



**SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT (METRO)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES*
DECEMBER 20, 2024 – 9:00 AM**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) convened on Friday, December 20, 2024, as a hybrid meeting.

The Board Meeting agenda packet can be found online at www.SCMTD.com. *Minutes are “summary” minutes, not verbatim minutes. Audio recordings of Board meeting open sessions are available to the public upon request.

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1 CALLED TO ORDER at 9:02 AM by Board Chair Brown.

2 SAFETY DEBRIEF

Gregory Strecker, Safety, Security & Risk Management Director, provided a debriefing on safety, emphasizing METRO’s response to a fire, earthquake and/or medical emergency, evacuation routes, and an active shooter situation.

3 ROLL CALL

The following Directors were **present**, representing a quorum:

Director Kristen Brown	City of Capitola
Director Rebecca Downing	County of Santa Cruz
Director Jimmy Dutra <i>AR 9:44 AM</i>	City of Watsonville
Director Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson	City of Santa Cruz
Director Manu Koenig	County of Santa Cruz
Director Donna Lind	City of Scotts Valley
Director Bruce McPherson	County of Santa Cruz
Director Scott Newsome	City of Santa Cruz
Director Larry Pageler	County of Santa Cruz
Director Quiroz-Carter	City of Watsonville
Director Mike Rotkin	County of Santa Cruz
Ex-Officio Director Alta Northcutt	Cabrillo College
Ex-Officio Director Edward Reiskin <i>AR 9:23 AM</i>	UC Santa Cruz
Corey Aldridge	CEO/General Manager
Nicole Witt	General Counsel

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

4.1 Today’s meeting is being broadcast by Community Television of Santa Cruz County.

4.2 Maria Avila of Language Line Services provided Spanish interpretation services.

5 BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMENTS

Hearing none, Board Chair Brown moved to the next agenda item.

6 ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, spoke to his written communications in the agenda packet and expressed concern about the cost of building the Coastal Trail - Segment 7B.

Eduardo Montesino, Temporary Reimagine METRO Recruitment and Training Coordinator, provided a recruiting/training update to the Board and thanked staff for their contributions to this effort.

Veronica Velazquez, Lead Internal Organizer with SEIU, Local 521, introduced herself to the Board. She mentioned that SEIU previously raised concerns about the management salary study and requested the Board to allow further discussions with management regarding the report's methodology used and the potential impacts to the budget.

Lola Quiroga, METRO Planning Intern, and several riders expressed concerns on cancelling the winter service and reverting to the fall schedule. They requested METRO to issue a public statement regarding this issue.

Kevin Norton, a member of the public, stated he sent three emails to METRO and has not received any response. Staff reached out to get more information.

Vincent Siu, a member of the public, commented that the wrapped buses do not allow riders to enjoy the views and hoped there could be a different way to promote One Ride at a Time.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Brown moved to the next agenda item.

7 LABOR ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATIONS

Nate Abrego, SMART Vice Chairperson, Local 23, stated that the union has been communicating with Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager, about the recent route changes and they are collaborating to find solutions. Mr. Abrego also mentioned that SMART is excited to bring back the senior luncheon and a tentative date has been set for June 29, 2025.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Brown moved to the next agenda item.

8 ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION TO SUPPORT EXISTING AGENDA ITEMS

Board Chair Brown announced additional communications were sent to the Board on December 19, 2024 and will be added to the agenda packet.

CONSENT AGENDA

All items appearing on the Consent Agenda are recommended actions which are considered to be routine and will be acted upon as one motion. All items removed will be considered later in the agenda. The Board Chair will allow public input prior to the approval of the Consent Agenda items.

9.1 ACCEPT AND FILE: PRELIMINARY APPROVED CHECK JOURNAL DETAIL FOR THE MONTHS OF OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2024
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

9.2 ACCEPT AND FILE MINUTES OF:
A. OCTOBER 25, 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING
B. NOVEMBER 8, 2024 PERSONNEL/HR STANDING COMMITTEE
Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager

