

MINUTES*

MAC MEETING OF FEBRUARY 19, 2020



The METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) met on Wednesday, February 19, 2020 in the METRO Administrative Office located at 110 Vernon Street, in Santa Cruz, CA. *Minutes are “summary” minutes, not verbatim minutes.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 6:25 PM.

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

Veronica Elsea, Chair
Joseph Martinez, Vice Chair
Jessica de Wit

Michael Pisano
Becky Taylor
James Von Hendy

Jason Lopez was absent.

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:

Jayne Ackemann, METRO
Brandon Freeman, METRO

Pete Rasmussen, METRO

2. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chair Elsea thanked METRO for the school term announcements that have been made.

Jayne Ackemann, Acting Planning and Development Director, informed the MAC members the Pacific Station is anticipated to be available for MAC meetings in August 2020.

3. RECEIVE AND FILE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 20, 2019

MOTION: ACCEPT AND FILE THE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 20, 2019

MOTION: PISANO

SECOND: TAYLOR

MOTION PASSED WITH 6 AYES: Elsea, Martinez, de Wit, Pisano, Taylor, and Von Hendy. Lopez was absent.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC)

Chair Elsea reported her January presentation to the Board of Directors was postponed to the February 28, 2020 meeting due to a lack of quorum at the January meeting. She felt the MAC update should be acknowledged and part of the record so opted to give the second half of 2019 update at the February Board meeting instead.

Discussion ensued on recommended changes to the MAC bylaws.

5. TEMPORARY BUS STOPS ON UCSC CAMPUS

Director Ackemann mentioned there are seven temporary bus stop poles available to use on the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) Campus. If UCSC has a need for this service, METRO requests a week's notice and the number of bus stops required so our Facilities Department can deploy them on the campus. Mr. Pisano said he would relay this information to Dan Henderson, UCSC Transportation and Parking Services (TAPS) Director.

6. FARE POLICY

Director Ackemann discussed three California state legislation bills being contemplated in order to be eligible for state funding. Assembly Bill (AB)1350 would require transit agencies to offer free youth transit passes to persons 18 years of age and under.

AB 2176 would require transit agencies to offer free student transit passes to persons attending the California Community Colleges, the California State University, or the University of California. College students comprise 60% of METRO's ridership and currently pay for our services. These two bills would significantly impact METRO if passed.

AB 2012 would require transit agencies to offer free senior transit passes to persons over 65 years of age.

Discussion ensued on financial savings and costs to METRO. METRO's analysis estimates there will be a \$6 million annual loss in funds if all three bills were to pass. Also discussed were other cities that are experimenting with the free fare service and the challenges they are facing.

Discussion continued on when the deadline was for the markup of the bills.

Vice Chair Martinez asked if someone shows their release paperwork from jail, does the Bus Operator have discretion on whether to allow that person to ride free. Brandon Freeman, Bus Operator, said that is a union directive. If anyone provides release papers from a hospital or government agency, METRO will give them a free ride. It is the hope that the person has gone through the rehabilitation system and we want to give them the opportunity to continue that process. Operations management is on board with this line of thinking.

7. SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE

a. Quarterly Ridership Report

Director Ackemann reported METRO continues to see a small loss of ridership on Hwy. 17, which is bringing down the overall average in ridership. Mr. Von Hendy asked if there is a sense of what is happening to result in this loss of ridership. Pete Rasmussen, Transportation Planner II, said we have seen a shift from 31-day passes to 15-ride passes, which suggests people are not riding the bus every day but only 2-3 days a week because they are telecommuting part of the week.

Mr. Pisano asked if a ridership survey has queried riders if having additional stops on the Hwy. 17 route (i.e., Los Gatos) would help increase ridership. Director Ackemann mentioned that METRO is going to do a community survey for our onboard ridership. It is in the process of working with a contractor to survey nontransit riders to get a better understanding as to why they aren't riding the bus; what would make riding more attractive to them; and if we had service to locations that we currently don't service, would that make a difference.

Director Ackemann said METRO continues to work with the City of Santa Cruz (City) to get the downtown EcoPass into the hands of potential customers. The City has given out 570 EcoPasses, but only half of those are being used. METRO is going to participate with the City in outreach campaigns to make downtown employees aware that the passes are available and teach them how to ride the bus. Mr. Pisano said he was very impressed with the program and inquired if anyone was tracking why people were not using it and if that correlates to working an early or late shift. Director Ackemann wasn't aware of a study done on that information.

Chair Elsea relayed a story of being in Watsonville late at night and calling Lyft to get back to Santa Cruz. She was offered a wait time of 40 minutes with a cost of \$91. The cost of riding

the bus seemed very attractive then. It was suggested if other people were encountering this with on-demand rides, perhaps METRO's ridership would increase.

Ms. de Wit asked if there was an opportunity to partner with Google for rides when their offices are built near the Diridon Station (i.e., make a METRO bus a Google bus; is there a pass that a Google employee could use to ride the METRO?) Director Ackemann said those are conversations we will have with Google when they get closer to having employees there. We will also reach out to other employers.

b. Stops

Director Ackemann mentioned METRO did test the route to Enterprise Technology Center (ETC) and believes it is feasible to have a stop there. We reached out to Dan Henderson, UCSC TAPS Director, and Director Larry Pageler on whether we would be allowed to stop in the loop. The next step is to have a discussion with the property owner because UCSC does not own this property. Mr. Pisano said UCSC has regular meetings with the property owner and he will reach out to Mr. Henderson with this additional information.

