

MINUTES*

MAC MEETING OF APRIL 21, 2021



The METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) met on Wednesday, April 21, 2021. The meeting was held via teleconference. *Minutes are “summary” minutes, not verbatim minutes.

1. CALL TO ORDER at 6:03 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	

Additional METRO staff, presenters and public:

Alex Clifford, CEO/General Manager	Curtis Moses, Safety, Security, & Risk Management Director
Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer	John Urgo, Planning & Development Director
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer	Kristina Mihaylova, Finance Deputy Director
Danielle Glagola, Marketing, Communications, & Customer Service Director	Brandon Freeman, Bus Operator
Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director	Donna Bauer, Administrative Specialist
	David Van Brink, Public

3. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

David Van Brink, a member of the public, expressed gratitude for METRO’s new Splash Pass app and said it was a simpler way of tracking the balance remaining on his card. He spoke in favor of the Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis & Rail Network Integration Study (TCAA/RNIS) Business Plan and urged the METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) to show support for the plan as well. Alex Clifford, CEO/General Manager, recommended MAC not weigh in on the matter; due to the latest Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) member tie (6-6) vote. Ms. Elsea suggested sending comments directly to the SCCRTC. Discussion ensued on the possibility of funding being diverted from METRO.

Mr. Pisano asked what METRO’s emergency plan is for charging its electric buses in light of the recent fires, winds and PG&E’s grid shutdowns. CEO Clifford remarked that METRO has determined current site constraints will not accommodate battery storage required with solar nor the number of generators required to charge an all-electric bus fleet in the event of a major power disruption. As a result, METRO’s future fleet may not be 100% battery electric buses. METRO is investigating the viability of hydrogen fuel-cell buses. We continue to update the Board and have Board concurrence to take a pause until 2026 on acquiring additional electric buses, with the exception of the three Highway 17 over-the-road coaches. Going forward, we may have a mix of vehicles—battery electric and hydrogen-cell.

Ms. Taylor thought there was a state mandate that all buses had to be electric by 2050. CEO Clifford said the California Air Resources Board (CARB) has stated that all agencies must be electric by 2040. The transition plan is based on the size of the agency. METRO is classified as a small agency. That means we do not have to start buying zero-emission buses (ZEB) until 2026 and, at that time, only 25% of the bus procurements have to be ZEB. By 2029, 100% of procured buses must be ZEB. We will still have CNG buses in the fleet and will carry them past 2040, which is allowable.

4. RECEIVE AND FILE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF FEBRUARY 17, 2021

MOTION: ACCEPT AND FILE THE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF FEBRUARY 17, 2021

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 mentioned that he wrote an email (included in the agenda packet) to the Board of Directors, on behalf of MAC, requesting the review of adding Braille route numbers and the Stop ID number to the new bus stop signs. Ms. Elsea thanked Chair Von Hendy for writing the email. John Urgo, Planning and Development Director, informed the Committee that METRO is performing background research and reviewing best practices at other agencies. We have preliminary ideas on how to implement such a change; however, this requires additional funding sources. Director Urgo said he will provide a more detailed update at the August MAC meeting .

6. INTRODUCTION OF CHUCK FARMER, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, AND CURTIS MOSES, SAFETY, SECURITY & RISK MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR

CEO Clifford provided brief bios for CFO Farmer and Director Moses. Each spoke briefly on their transition to METRO. The MAC members welcomed them both.

7. COVID-19 UPDATE

CEO Clifford updated the Committee on several items related to COVID-19:

- METRO has had no new cases since March 15, 2021.
- To date, 62% of METRO employees have been vaccinated.
- Effective May 1, METRO will increase bus capacity, except on the Hwy. 17 Route. Santa Clara County has not eased its COVID-19 capacity restrictions.
- As Santa Cruz County continues to open up, METRO will monitor pass-ups and increase capacity as needed. We hope to be at full capacity when students return in the fall.

Mr. Pisano thanked METRO in helping people get the vaccinations. Vice Chair Martinez asked how long the vaccination program will continue. Director Urgo and COO Ross both remarked that METRO will keep the service in place as long as people continue to get vaccinations.

8. UPDATE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS (ITS)

Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director, reported that METRO is close to accepting the public-facing aspect of the ITS system. The vendor anticipates the mobile app to be ready by summer.

Discussion ensued on emphasizing accessibility as well as trip planning. Director Holly will report back to the Committee in August with an update.

9. FY22 AND FY23 PRELIMINARY OPERATING AND FY22 PRELIMINARY CAPITAL BUDGET AS PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON MARCH 26, 2021

CFO Farmer provided an overview of the preliminary budget and shared the slide presentation included in the agenda packet. An update will be presented to the METRO Board in May. CFO Farmer reviewed METRO's revenue sources, operating expenses and capital budget commitments.

Discussion followed on the revenue received from the EcoPass Program with the City of Santa Cruz and the Program's current status.

Ms. Elsea asked if the On-Demand Program is anticipated to generate a noticeable amount of revenue and if METRO anticipates raising fares. Director Urgo answered the reduced fare program

will be in place until September 15, 2021 when the fall bid starts. The old fare structure will be reinstated at that time. The goal of this program is to get ridership back and give back to the community. A Title VI analysis would be required around fare changes to continue the program past six months. We may experience a small bump in revenue with the on-demand service. However, that ridership will go away when ParaCruz returns to normal service levels.

10. SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE

a. Quarterly Ridership Report

Director Urgo reported METRO has seen a 26% ridership increase since implementing the fare reduction on March 22, 2021. A full report will be presented to the Board in May.

Mr. Cruse mentioned he was in a group meeting where no one had heard about the reduced fare program; they were excited to hear the news. Director Urgo said METRO has notices on the website, sent out email blasts, placed announcements in newspapers but word of mouth is important, and thanked Mr. Cruse for sharing the news with the group.

b. Bus Stops

b.i. Bus Stop Sign Improvements

Director Urgo said METRO will implement the first phase of installing the newly designed bus stop signs with the summer bid. The focus will be on routes requiring schedule changes (e.g., 71, 69, 35 and the westside routes). We are working with UCSC on a pilot westside route called Route 18 which will replace Route 16.

b.ii. Enterprise Technology Center (ETC) for Highway 17 Express

Director Urgo said Mr. Pisano's request was reviewed. The Bus Operators expressed concerns about missing the turn and getting stuck on Highway 17. Instead, we hope to serve that area with on-demand microtransit trips.

c. Other Projects

c.i. ParaCruz and On-Demand Microtransit Trips

Director Urgo reported the On-Demand Program launched on April 19, 2021. He shared his experiences in using the program and reported that it worked great. We're seeing an average wait time of about 30 minutes. We hope to have more shared rides as the program progresses.

Mr. Pisano asked how long an Operator will wait when they arrive at the pick-up location. COO Ross said the Operator can't wait beyond five minutes because (s)he has to service ParaCruz riders first.

Discussion ensued on how to know if you are within the three-mile distance and where within Santa Cruz County the service is offered. Director Urgo replied the app will calculate the distance for you and won't book the trip if it is over three miles. You can travel anywhere within the ParaCruz service area which includes most of Santa Cruz County.

11. CODE OF CONDUCT TRANSIT CENTER POSTING

Danielle Glagola, Marketing, Communications and Customer Service Director, recapped the tri-fold brochure she shared with the Committee in February 2021 had been printed and distributed on METRO buses and at the transit centers. She shared the design of the new Code of Conduct signage that will be at the transit centers (attached), emphasizing there are graphics and signage covering these aspects already on our buses. Several Committee members felt the graphics chosen are friendly, soften the message, and welcome riders to METRO.

Concern was raised on the use of “Only Service Animals/Animals In Carriers” phrase referenced on the signage and thought the regulation only allowed service dogs on the buses. Director Glagola said she’d update the language on the sign to read “Only Service Dogs”.

Mr. Cruse asked if the Bus Operators had been trained on the policy. COO Ross confirmed that they had and the training includes de-escalation techniques.

Vice Chair Martinez asked how many signs will be at each transit center. Director Glagola said there will be four at Pacific Station, two in Watsonville and two at the other sites.

Ms. Elsea suggested sending a text blast to the ridership and include a link to the new sign and policy to help distribute and promote the change.

Ms. Taylor thanked Director Glagola for her work on this matter.

12. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO CEO

Hearing none, Chair Von Hendy moved to the next item.

13. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Pisano suggested bringing the emergency plan for electric buses to the Board’s attention. Ms. Elsea said that topic was in oral communications and we can’t act on that; but if it is added to a future agenda, then the Committee could reach out to the Board. Vice Chair Martinez added that the topic was discussed thoroughly.

14. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA

- COVID-19 Update
- Information Technology Systems Update
- Bring ZEB emergency plan to the Board of Directors
- Increase bicycle capacity on the buses
- Create a logo for MAC
- ParaCruz and On-Demand Microtransit Trips
- Bus Stop Sign Improvements
- Enterprise Technology Center for Hwy. 17 Express
- Santa Cruz County Fair and METRO’s Participation
- Alternative to Felton Faire bus stop

15. DISTRIBUTION OF VOUCHERS

Donna Bauer, Administrative Specialist, will mail out the vouchers on Thursday, April 22, 2021 to all members in attendance at this meeting.

16. ADJOURNMENT

The next MAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 18, 2021 at 6:00 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 7:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bauer
Administrative Specialist

PUBLIC NOTICE

CODE OF CONDUCT



Proof of Payment



Dispose of Waste



No Drugs or Alcohol



No Flammable Liquids/Explosives



No Riding Bicycles, Skates, Skateboards



No Soliciting



Only Service Animals/ Animals in Carriers



No Vandalism



No Loitering



No Smoking/Vaping



No Weapons



Headphones Only



METRO's Complete Code of Conduct Policy

Violations to this Policy are subject to a notice of violation and imposition of any and all remedies, fines, criminal sanctions, damages, and penalties available by law based on California Penal Code section 640 (b) and (c), shall be pursuant to the authority and according to the procedures, herein and as set forth in the California Public Utilities Code including section 99580 et seq.

METRO Customer Service
(831) 425-8600
scmttd.com