- 9.3 APPROVE: RECOMMENDED ACTION ON TORT CLAIMS
Gregory Strecker, Safety, Security and Risk Management Director
- 9.4 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR-TO-DATE MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF NOVEMBER 30, 2024
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.5 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION APPROVING THE FY25 REVISED CAPITAL BUDGET/PORTFOLIO
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.6 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR-TO-DATE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) REPORT FOR QUARTER ONE AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2024
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.7 ACCEPT AND FILE: END OF YEAR GRANTS MANAGEMENT REPORT
Derek Toups, Planning and Innovation Deputy Director
- 9.8 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE METRO PARACRUZ OPERATIONS STATUS REPORT FOR JULY, AUGUST, AND SEPTEMBER 2024
Rina Solorio, Assistant Operations Manager, Paratransit Division
- 9.9 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE METRO SYSTEM RIDERSHIP REPORTS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF FY25
John Urgo, Chief Planning and Innovation Officer
- 9.10 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH THE 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING SCHEDULE
Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager
- 9.11 CONSIDERATION OF AUTHORIZING FUNDING FOR THREE (3) ADDITIONAL MECHANICS I-II IN THE MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT
Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer

Ex-Officio Director Reiskin requested Item 9.6 be pulled for further discussion.

Ms. Quiroga referred to Item 9.10 and mentioned that by holding the meetings elsewhere, it would allow Board Members to take transit to the meetings that are held within their jurisdictions. Director Kalantari-Johnson pulled the item for further discussion.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Brown called for a voice vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ITEMS 9.6 AND 9.10.

MOTION: DIRECTOR PAGELER

SECOND: DIRECTOR ROTKIN

MOTION PASSED WITH 10 AYES (Directors Brown, Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Lind, McPherson, Newsome, Pageler, and Rotkin). Director Quiroz-Carter was absent.

REGULAR AGENDA

Items 9.6 and 9.10 previously pulled from the Consent Agenda.

- 9.6 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR-TO-DATE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) REPORT FOR QUARTER ONE AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2024**

Ex-Officio Director Reiskin requested additional information on Slides 13, 18, 22, and 23 in the agenda packet.

Discussion followed on:

- Route 16 – Why is it being suspended when it appears to be the highest performing route? Staff responded that they'd follow up on how this determination was made with the Chief Planning and Innovation Officer.
- Why is there a precipitous drop in the mean miles between chargeable road calls – fixed route compared to previous years? Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer, reminded the Board Members that METRO's fleet is very old. Consequently, METRO can no longer get parts for many vehicles; METRO's Mechanics either have to manufacture them or send the parts out to be fixed.
- When do we expect the new buses to arrive? CEO Aldridge responded that METRO has received three buses and is waiting for the fueling infrastructure to be put in place. It will probably be 4-5 months before placing them in service.
- Cancelled trips – Why is that increasing? Kristina Mihaylova, Finance Deputy Director, said one reason is due to the mechanical problems. COO Ross explained that when service was added with Reimagine METRO, it also increased the service miles. This means a bus needs preventive maintenance sooner and is one of the reasons METRO is requesting additional Mechanics to help ease this strain.
- Pass-Ups – Why are there so many UCSC pass-ups when the articulated buses increased capacity by 60%? COO Ross responded that METRO has a higher incidence of the articulated buses having mechanical issues. The larger capacity that METRO counts on for the UCSC routes isn't there.

Director Reiskin said it may be helpful to get fleet updates on the retirement schedule of these older buses. Board Chair Brown requested that item be added to the January agenda.

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Brown asked for a voice vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE ITEM 9.6 AS PRESENTED.

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN

SECOND: DIRECTOR PAGELER

MOTION PASSED WITH 10 AYES (Directors Brown, Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Lind, McPherson, Newsome, Pageler, and Rotkin). Director Quiroz-Carter was absent.

9.10 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH THE 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING SCHEDULE

Director Kalantari-Johnson requested the CEO to speak to this item. CEO Aldridge said the Santa Cruz Conference Room was modified to accommodate hybrid meetings and works with Community TV's equipment so that the meetings can be broadcast. It was stated there is a lack of public transit to the Admin Office and that is something that can be resolved but is willing to explore other location options. Board Members discussed the pros and cons of changing the venues within the county and proposed the following motion.

Members of the public requested that the meeting schedule be better publicized using social media and Board Members ride the bus within their jurisdictions to attend these meetings. Ryan Meckel, a member of the public, requested a meeting be held on the UCSC campus but Director Rotkin commented that UCSC does not have a place to accommodate the IT component of running these meetings.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Brown asked for a voice vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING SCHEDULE AND DIRECT STAFF TO RETURN AT THE FEBRUARY 28, 2025 MEETING WITH OPTIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE MEETING LOCATIONS.

MOTION: DIRECTOR KOENIG SECOND: DIRECTOR KALANTARI-JOHNSON

MOTION PASSED WITH 10 AYES (Directors Brown, Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Lind, McPherson, Newsome, Pageler, and Rotkin). Director Quiroz-Carter was absent.

