

# MINUTES\*

MAC MEETING OF AUGUST 18, 2021



The METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) met on Wednesday, August 18, 2021. The meeting was held via teleconference. \*Minutes are "summary" minutes, not verbatim minutes.

**1. CALL TO ORDER** at 6:02 PM.

**2. ROLL CALL** - The following MAC Members were present via teleconference, representing a quorum:

James Von Hendy, Chair	Veronica Elsea
Joseph Martinez, Vice Chair	Michael Pisano
James Cruse	Becky Taylor
Jessica de Wit <b>AR 6:05 PM</b>	

Additional METRO staff and presenters:

Alex Clifford, CEO/General Manager	Curtis Moses, Safety, Security, & Risk Management Director
Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer	Brandon Freeman, Bus Operator
Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director	Donna Bauer, Administrative Specialist
John Urgo, Planning & Development Director	

**3. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Vice Chair Martinez asked if the Accessible Services Coordinator position is being filled because he was approached by a Bus Operator to train someone on how to use a wheelchair on the METRO bus system. Alex Clifford, CEO, said the individual needing assistance should call Customer Service and we will make arrangements for the training. We are currently reviewing the job description and the needs of METRO. Mr. Cruse added that ParaCruz is very good at helping people in wheelchairs.

**4. RECEIVE AND FILE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF APRIL 21, 2021**

**MOTION: ACCEPT AND FILE THE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF APRIL 21, 2021 AS PRESENTED**

**MOTION: ELSEA**

**SECOND: PISANO**

**MOTION PASSED WITH 7 AYES: Von Hendy, Martinez, Cruse, de Wit, Elsea, Pisano, and Taylor**

**5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC)**

Chair Von Hendy attended the June 25, 2021 Board of Directors meeting and reported on MAC's last two meetings of 2021. He spoke highly of MAC's contributions and dedication to METRO and felt MAC was well received and appreciated by the Board.

**6. COVID-19 UPDATE**

CEO Clifford reported on the following:

- METRO had a fully vaccinated employee test positive for COVID-19 two weeks ago. METRO continues to monitor information from the CDC, Cal/OSHA, county and state health agencies and make the necessary adjustments to protocols (e.g., CDC currently recommends face masks be worn inside an office environment, whether vaccinated or not).
- METRO is launching a mask mandate and weekly COVID testing in four METRO departments which have a substandard fully vaccination level.

- The management team continues to evaluate an all-employees vaccination mandate.
- Governor Newsom has indicated that his executive order waiving the open meeting requirements may end September 30, 2021. Starting in October 2021, all meetings that fall under the Ralph M. Brown Act, which include MAC meetings, will have to be held in person.

Ms. Elsea asked if there was any news about Santa Clara County allowing METRO to increase the capacity on the Hwy. 17 buses. CEO Clifford responded that there is no update.

Ms. Elsea asked if the public can enter the Pacific Station lobby on hot days to get out of the heat. CEO Clifford said METRO is not allowing people to congregate in small areas. However, the restrooms are open to the public.

## **7. UPDATE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS (ITS)**

Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director, said METRO has been working hard to make the intelligent transportation system project succeed but the vendor has failed us. We just sent a letter of default to them. If certain requirements are not met (including the audio/visual enunciation system that Ms. Elsea mentioned earlier) within 30 days, METRO has legal grounds to release them from the contract and choose another vendor to complete the project. He added that METRO wants a stable, reliable system for its riders. MAC members thanked Director Holly for his efforts and dedication.

## **8. SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE**

### **a. Quarterly Ridership Report**

John Urgo, Planning & Development Director, gave an update on the ridership for the Fourth Quarter of FY21 and stated the full report would go to the Board of Directors on August 27, 2021. Ridership continues to rise every week and we are approaching about 50% pre-COVID ridership levels. More student services are expected to return this fall. Even though SJSU has started classes, most employers in the San Jose region have extended remote working. We are not expecting Hwy. 17 to rebound. Chair Von Hendy expressed concern about the low ridership on the Hwy. 17 buses but understands METRO is bound by whatever directive comes from Santa Clara County. Director Urgo said we are stuck with the current capacity limits, but our pass bys have gone down.

Ms. Elsea asked if METRO will be increasing Route 18 service in the fall. Director Urgo said that service will remain the same. UCSC service (Routes 15 and 22) will return to pre-COVID levels as students return to campus.

