



**SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT (METRO)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES*
JANUARY 24, 2025 – 9:00 AM**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) convened on Friday, January 24, 2025, 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 9:04 AM by Vice Chair Downing.

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, and evacuation routes.

3 ACKNOWLEDGE APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS

Vice Chair Downing acknowledged the appointment of Directors Leonor and Orbach and the reappointment of Director Dutra, Ex-Officio Directors Northcutt and Reiskin to the METRO Board of Directors.

4 ROLL CALL

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

Director Rebecca Downing

Director Jimmy Dutra

Director Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson

Director Manu Koenig

Director Donna Lind

Director Fabian Leonor

Director Scott Newsome

Director Melinda Orbach

Director Quiroz-Carter

Director Mike Rotkin

Vacant

Ex-Officio Director Alta Northcutt

Ex-Officio Director Edward Reiskin

Corey Aldridge

Julie Sherman

County of Santa Cruz

City of Watsonville

City of Santa Cruz

County of Santa Cruz

City of Scotts Valley

County of Santa Cruz

City of Santa Cruz

City of Capitola

City of Watsonville

County of Santa Cruz

County of Santa Cruz

Cabrillo College

UC Santa Cruz

CEO/General Manager

General Counsel

5 ANNOUNCEMENTS

5.1 Today’s meeting was broadcast by Community Television of Santa Cruz County.

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

6 NOMINATE BOARD OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Vice Chair Downing introduced her 2025 slate of Officers, Standing Committee Members, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) Members, and Santa Cruz Civic Improvement Corporation (SCCIC) Members. She then welcomed input from the other Board Members. Director Leonor requested to be added to the slate for the Finance, Budget and Audit Standing Committee.

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, spoke to his letter addressed to the SCCRTC Executive Director and suggested the proposed slate for representation on the SCCRTC be changed to include different representation.

Directors Rotkin and Koenig commented that Mr. People's representation of the former SCCRTC Executive Director is inaccurate. Director Koenig added that the SCCRTC is experiencing significant turnover this year and having some consistency in METRO's representation will be a benefit to both agencies.

Ex-Officio Director Northcutt asked why ex-officios cannot serve on METRO's standing committees. Julie Sherman, General Counsel, responded that since ex-officios are not voting members on METRO's Board, they could not be voting members on the committees. However, she added that Ex-Officio Director Northcutt is welcome to participate in those meetings as a member of the public.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE NOMINATION SLATE PUT FORTH WITH THE ADDITION OF DIRECTOR LEONOR TO THE FINANCE, BUDGET AND AUDIT STANDING COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE FEBRUARY 28, 2025 BOARD MEETING AND ALLOW ADDITIONAL SLATES TO BE CONSIDERED AT THAT MEETING

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN SECOND: DIRECTOR KOENIG

MOTION PASSED WITH 6 AYES (Directors Downing, Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Newsome, and Rotkin). Directors Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Orbach, and Quiroz-Carter were absent. There were no abstentions.

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

7 BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMENTS

Ex-Officio Director Northcutt reminded the Board that Cabrillo College's contract is set to expire in 2025. The students will have elections, and a majority is needed to extend the contract with METRO. She is giving METRO a heads up so that a marketing campaign can be initiated by METRO if desired. She emphasized that with Cabrillo's housing project moving forward, METRO's presence on campus is important.

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

8 ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, spoke to his written communication regarding the Coastal Trail. He remarked that the construction of Segment 7 of the Coastal Trail is behind schedule and millions of dollars over budget. He encouraged METRO's representation on the SCCRTC to help open up the corridor now.

Portia, a member of the public, spoke to her experience renewing her paratransit eligibility through the ADAride app and suggested training staff to help with questions on the process. Regarding SCCRTC, she encouraged members of the Board and public to attend those meetings to get a better understanding of what is and isn't being accomplished and the reasoning behind those decisions. Director Leonor commented on ADAride and found it was difficult for some of the disabled community to access it. He also recommended that METRO have a trained staff member to address those needs and be available to help with the process.

David Van Brink, a member of the public, thanked METRO for its great service and the new buses. He suggested fixing the headways and tracking apps to be more accurate and requested a bus shelter be installed at the Diridon Station.

Elizabeth Madrigal, a member of the public, informed the Board of recent cancellations on the 90X and stated that taking the alternative routes 1 or 2 takes longer to get to Watsonville. She recommended cancellations be noted on the real-time tracking app so riders can adjust their schedules accordingly.