10 PRESENTATION OF EMPLOYEE LONGEVITY AWARDS FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER:

(10 YEARS) LUIS ABUNDEZ CAMACHO, CUSTODIAL SUPERVISOR

(25 YEARS) JAIME HERNANDEZ, MECHANIC III

(25 YEARS) MARC KROVETZ, BUS OPERATOR

(25 YEARS) URIEL MENDOZA, BUS OPERATOR*

*Signifies those present to receive their certificates in person.

Board Chair Brown thanked all recipients for their contributions to METRO.

Mr. Mendoza thanked the Board for the opportunity to work at METRO.

Mr. Abrego and members of the public expressed gratitude to Mr. Mendoza.

**11 RETIREE RESOLUTIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR:
ESMERALDA ARIAS, CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE
EDDIE BENSON, MAINTENANCE MANAGER
FRANCISCO CALDERON, BUS OPERATOR**

Board Chair Brown congratulated all recipients on their retirement and thanked them for their years of service at METRO.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE RETIREE RESOLUTIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR ESMERALDA ARIAS, EDDIE BENSON, AND FRANCISCO CALDERON

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN SECOND: DIRECTOR PAGELER

MOTION PASSED WITH 10 AYES (Directors Brown, Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Lind, McPherson, Newsome, Pageler, and Rotkin). Director Quiroz-Carter was absent.

12 METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) SEMI-ANNUAL ORAL UPDATE

Veronica Elsea, MAC Chair, acknowledged the MAC Members and thanked them for their participation in the committee meetings. She provided a recap of items MAC has been working on for the past six months and provided the 2025 meeting schedule. MAC will continue to provide the METRO Board with semi-annual updates and it looks forward to helping METRO be a better transit system.

The Board Members thanked Ms. Elsea for her service.

There were no public comments.

Director Pageler left the meeting at 10:37 AM.

13 UPDATE PROVIDED BY SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (SCCRTC) ON ZERO EMISSION PASSENGER RAIL AND TRAIL PROJECT (ZEPRT)

Sarah Christensen, Executive Director, SCCRTC, spoke to her presentation and provided a project overview and milestones, including public engagement, focus areas for alignments, potential station locations, station design and amenities, and next steps.

Board Members raised the following concerns:

- Funding - grants received and new funding opportunities as well as preserving SB125
- Mitigating impacts to the Beach Street/Boardwalk area
- High-density housing around stations
- Extending to the west side of Santa Cruz as an option
- Alternatives to a train passing through the downtown Santa Cruz area
- Aligning this system to the state rail network in Pajaro
- Integrating the METRO bus system into this plan
- Connectivity for bicyclists, pedestrians, and auto users
- Station amenities
- First/Last mile accessibility
- Ridership modeling and considering METRO's current ridership
- Stakeholder meetings held regularly
- Proposed size of the stations
- Location differentiations
- Environmental issues
- Zero emissions – battery operated or hydrogen

Ms. Christensen and Mark McLaren, Sr. Vice President at HDR Inc. addressed all concerns.

Ben Finke, Bus Operator, mentioned the importance of interorganizational planning and coordination of schedules.

Mr. Peoples mentioned the importance of preserving the 2016 Measure D funding and how it is distributed.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Brown moved to the next item.

14 CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS

Director Kalantari-Johnson read each resolution of appreciation to Board Chair Brown and Director McPherson, expressing both have given so much to our community and METRO, and presented them with plaques. Additional Board Members thanked each for their astuteness to details, thoughtfulness, wisdom, knowledge of policies, leadership, being mentors, and wished them the best in their next endeavors.

Board Chair Brown and Director McPherson expressed their appreciation for the kind words shared and having the opportunity to serve on METRO's Board.

Director Dutra left the meeting at 11:49 AM.

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Brown asked for a voice vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS KRISTEN BROWN AND BRUCE MCPHERSON

MOTION: DIRECTOR KALANTARI-JOHNSON SECOND: DIRECTOR NEWSOME

MOTION PASSED WITH 8 AYES (Directors Brown, Downing, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Lind, McPherson, Newsome, and Rotkin). Directors Dutra, Pageler, and Quiroz-Carter were absent.

Director Pageler returned to the meeting at 11:51 AM.