Director Ackemann and Mr. Freeman discussed changes on the Hwy. 17 Route that pertain to changes implemented by the City of San Jose. Bollards were placed on San Fernando Street to protect the bike lanes. There is a pocket for buses to use but people are parking in it; this causes the bus lane to be pushed out into the street, making it unsafe for riders to board and disembark from the bus. Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) has stopped serving that corridor. As a result, METRO has relocated some of the San Jose stops by San Jose State University for safety reasons.

Chair Elsea was on a Caltrans committee a few of years ago that was involved in designing these Class IV protected bike lanes. Concerns were raised then about having pedestrians going into unsafe spaces to try to find the buses and going across the bike lanes. She was disappointed to see this happening and will campaign with Caltrans on the design.

Ms. de Wit asked if there was any potential benefit to the BART extension eventually coming to Santa Clara County. Director Ackemann said a connection to BART would certainly be an attractive option for our customers.

Chair Elsea mentioned many people use the light rail stops to catch the airport shuttle. Director Ackemann said VTA has recently made changes to those stops and said there are new directions on METRO's website.

Mr. Pisano asked if there is any movement to putting covered bus shelters at the Pasatiempo Park 'n Ride. Mr. Rasmussen replied that Caltrans controls that area because of its proximity to Hwy. 17. To put in a shelter would require engineering and retaining walls.

c. Other Projects

Bus-on-Shoulder: Director Ackemann stated bus-on-shoulder would use the auxiliary lanes on Hwy. 1 and allow METRO to operate an express service along that corridor. Mr. Rasmussen reminded the MAC members that METRO did a study a couple of years ago to determine whether it was even feasible to use the shoulders for transit. The study determined that it was and the most feasible way to do that was to incorporate it with Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's (SCCRTC) auxiliary lanes project. This has been handed off to the SCCRTC since they are leading the project to build the auxiliary lanes. The first phase would be between Morrissey Boulevard and 41st Avenue. The goal is to have this phase operational in 2023. Phase 2 is between 41st Avenue and Bay/Porter Street and Phase 3 is from State Park Drive to Freedom Boulevard.

Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis:

Mr. Rasmussen has been attending the SCCRTC and consultant project team meetings. In addition, METRO has met with the Planning and Public Works staff at various cities within the county, community organizations and recently held two public open houses. We are currently refining the draft screening criteria. The first milestone is to take the larger list of alternatives for the corridor and pare it down to a smaller list. Feedback collected from the various outreach campaigns will go to SCCRTC's next board meeting. If approved, METRO will perform a deeper study on the smaller list.

Chair Elsea added that the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&D TAC) did discuss this at their last meeting and submitted their comments. Mr. Rasmussen confirmed those comments/concerns were received.

Mr. Pisano brought up the future Kaiser project in Live Oak and a possible overpass being constructed. Mr. Rasmussen said that was not in the scope of the Measure D project and would require additional funding.

Chair Elsea inquired if there was an update on the Code of Conduct campaign. Director Ackemann said she is pressed to get METRO's apps launched; e.g., the overnight parking permit app is now available in Scotts Valley. In March we will launch our mobile ticketing app. She hopes to turn her full attention back to marketing when the new Planning Director arrives.

Mr. Pisano asked for an Automatic Vehicle Locating (AVL) system update. Mr. Freeman said the 9800s (referring to all buses manufactured in 1998) are now installed with AVL and deployed. We are getting more data, but the issues have inflated as well. We had a conference with Synchromatics two weeks ago and they are working on fixes. Director Ackemann said what makes this project so challenging is that we are trying to install new technology on a system that has buses as old as 1998 and of various manufacturers. The systems on the buses are not uniform and we have to customize the program for each of these different kinds of buses.

Mr. Pisano asked for an update on the redesign of Pacific Station. Director Ackemann said METRO is negotiating the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Santa Cruz. We need to agree on the terms of the partnership and how we want the project to unfold. Our current focus is on the grant application. We will submit our application in 2021.

Vice Chair Martinez asked about the Capitola Mall project. Director Ackemann said METRO is working with the mall developers. They are going to redesign the flow of those parking lots so METRO will have to move its current bus stop to a temporary location while construction is going on. Chair Elsea asked if METRO owns the land where the current bus stop is. Mr. Rasmussen said it is an easement. Director Ackemann recommended METRO provide an update at the April MAC meeting.

8. LARGE PRINT HEADWAYS

Director Ackemann, Marketing, Communications & Customer Service Director, told the MAC members that METRO has been producing a large print version of the Headways for those who benefit from the larger print. We mail this version out to about 50 people. Unfortunately, the special printing and mailing costs of this version have tripled over the years. Now that people are more electronic focused on where they get their information, we are wondering if this is still an important tool to offer.

Chair Elsea supports keeping it and suggested this could be a valuable tool for an aging population but didn't see a reason why it needs to be mailed to them. An alternative may be to

make them aware of the situation and let them know where they can pick up a copy. Not everyone uses METRO's website.

Ms. Taylor added that she thinks of the Headways as being an outreach to the public who may be less familiar with the buses or as a way for people who are familiar with the buses to plan a first trip with someone.

Chair Elsea suggested reaching out to places like La Posada Retirement Community that has a high concentration of seniors but also has a population that does use the bus system.

Mr. Pisano suggested it can be hard to find stuff at the METRO website on his phone (everything is small and hard to read). Is there any plan for METRO to provide an app to find locations and schedules? Director Ackemann said that is an IT question to address on mobile optimization.

9. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO CEO

None.

10. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

None.

11. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA

- Discuss use of alternative fuels for buses
- AVL update
- Mobile optimization app for website
- Preliminary budget
- Update on Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis
- Update on Enterprise Technology Center
- Update on legislation regarding fare structures
- Update on Capitola Mall

12. DISTRIBUTION OF VOUCHERS

Vouchers distributed by Donna Bauer.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bauer
Administrative Specialist