - AUTOMATIC VEHICLE LOCATION (AVL)

Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director, reported the challenges with the hardware integration to METRO's buses have been resolved. METRO is proceeding with the installation, with approximately 50% of the equipment already installed.

The vendor, GMV Syncromatics, is in the early stages of beta testing the application. Mr. Pisano is one of a small group of people selected for the beta program. Chair Elsea asked if any voice-over users were in the beta group. Director Holly said the vendor is not at that stage yet; but will include her in the testing group when that feature is available.

Discussion ensued on the ability of one application handling fixed route and paratransit information. Director Holly said we could potentially integrate the apps with one side being the default and creating a hook to launch into the other one (i.e., fixed route being the default and being able to choose Ecolane to get the paratransit experience).

7. UPDATE ON ECOLANE DRT SOFTWARE FOR PARACRUZ

Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director, explained the Ecolane application would allow a passenger to see when the paratransit vehicle is going to arrive and get them to their destination. We are currently doing data exports from our Legacy application to the new system. We expect to begin rollout by mid-January 2020.

8. UPDATE ON RECENT CLASS OF BUS OPERATOR GRADUATES – FORMER AGENDA ITEM 11 MOVED UP TO AGENDA ITEM 8 WITH CHAIR APPROVAL

Leo Peña, Safety and Training Coordinator, gave an update on the recent graduating class of 12 Bus Operators. Chair Elsea said she participated in the accessibility training and said this class was one of the most engaged groups that she has seen in a long time. She added that METRO's Bus Operators are phenomenal. Mr. Pisano agreed and said he has ridden many different bus systems and METRO's Bus Operators are amazing.

Mr. Pisano inquired about the total number of Bus Operators employed at METRO. Brandon Freeman, Bus Operator, said 156 are currently in Fixed Route, but we are fully funded for 164. Mr. Peña remarked that METRO will be starting a new recruitment cycle soon.

9. UPDATE ON MARKETING OF POLICY: USE OF FIXED ROUTE SERVICES AND TRANSIT FACILITIES, INCLUDING PASSENGER CODE OF CONDUCT AND SERVICE SUSPENSION/EXCLUSION

Jayne Ackemann, Marketing, Communications & Customer Service Director, said she is planning a customer-focused campaign and pressed the MAC members for input on the most important issues relating to customer conduct that need to be addressed now. Suggestions put forth included:

- Show respect for fellow riders (i.e., don't expect them to move to accommodate an abundance of bags one is carrying onto the bus)
- Be mindful of surrounding passengers; lower your voice in conversations
- Present simple, positive messages with cute images
- Use school children's art for the signs
- Let your Bus Operator know if there is an issue
- Use the text message system to put out tips on conduct
- Use the message intake system to notify riders that the policy exists and direct them to the website to review it
- Occasionally use bus announcements/ticker screen to promote the policy
- Radio campaign

Director Ackemann said METRO would use various tools to target rider content (i.e., car cards, Headways, service alert system, social media, tile icons, brochures, and signs at the transit centers). We will also do a splash page on the home page of the website when we roll it out. METRO does not have a graphic designer to do characters/graphics, but we can achieve a visually attractive message with big, bold colors.

Director Ackemann added that METRO is doing a kickoff campaign with KSCO in January 2020 to promote signing up for service alerts. We will do the traffic tags for "King of the Hill."

10. UPDATE ON THE FIXED-ROUTE FREE FARE PROGRAM FOR LEGALLY BLIND CUSTOMERS

Jayne Ackemann, Marketing, Communications & Customer Service Director, informed the MAC members that the free fare program was rolled out to METRO Bus Operators at the beginning of November. Steps have been taken to streamline the process in acquiring the access card. Our Paratransit Eligibility Coordinator reviewed the existing list of paratransit riders who would be eligible for this program and verified their status so that they can be grandfathered into the program. They can obtain their card through Customer Service and will not have to fill out any medical forms. METRO has reached out to local organizations, and Vista Center will also certify their clients for the card. In addition, eligibility extends to a Personal Care Attendant (PCA). They just need to request the PCA "dot" for their cards.

Vice Chair Martinez asked if customers had to go to Pacific Station or if they can go to the Watsonville Transit Center (WTC). Director Ackemann said customers can go to the WTC but they will not get their card the same day because the ID printer in Watsonville is currently broken. The WTC Customer Service Representative can take the customer's photo and information there, but has to send everything to the Pacific Station to make the card. Once completed, the card will be returned to WTC for the customer to pick up.

Chair Elsea added that she has not had any difficulties or challenges since the program took effect. She suggested this could be an item sent out on text alerts and outgoing phone messages.

11. SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE

Jayne Ackemann, Acting Planning & Development Director, introduced Pete Rasmussen, Transportation Planner, and turned over the service planning updates to him.

a. Quarterly Ridership Report highlights:

- Total fixed route ridership increased by 3.4% in FY20 Q1 (July-September) compared to FY19.
- UCSC ridership increased by 11.8%
- Cabrillo College was down by 2.2%

- Non-student ridership increased 0.2%
- Hwy. 17 ridership decreased 1.8%
- ParaCruz ridership increased 3.5%

b. Stops

Mr. Rasmussen reminded the Committee that the winter schedule starts on December 12, 2019. The biggest change is that METRO is eliminating the Felton Faire Shopping Center stop. The owner of this property is terminating its agreement with METRO in early January. METRO was not given much advance notice so we have not been able to find a feasible, safe alternative route and stop. The school term routes serving San Lorenzo Valley will now start at San Lorenzo Valley High School rather than Felton Faire.

Some of the Route 15 and 16 trips to UCSC in the late afternoon will now be “limited campus” trips to address overcrowding on the campus buses. The Headways and website will designate these stops with LC (e.g., 15LC).

Mr. Rasmussen alerted the members that the Hwy. 17 Route will be modified in March 2020. The City of San Jose has put in a bike lane on San Fernando Street and requested METRO move its route to Santa Clara Street so that we are not in conflict with the bike lane.

Mr. Pisano asked if there was an update on adding a bus stop at Enterprise Technology Center or for on-demand bus service in San Lorenzo Valley. Mr. Rasmussen said there was nothing new on either topic. Discussion continued on the use of JUMP bikes as a possible way to fill the bus service gaps. Mr. Pisano said JUMP bikes are only in the Santa Cruz City limits and have not been extended to the County. Director Ackemann said METRO does plan to explore microtransit solutions in the second half of 2020.

Chair Elsea reminded METRO staff of the need for text alerts on UCSC’s schedule for planning purposes. She rides the university buses but is not affiliated with the university. It would be helpful to get text alerts about their schedules. Director Ackemann said she would elevate Chair Elsea’s message.

Mr. Pisano likes the idea of replacing some of the bus stop benches with Simme-Seats. Chair Elsea commented that sometimes she has trouble finding the Simme-Seats because they are up.

c. Other Projects

The Planning Department recently met with the owners of Capitola Mall. Part of redesigning the mall involves moving the transit center to the backside of what is currently Macy’s and Kohl’s. We have taken our buses out there to test the turning movements. Discussion ensued about other proposed changes.

Mr. Rasmussen reported that a consultant for the Kaiser development is working on a transportation impact study and METRO has requested data from that study. The project is still years away from completion but we are following its progression.

Director Ackemann added that we are moving forward with the rollout of the mobile ticketing pilot program for the Hwy. 17 Route. We anticipate launching it in March 2020. We are in the application development process right now and making progress with the vendor, Masabi. Mr. Von Hendy asked which Hwy. 17 passes will be available with mobile ticketing. Mr. Rasmussen said we plan to have all of the Hwy. 17 passes available.

Director Ackemann gave an update on overnight parking permits at the Cavallaro Transit Center. METRO is offering the permits to accommodate those riders who wish to ride the Hwy. 17 bus to go out of town for a few days and not worry about their vehicle being towed. Discussion followed on the permit cost, the current process of obtaining the permit, and how that process will be streamlined when the Passport application is implemented.

Mr. Pisano mentioned the Bay Area transit agencies are trying to get one fare for all of their transit services and asked if that will affect Hwy. 17 fares. Director Ackemann said METRO is watching to see how that situation unfolds. Currently, the Clipper Card, which is how they unify their fares, is not available on any of METRO's services.

Mr. Rasmussen added that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Board would have to make a policy change to accept transit agencies that are not within their nine county region to join the Clipper program. They are currently updating the Clipper program and will not consider taking on additional agencies until the modernization of the program is completed. Ms. Ackemann added that METRO would have to pay the MTC to be part of the consortium. She explained that the MTC collects taxes from those nine counties and when they get state and federal funds, it goes back to those counties.

Director Ackemann said METRO met with the City of Santa Cruz (City) to review the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) about the relationship between the City and METRO regarding the reconstruction of Pacific Station. We expect to take it through the approval process with both of our boards in 2020.

Vice Chair Martinez asked if there is a new restaurant going in at Pacific Station. Director Ackemann said Betty's Noodles is keeping the space to eventually open a dim sum restaurant. That space will remain closed while the owner establishes the Monster Pot restaurant in Santa Cruz.

Mr. Pisano asked if there is an update on when the rail trail will get implemented and how METRO will be a part of that. Mr. Rasmussen said the alternative analysis study begins next week and will be conducted over the next year.