15 CEO ORAL REPORT

Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager, spoke to the following items:

- Route 16 – referred to the KPI question asked earlier and said the Route 16 has the higher ridership because it's scheduled to class times and it's an overlay on top of Routes 18 and 19. It was determined that Routes 18 and 19 can still meet the demand. Director Rotkin added that the pass-ups will be exacerbated without Route 16. CEO Aldridge responded that as soon as METRO can add more articulated buses on the routes, it will do so.
- Pacific Station North – METRO anticipates a mid-2026 reopening. The tarmac will include 18 bus bays, real-time passenger information, a new customer lobby area, Bus Operator breakroom and a solar canopy. METRO is working with the City of Santa Cruz to potentially extend the transit only lanes on Front Street from the transit center to Water Street. In the meantime, METRO is working to improve operations and customer experience at the temporary terminal. Facilities recently fabricated and installed an additional bus shelter in Area 3 and is planning to install a fourth shelter in Area 1.
- METRO also has a project in Planning to improve wayfinding.
- METRO is exploring the ability to lease additional space for the Customer Service and Bus Operator facilities.
- Winter Bid – Traditionally, every quarter METRO does a service update and puts out a new Headways. Unfortunately, METRO didn't put a bus replacement program in place and now it is starting to see the ramifications of having an aged fleet. It is experiencing more breakdowns. As METRO has added more service under Reimagine METRO, it is putting more miles on the buses and the frequency of preventive maintenance has increased considerably. It has been battling this dead list (buses that can't be in service) for the better part of three plus years. Typically, with an agency of this size, it should be replacing on average 5-10 buses a year to keep the fleet in a relatively newer state. Instead, METRO is replacing half of its fleet at once with brand new technology. With the existing service it was operating in the fall, it was cutting routes because of fleet availability. Staff is making efforts to right size our service with the available fleet. Unfortunately, because this was a last-minute decision to revert back to the fall schedule, the new Headways appeared on the website for 24 hours before being pulled. The hard copies of the new Headways were never released. The fact that so many people commented today with so much

information that was never released to the public makes me think METRO has internal people sharing information beyond what they should have been sharing. I am very appreciative of SMART being willing to work with us on this because it impacted them greatly. CEO Aldridge apologized to the Board and METRO employees that he had to make these changes but felt it was necessary to do so for the sake of the public and METRO.

Board Members requested a formal public apology in various forums. CEO Aldridge said a statement would be crafted and distributed by the end of the day.

Other concerns raised by Board Members:

- Real-Time Information for passengers – CEO Aldridge said METRO has been working on its trip disruption process—being able to notify the public of changes through the real-time app. The app is 95% accurate and METRO is trying to resolve the other 5% with Clever Devices. Isaac Holly, IT and ITS Director, said the system is designed around paths of travel so if METRO deviates from those paths of travel without manual intervention, it will cause problems. METRO is working to hire more Supervisors to enter those manual disruption entries.

Mr. Finke asked if METRO should keep the old buses running as METRO receives the new buses given the discrepancy between operators and available buses? CEO Aldridge said METRO will keep as many buses operating as it can, but part of the grant funding process requires us to identify the buses that are going to be replaced and then drill through the engine block so that they can't be used again.

Mr. Finke mentioned that most passengers use Google Maps for route information instead of the METRO app. He suggested that METRO inform riders of its app so that they are better informed.

Rohan Tulle mentioned that a lot of people anticipate when the new Headways is going to be released on the website and several people downloaded it.

Members of the public thanked the CEO for saying he'd draft a statement on this.

Director Rotkin thanked all that attended the meeting to express what they were experiencing.

Hearing nothing further, the Board Chair moved to the next agenda item.

RECESSED TO CLOSED SESSION AT 12:25 PM

Director McPherson left the meeting at 12:27 PM.

16 CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – LIABILITY CLAIMS (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54961)

CLAIMANTS: JUNG, CORTES, CONNECT INSURANCE A/S/O MILLAN, LIBERTY MUTUAL A/S/O TOLLIK, ABRAMS, TICO CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, BOLLON, TOBAR, MILLER, CARBONE

RECONVENED TO OPEN SESSION AT 12:36 PM

17 REPORT OF CLOSED SESSION

Nicole Witt, General Counsel, announced there was no reportable action.

There were no public comments.

18 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

Board Chair Brown announced the next regular Board meeting will be held on Friday, January 24, 2025, at 9:00 AM at the METRO Admin Office, 110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz, CA.

19 ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Brown adjourned the meeting at 12:38 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna Bauer
Sr. Executive Assistant