



**SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT (METRO)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES*
FEBRUARY 23, 2024 – 9:00 AM**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) convened on Friday, February 23, 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 9:00 AM by Board Chair Kalantari-Johnson.

2 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	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	UC Santa Cruz
Daniel Zaragoza	Interim CEO/GM
Julie Sherman	General Counsel

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

Hector Guzman, Language Line Services, provided Spanish language interpretation services.

4 APPROVE: BOARD OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Board Chair Kalantari-Johnson spoke to the slate presented in the agenda packet and opened the dialogue to the other Board Members and public. No additional slates were presented.

There were no public comments.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE ENTIRE SLATE AS PRESENTED

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN

SECOND: DIRECTOR KOENIG

MOTION PASSED WITH 9 AYES (Directors Brown, Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Lind, Newsome, Pageler and Rotkin). Directors McPherson and Quiroz-Carter were absent.

Director Kalantari-Johnson welcomed Director Brown as the new Board Chair.

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

5 BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMENTS

Board Chair Brown thanked Director Kalantari-Johnson for leading the Board of Directors this past year.

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

6 ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Chair Brown announced there was one additional written communication received, which will be added to the agenda packet with the staff's response.

Dawn Crummié, Human Resources Director, commented that her department is excited about Reimagine METRO Phase 1 and the anticipated Phase 2. She introduced her staff: Ann Farillas and Sophie Farspour, both HR Analysts I, who work together to process all new hires; Daniela Fuentes, HR Analyst I – Benefits, who meets with each new hire and reviews their benefits; and Monik Delfin, HR Deputy Director, who provides guidance and backup to the team. Absent today is Rickie-Ann Kegley, Paralegal II, who handles the DOT (Department of Transportation) drug and alcohol training and reviews METRO's policies with the new hires; and Manasi Sabnis, HR Analyst II, who performs the data entry for payroll. All play an important role for the agency. Ms. Crummié praised them for their hard work in processing over 100 new hires in the last three months.

Eduardo Montesino, Temporary Reimagine METRO Recruitment and Training Coordinator, thanked Ms. Crummié and her department for their support in doing an exceptional job. Ms. Crummié thanked Mr. Montesino and said they had worked well together and created a good collaboration with SEIU and SMART.

Brett Garrett, member of the public, expressed appreciation for METRO's recent service improvements of frequency and reliability. He provided an update on personal rapid transit, specifically through Glydways, as a possible solution for transportation issues in Santa Cruz County. He mentioned Glydways will be presenting to the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) on March 7, 2024. He encouraged the Board Members to attend this meeting and learn more about this technology.

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

7 LABOR ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATIONS

Brandon Freeman, SMART General Chairperson, Local 0023, welcomed Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer, to introduce METRO's newest Bus Operators,

bringing METRO's total Bus Operators to 196. COO Ross greeted and thanked them for joining METRO. She mentioned that she started out as a Bus Operator and knows this is a noble, wonderful profession. She thanked her training department that works extensively with the new hires to get them through the training process and licensed.

Mr. Freeman thanked all the departments that came together to transition from Pacific Station to the River Front Transit Center, specifically Facilities, IT, Customer Service, and the managerial team.

Jordan Vascones, SEIU Local 521, SEA President, thanked the administrative staff, specifically Planning, Facilities, and HR, who have worked hard to make this transition happen. Finance is working on the ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) transition with IT's help. Everyone is coming together to achieve these goals. He also mentioned that SEIU members asked him to provide comments to the Board regarding hiring practices, particularly with management staff and even potentially the CEO. SEIU is asking the Board to follow a very ethical and rigid standard on hiring.

Ron Bushnell, SEIU Local 521, PSA President, congratulated Board Chair Brown on her new role and Director Kalantari-Johnson for her past leadership. He advocated for Item 9.9 on the Consent Agenda. With all the new Bus Operators coming online, it is crucial that METRO increase its Transit Supervisors.

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

8 ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION TO SUPPORT EXISTING AGENDA ITEMS

Donna Bauer, Executive Assistant, mentioned that the presentation for Item 15 was sent to all Board Members on February 22, 2024 to preview and will be added to the agenda packet.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 9.1 ACCEPT AND FILE: PRELIMINARY APPROVED CHECK JOURNAL DETAIL FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2024
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.2 ACCEPT AND FILE MINUTES OF:
 - A. JANUARY 26, 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
 - B. FEBRUARY 9, 2024 PERSONNEL/HR STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGDaniel Zaragoza, Interim CEO/General Manager
- 9.3 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR TO DATE MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF JANUARY 31, 2024
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.4 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR TO DATE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) REPORT FOR 2ND QUARTER FY23 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2023
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