12. DISCUSS USE OF ALTERNATIVE FUELS FOR BUSES

MOTION: TABLE ITEM TO NEXT MAC MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2020

MOTION: VON HENDY

SECOND: PISANO

MOTION PASSED WITH 7 AYES (Elsea, Martinez, de Wit, Lopez, Pisano, Taylor and Von Hendy)

13. ESTABLISH AND APPROVE THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2020 MEETING SCHEDULE

MOTION: APPROVE THE 2020 MAC MEETING DATES OF FEBRUARY 19, APRIL 15, AUGUST 19, AND OCTOBER 21

MOTION: PISANO

SECOND: MARTINEZ

MOTION PASSED WITH 7 AYES (Elsea, Martinez, de Wit, Lopez, Pisano, Taylor and Von Hendy)

14. ELECT THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR 2020 TERM

MOTION: ELECT CHAIR ELSEA FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM (JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2020)

MOTION: MARTINEZ

SECOND: LOPEZ

MOTION PASSED WITH 7 AYES (Elsea, Martinez, de Wit, Lopez, Pisano, Taylor and Von Hendy)

MOTION: ELECT VICE CHAIR MARTINEZ FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM (JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2020)

MOTION: DE WIT

SECOND: TAYLOR

MOTION PASSED WITH 7 AYES (Elsa, Martinez, de Wit, Lopez, Pisano, Taylor and Von Hendy)

15. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO CEO

None.

16. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

None.

17. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA

- Discuss use of alternative fuels for buses
- Temporary bus stops on UCSC Campus

18. DISTRIBUTION OF VOUCHER

Vouchers distributed by Donna Bauer.

Chair Elsa took a few minutes to explain how the vouchers work to the new members of MAC.

19. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bauer
Administrative Specialist

d. Tri MyRide on-demand transit:

Mr. Pisano said Try MyRide is an on-demand service used in Antioch and Cupertino. Director Emerson said the Planning Department would follow up on this and mentioned that METRO has a couple of pilot projects it is considering. One is to come up with an Uber/Lyft type program to cover south of Capitola where we had to cut Routes 54, 55 and 56. We also want to try another model with taxi service in the evening beyond Felton Fair and the Scotts Valley Transit Center. In this case, METRO would buy a few taxis for the night instead of running fixed route buses to service these areas. Look for these ideas to unfold early next year.

Last, Director Emerson gave an update on the ridership and reported that ridership is flat. We hope the new buses and mobile ticketing will improve ridership.

Mr. Pisano asked if METRO had thought about splitting Route 71 for Kaiser Hospital and Director Emerson said we are looking at variations to Route 69 instead. Mr. Pisano asked if we are involved in the Diridon Station remodel. Pete Rasmussen, Transportation Planner, said he is working with the City of San Jose on a bikeway on East San Fernando Street, which could impact the Hwy. 17 bus route. METRO is waiting for Google to go public with their development plans so that METRO can determine the next steps needed.

Vice Chair Martinez inquired about the number of Bus Operators currently enrolled in the training class. Director Emerson said we have 12 currently going through the course.

Mr. Lopez commented that he was able to ride the new diesel hybrid bus and it was very nice and was wondering if we plan to get more. Director Emerson explained that we got 10 used ones from VTA and there is no plan to acquire more at this time.

Mr. Pisano asked if Dominican Hospital would be interested in buying bus passes for its employees. Director Emerson said METRO has reached out extensively to Dominican Hospital to be a partner but at this time, there is no interest.

10 UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTING POLICY: USE OF FIXED ROUTE SERVICES AND TRANSIT FACILITIES, INCLUDING PASSENGER CODE OF CONDUCT AND SERVICE SUSPENSION/EXCLUSION

COO Aguirre provided an update on the Code of Conduct Policy. Our current class of Bus Operators is being trained on the policy. This class is scheduled to graduate mid-October. Once that happens, our two Training Coordinators will train the rest of the Bus Operators. Simultaneously Director Ackemann will devise an approach for informing the public.

COO Aguirre also gave an update on a new feature that will be on the six Gillig buses ordered. The forward facing seats after the securement area will now have flip up individual seats. You will be able to sit down and flip one seat up to fit a cart, or whatever you are carrying, so there is more aisle room. Ms. Taylor thought that would be good for Routes 4 and 66.

Ms. Taylor thought METRO should consider adding no sleeping on the fixed route front seats to the code of conduct. She went on to explain an encounter that took place on Route 71.

Chair Elsea asked at what point would it be good to have Director Ackemann give an update on the preliminary marketing plans for the Code of Conduct so that MAC can offer some input. COO Aguirre suggested doing that at the next MAC meeting.