Tim, a member of the public, suggested the buses that go through Bay Village in Watsonville are empty and speeding through that neighborhood. He suggested cutting service there, rerouting the buses, or using smaller buses. John Urgo, Chief Planning and Innovation Officer, responded that METRO did increase service on Route 79 that serves that area, and ridership has increased 69% over 2024. Because of this increase, METRO cannot run a smaller bus. Director Rotkin added that a bus runs a complete route, and portions of the route won't have many people on it. That doesn't make it useless. METRO has looked at having different sized buses and the cost of having the parts in inventory to service those vehicles makes it infeasible. Director Leonor added that he rides the bus and sees the increase in ridership. Director Rotkin suggested METRO look into the speed issue mentioned.

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

9 LABOR ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATIONS

Hearing none, Vice Chair Downing moved to the next agenda item.

10 ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION TO SUPPORT EXISTING AGENDA ITEMS

Vice Chair Downing announced additional communications were sent to the Board on January 23, 2025 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.

11.1 ACCEPT AND FILE: PRELIMINARY APPROVED CHECK AND ACH JOURNAL
DETAIL FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2024
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

11.2 ACCEPT AND FILE MINUTES OF:
A. OCTOBER 16, 2024 METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
B. DECEMBER 20, 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING
Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager

- 11.3 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR-TO-DATE MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2024
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 11.4 ACCEPT AND FILE: ACCEPTANCE OF AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS WITH INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Vice Chair Downing called for a voice vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN SECOND: DIRECTOR LIND

MOTION PASSED WITH 6 AYES (Directors Downing, Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Newsome, and Rotkin). Directors Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Orbach and Quiroz-Carter were absent. There were no abstentions.

REGULAR AGENDA

- 12 PRESENTATION OF EMPLOYEE LONGEVITY AWARDS FOR JANUARY:**
(10 YEARS) MONIK DELFIN, HR DEPUTY DIRECTOR*
(10 YEARS) GUSTAVO MAGANA, BUS OPERATOR
(10 YEARS) DAVID MEDINA, BUS OPERATOR*
(10 YEARS) EDDIE TORRES MORENO, BUS OPERATOR*
(25 YEARS) VICKIE SANCHEZ, SR. CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE*
*Signifies those present to receive their certificates in person.

Vice Chair Downing thanked all recipients for their contributions to METRO.

Monik Delfin, HR Deputy Director, expressed that she is grateful that she works with amazing people throughout METRO. She believes METRO is investing in its employees and is creating a culture that values collaboration, respect and excellence so great things can be achieved.

Dawn Crummié, Chief HR Officer, congratulated Ms. Delfin on her 10-year anniversary. Ms. Delfin is a tremendous help to me, our department and all METRO employees. I truly appreciate her and look forward to another 10 years of working with her.

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

- 13 RETIREE RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FOR SERGIO LONA-GONZALEZ**
Vice Chair Downing congratulated Mr. Lona-Gonzalez on his retirement and thanked him for his years of service at METRO.

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Vice Chair Downing called for a voice vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE RETIREE RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FOR SERGIO LONA-GONZALEZ

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN SECOND: DIRECTOR NEWSOME

MOTION PASSED WITH 6 AYES (Directors Downing, Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Newsome, and Rotkin). Directors Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Orbach and Quiroz-Carter were absent. There were no abstentions.

14 RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FOR OUTGOING BOARD MEMBER

Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager, read the resolution of appreciation for Director Pageler and thanked him for his years of service on the METRO Board. Vice Chair Downing added her personal thanks and presented Director Pageler with a plaque.

Additional Board Members thanked him for his in-depth knowledge and experience of ridership and the routes, for being a sounding board and providing advice on all the things METRO is working on, being a great example of how to serve on METRO's Board and being generous with his time.

Director Pageler commented that he has been working in transportation since 1984. He managed the contract between UCSC and METRO and was a rider for 7 years before joining the Board. He thanked the Board Members, Legal Counsel, Interim CEO's Dawn Crummié and Daniel Zaragoza, staff, and the Bus Operators who have been terrific.

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Vice Chair Downing asked for a voice vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FOR OUTGOING BOARD MEMBER LARRY PAGELER

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN SECOND: DIRECTOR LIND

MOTION PASSED WITH 6 AYES (Directors Downing, Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Newsome, and Rotkin). Directors Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Orbach and Quiroz-Carter were absent. There were no abstentions.

15 UPDATE ON RETIREMENT SCHEDULE OF FLEET BUSES

Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer, spoke to this item and emphasized the FTA (Federal Transit Administration) requires METRO to have its buses in useful service for 14 years. METRO's buses are older than that. COO Ross addressed the challenges facing Fleet, Maintenance and the Parts Departments—sourcing parts for the older vehicles, lack of OEM (original equipment manufacturer) technology training, increased mileage incurring additional maintenance, and a shortage of bus bays. The good news is that METRO has hired more Mechanics and it has added graveyard and swing shifts. METRO is in the process of replacing the batteries on its hybrid vehicles, has increased the volume of parts in the warehouse, and is looking for training opportunities. METRO is prioritizing getting the Orange County Transportation Authority buses purchased into service to replace the older vehicles.