- 9.5 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE METRO PARACRUZ OPERATIONS STATUS REPORT FOR OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, AND DECEMBER 2023
Daniel Zaragoza, Interim CEO/GM, and Operations Deputy Director
- 9.6 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE METRO SYSTEM RIDERSHIP REPORTS FOR THE SECOND QUARTER OF FY24
John Urgo, Planning and Development Director
- 9.7 APPROVE: RECOMMENDED ACTION ON TORT CLAIMS
Gregory Strecker, Safety, Security & Risk Management Director
- 9.8 APPROVE: AUTHORIZE FUNDING OF SPECIAL PROJECTS MANAGER IN THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.9 APPROVE: AUTHORIZATION AND FUNDING OF UP TO A MAXIMUM OF TWENTY-THREE (23) TRANSIT SUPERVISORS
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.10 APPROVE: AUTHORIZE THE INTERIM CEO/GENERAL MANAGER TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED BUS OPERATORS
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.11 CONSIDERATION OF DECLARING VEHICLES AND/OR EQUIPMENT AS EXCESS FOR PURPOSES OF DISPOSAL OR AUCTION
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.12 CONTRACT FOR TRANSIT SERVICES WITH CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION FOR SERVICE TO BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK DURING SPRING QUARTER
John Urgo, Planning and Development Director

There were no public comments.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED

MOTION: DIRECTOR LIND

SECOND: DIRECTOR ROTKIN

MOTION PASSED WITH 9 AYES (Directors Brown, Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Lind, Newsome, Pageler, and Rotkin). Directors McPherson and Quiroz-Carter were absent.

REGULAR AGENDA

- 10 PRESENTATION OF EMPLOYEE LONGEVITY AWARD FOR 20 YEARS: JULIO CURREA**

Board Chair Brown thanked Mr. Currea his 20 years of service to METRO.

- 11 RETIREE RESOLUTIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR ROBERT KRAUSE – PARATRANSIT OPERATOR AND MICHAEL TREE – CEO/GM**

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

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE RETIREE RESOLUTIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR ROBERT KRAUSE AND MICHAEL TREE

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN

SECOND: DIRECTOR PAGELER

MOTION PASSED WITH 9 AYES (Directors Brown, Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Lind, Newsome, Pageler, and Rotkin). Directors McPherson and Quiroz-Carter were absent.

12 PRESENTATION BY SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (SCCRTC) ON ZERO-EMISSION PASSENGER RAIL AND TRAIL PROJECT

Sarah Christensen, SCCRTC Senior Transportation Engineer, spoke to the item and provided an overview on the zero-emission passenger rail and trail project. She encouraged community members to attend the virtual open house at <http://www.zeprt.com> through March 4, 2024 to learn more about the project and provide input on the Project Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement.

Discussion ensued on defining what the alignment of the project entails, timelines, funding sources, a sales tax measure in 2028 to operate and maintain the system, working with the SCCRTC Climate Adaptation Vulnerability Assessment and Priorities Report (CAVA) project, and creating achievable benchmarks.

Michele Cramer, member of the public, related that she was in favor of the rail trail and believes a sales tax will probably pass. She raised concerns about the current segments of the rail trail that she and others use and some of the experiences encountered. She requested SCCRTC to consider those concerns as they move forward.

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

13 RATIFICATION OF INTERIM CEO/GM ENGAGEMENT LETTER

Julie Sherman, General Counsel, spoke to the item and summarized the key business terms. The Board appointed Daniel Zaragoza as Interim CEO/General Manager at its January 26, 2024 meeting and directed staff to negotiate an engagement letter. That has occurred and is before the Board of Directors for ratification.

There were no public comments.

ACTION: MOTION TO RATIFY THE INTERIM CEO/GM ENGAGEMENT LETTER

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN

SECOND: DIRECTOR PAGELER

MOTION PASSED WITH 9 AYES (Directors Brown, Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Lind, Newsome, Pageler, and Rotkin). Directors McPherson and Quiroz-Carter were absent.

14 ORAL UPDATE ON PACIFIC STATION NORTH PROJECT

John Urgo, Planning and Development Director, provided an update on the Pacific Station North Project. The Pacific Station booth and transit center closed on February 8, 2024, coinciding with the start of our free fare period that ends February 25, 2024.

Flyers and brochures (created in English and Spanish) and banners were posted in early February at Pacific Station with important dates notifying riders of the move to the River Front Transit Center. This information was also posted on the METRO website homepage and social media. METRO also has a transit center landing page on its website with all the information and maps. The City of Santa Cruz posted details on their website. Press releases were picked up by Lookout Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz Sentinel, and the Good Times.

Starting February 8th, our Bus Operator trainees served as ambassadors at both locations to help riders with the transition. Customer Service reopened on February 12th at the River Front Transit Center.

Director Kalantari-Johnson noted there were previous discussions with the Downtown Association to increase the downtown ambassadors and have METRO contribute to that and asked if that is moving forward? Mr. Freeman reported that METRO continues to work on that. Director Kalantari-Johnson mentioned that investing in the downtown ambassadors has been received favorably by the retailers.

There were no public comments.