### **b. Bus Stops**

#### **b.i. Bus Stop Sign Improvement**

Director Urgo said the bus stop improvement project is being implemented. Approximately half of the signs have been installed at our 800 bus stop locations.

Ms. Elsea asked if any research had been done on the Braille component. Director Urgo responded that METRO has done research and found some of the options were outside of our means to implement. One option may be to place a marker on the pole to identify the Bus Stop ID. Ms. Elsea said the Bus Stop ID would be helpful; with the ID, one can access route information.

Mr. Pisano and Chair Von Hendy both commented that they have seen the new signs and they look great.

**b.ii. Add/Adjust Bus Stops at Santa Cruz County Government Building in Watsonville**

Director Urgo said we will study this and work with Santa Cruz County. Currently, it would be challenging to add service anywhere given the work force shortages we are experiencing.

**b.iii. Adjust Route 69W for Kaiser Facility on Soquel Avenue**

Director Urgo said we do not have the resources to redirect Route 69W to the Kaiser facility. Pete Rasmussen, Transportation Planner II, is working with Kaiser and looking at a possible shuttle service model provided by Kaiser.

**b.iv. Add Bus Stop for Capitola Library**

Director Urgo said METRO doesn't have the resources to deviate service to the Capitola library at this time.

**b.v. Maintenance of Simme-Seats at Bus Stops**

Facilities is visiting every METRO bus stop and noting their condition, especially the Simme-Seats. We will come up with a plan to refurbish any that need maintenance.

**c. Other Projects**

**c.i. ParaCruz and On-Demand Microtransit Trips**

Director Urgo reported we are about six months into this one-year pilot project. We are seeing very low demand for this service—under 10 trips per day. We will continue to evaluate it. As ParaCruz rides increase, on-demand trips will be impacted.

Mr. Cruse asked if ParaCruz can pick up wheelchairs with the microtransit trips. Director Urgo replied yes, as long as there is wheelchair capacity on the ParaCruz van.

**c.ii Increase Bicycle Capacity on Buses**

In response to MAC's earlier request, METRO staff reviewed literature on this issue and even contacted their peers for information. The biggest advancement over the last 10-15 years is the three-position bike rack.

There are van-type services with trailers (i.e., UCSC and Caltrans) but METRO is not going to hitch a trailer to a bus nor install rear bike racks. We were potentially looking at procuring a zero-emission, electric, commuter coach for the Hwy. 17 service that would have allowed bikes to be stored in the undercarriage. However, the range of the vehicle was not sufficient to travel the Hwy. 17 corridor. We recognize the limitations so will work with our City and County partners to encourage more bike racks, bike lockers and bike-share programs that would allow people to connect to transit with bikes.

**9. SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FAIR – SEPTEMBER 15 - 19, 2021**

COO Ross announced METRO will extend Route 79 service and provide ParaCruz service to the Santa Cruz County Fair. Discussion followed regarding the information that will be displayed on the flyers to be posted at the bus stops on Route 79. METRO will also man a booth at the fairgrounds with first responders and have on display a new electric bus and new ParaCruz van. Chair Von Hendy thanked METRO for making it possible to take the bus to and from the fairgrounds.

**10. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO CEO**

Ms. Elsea asked if METRO is going to reinstate the disabled passenger training she participated in as part of the Bus Operator training. Margo Ross, COO, said METRO had to suspend that aspect due to COVID for safety reasons but that ADA training is part of the syllabus. Concern was

expressed over the loss of this practice. Brandon Freeman, Bus Operator, added that COO Ross and Director Moses have improved the training program and recognize the people component is important; however, for now, COVID precautions have to be followed. Chair Von Hendy acknowledged Ms. Elsea's concerns that something might be lost and thanked COO Ross, Director Moses and Mr. Freeman for their reassurances to continue training to fully serve our community. Ms. Taylor thanked Ms. Elsea for all of her years of dedication to so many in the community.

Discussion ensued on who should be contacted while METRO is reviewing the Accessible Services Coordinator position.

**11. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

None.

**12. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA**

- COVID-19
- Information Technology Systems
- ParaCruz and On-Demand Microtransit Trips
- Bus Stop Sign Improvement
- Maintenance of Simme-Seats at Bus Stops

**13. DISTRIBUTION OF VOUCHERS**

Donna Bauer, Administrative Specialist, will mail out the vouchers on Thursday, August 19, 2021 to all members in attendance at this meeting.

**14. ADJOURNMENT**

The next MAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at 6:00 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bauer  
Administrative Specialist