Director Rotkin remarked that he is impressed, given the supply chain problems with parts, that METRO's Mechanics manufacture parts for the older buses because the parts are no longer available. COO Ross commended the Fleet and Maintenance team for being creative, smart, and working hard on solutions to get the buses back in service.

Director Lind added that 7 buses are over 900K miles and with 3 over a million miles, those 10 new buses are needed now. COO Ross agreed but added that METRO will try to get as much as possible out of the older buses before retiring them.

Director Leonor commented that there have been a lot of Bus Operators hired recently and inquired what happens when they don't have a bus to drive? COO Ross responded that they are given other assignments, and they are allowed to do additional training relating to bus operations. Sometimes we split assignments, so everyone gets a piece of work. We also have added more vacation time to allow time off and to help with the morale.

Director Rotkin added that he appreciated reading the report and getting information on how METRO is handling the problem and was happy to hear the District is on top of the situation.

There were no public comments.

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

16 CEO ORAL REPORT

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

- December 5th – METRO's Fleet, Operations, and Human Resources passed the annual CHP inspection.
- Since December 12th, METRO has hired one Paratransit Operator, had five promotions (two Transit Supervisors, one Fleet Maintenance Supervisor, one Safety & Training Program Specialist I, and one Mechanic III) and one career change (Sr. Financial Analyst).
- METRO successfully launched "Your Voice Matters" and is receiving positive suggestions on enhancing service, improving efficiency, and refining processes.
- METRO is installing five bus shelters in Watsonville.
- January 16th - presented an update on METRO's services to the Capitola/Aptos Rotary Club.
- Issued a public apology letter on the change to Winter service and provided interviews with Lookout and the Sentinel to provide details and clarification on future steps.
- The Board requested rotating our meetings and we will have it finalized for the February Board meeting. We are also posting on social media to promote the Board meetings.
- February 6th - I will be attending the Senate Budget Committee Hearings in Sacramento to provide an update on METRO's SB 125 fund implementation, reporting, task force involvement, and fiscal outlook.
- February 8th - METRO will be participating in the Monarch Migration Festival at Natural Bridges and will showcase its One Ride at a Time monarch bus.

- METRO has won two first place awards in the 2025 APTA AdWheel Awards competition for two categories—One Ride at a Time Print Media and One Ride at a Time Comprehensive Campaign. Awards will be presented in February at the APTA Marketing, Communications, and Customer Experience Workshop. This will make METRO eligible to win the APTA Grand Prize Award at the APTA TRANSform Conference held in September 2025.
- Announced Isaac Holly's, IT and ITS Director, retirement on January 31st and praised him for his contributions to the agency and presented Mr. Holly with a plaque.

Director Rotkin thanked Corey for the public apology on the service changes. CEO Aldridge commented that last week staff participated in a dry run of upcoming service changes to understand the process and how it affects all departments.

Director Lind thanked Mr. Holly for his years of service and appreciated his support and responsiveness.

Director Downing thanked Corey for all of the articles he emailed to Board members and for engaging the media.

Director Rotkin asked staff if METRO has an extra shelter that can be installed at the Diridon Station. John Urgo, Chief Planning and Innovation Director, responded that there is a shelter there but to the side of the stop. CEO Aldridge added with that area being redeveloped, there may be an opportunity to upgrade. COO Ross said she'd reach out to VTA's (Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority) COO.

Director Leonor expressed appreciation for the new shelter on Freedom Boulevard and another one being installed on Main Street in Watsonville. He suggested METRO post a telephone number at the shelters so customers can report any issues at the shelters. Michael Bois, Communications and Marketing Manager, said the Customer Service telephone number is posted at every bus stop so riders can call in and report graffiti, garbage, etc. Danielle Glagola, Chief Communications and Marketing Officer, added that any shelters funded by the Clean California Local Grant Program have fliers posted with a QR code to METRO's website for more information. Brandon Freeman, Assistant Operations Manager – Fixed Route, commented that customers also have the ability to report issues through a service request form at METRO's website.

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

17 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

Vice Chair Downing announced the next regular Board meeting will be on Friday, February 28, 2025 at 9:00 AM at the METRO Admin Office, 110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz, CA.

18 ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Downing adjourned the meeting at 10:15 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna Bauer
Sr. Executive Assistant