15 PRESENTATION ON REIMAGINE METRO PHASE II

John Urgo, Planning and Development Director, commented that METRO has done three hybrid outreach community meetings so far this week and will present at UCSC this afternoon. He also presented the materials to SCCRTC's Transportation Equity Workgroup. We want to present the analysis behind the network plan at this Board meeting and come back in March with any changes to the plan based on feedback we've received. We will present the final plan and do the public hearing for approval in March. He introduced Daniel Costantino, Principal Associate with Jarrett Walker & Associates, to speak to his slide presentation.

Mr. Costantino highlighted what has happened since late 2022 and went into detail on the service changes starting in March 2024 and the proposed service changes in June and September 2024. In the outreach meetings, high frequency remains the public's highest priority. He showed how access would improve throughout Santa Cruz County. He mentioned that the community can take a survey to provide feedback at <https://scmtd.com/reimaginemetro> through March 4, 2024 and requested the Board Members to share the link with their networks.

Discussion ensued on:

- Using the term "low-income people" and the federal definition of its use. Mr. Costantino explained that it is a federal civil rights law requirement that changes to service don't disproportionately impact people of color or low-income residents.
- Impacts to neighborhoods with the increased frequency and noise levels on Route 79. Mr. Urgo said he'd review the route.
- Placing a bus stop on College Road in Watsonville. Staff will investigate.

- Is anyone disadvantaged by METRO's choice to expand service and frequency? Mr. Urgo responded that the network has not shrunk, and no one is losing service. METRO is investing in areas where there is higher demand and where there is more potential for growth.
- Bus Operator time behind the wheel on some routes is very long. Mr. Urgo responded that by splitting the routes more in the middle of the district, we are evening that out on both sides and creating more even total run times between routes. Making that happen in Phase 2 is completely dependent on identifying a layover location at UCSC. We are having positive discussions with UCSC Transportation and Parking Services (TAPS) on where that location can be and getting that ready for September.
- Including holidays in providing service seven days a week.
- Infrequent service on some routes should have better shelters to improve the overall experience for riders. Mr. Urgo mentioned that twenty-three shelters throughout the district will be in place by the end of this year with additional ones being implemented within the next couple of years.
- Routing at Cabrillo College and the impacts of the current configuration on neighborhoods. Mr. Urgo explained the safety concerns in changing the configuration. However, in the plan we bring to the Board in March, Route 73 will extend to Capitola Mall and eliminate this issue.
- Hourly service in San Lorenzo Valley and the north end of Scotts Valley. Parents are expressing concern that the timing doesn't work with the school schedules. Mr. Urgo responded that METRO could potentially look to add more school term service in the San Lorenzo Valley.
- Having a stop at the summit of Hwy. 17. Mr. Urgo said that it has been evaluated in the past and is not feasible.
- Are the 45- and 60-minute trips times in the presentation the total trip length? Mr. Urgo confirmed that it includes the time you leave home to when you arrive at your destination.
- Making Route 55 in Aptos or Rio del Mar a two-way route instead of traveling south to La Selva Beach and then circling back to go north to Cabrillo. Mr. Urgo explained that some of the streets in these areas were not designed for two-way service and providing bi-directional service will mean losing frequency.
- Route 3 reliability challenges.
- Service to juvenile hall. Mr. Freeman responded that we had served it in the past but had less than one rider per hour. It was one of the first routes cut when we had to reduce service.

There were no public comments.

16 INTERIM CEO/GM ORAL REPORT

Daniel Zaragoza, Interim CEO/General Manager, reported:

- Danielle Glagola, Marketing and Communications Director, received the APTA (American Public Transportation Association) AdWheel Award for Youth Cruz Free – “Best Social Media to Increase Ridership.”

- METRO released a new One Ride At a Time bus wrap titled “Deep Sea” in partnership with MBARI (Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute) that showcases the animals that live in the depths of Monterey Bay.
- METRO promoted Kevin Montes-Morales and Mark Vasquez from Paratransit to Fixed Route. We have had 23 new hires since our January 26th meeting: 14 Bus Operators, 6 Paratransit Operators, 1 Dispatcher/Scheduler, 1 Full Stack Developer and 1 Mechanic.
- ERP System – Payroll is expected to go live March 14, 2024 and the first time METRO will do the full payroll in house. The County will no longer be doing it.
- All documents have been signed by the City and Eden Housing Authority for construction of Pacific Station North Project to proceed.

Director Pageler congratulated Ms. Glagola on the award received for METRO. Several Board Directors commented on the new bus wrap, and it was noted that these wraps are also being seen in Santa Clara County with our Hwy. 17 buses.

There were no public comments.

RECESSED TO CLOSED SESSION AT 10:33 AM

- 17 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE APPOINTMENT – CEO/GM POSITION (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54957); CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54957.6)**

RECONVENED TO OPEN SESSION AT 12:48 PM

- 18 REPORT OF CLOSED SESSION**

Julie Sherman, General Counsel, informed the attendees there was no reportable action.

- 19 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING**

Board Chair Brown announced the next regular Board meeting will be on Friday, March 22, 2024, at 9:00 AM at the METRO Admin Office, 110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz, CA.

- 20 ADJOURNMENT**

Board Chair Brown adjourned the meeting at 12:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bauer
Executive Assistant