



**SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT (METRO)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES*
FEBRUARY 28, 2025 – 9:00 AM**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) convened on Friday, February 28, 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 9:02 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 DIRECTOR

Vice Chair Downing acknowledged the appointments of Directors Martinez and Orbach and welcomed them to their first METRO Board meeting.

4 ROLL CALL

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

Director Rebecca Downing	County of Santa Cruz
Director Jimmy Dutra <i>AR 9:07 AM</i>	City of Watsonville
Director Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson	City of Santa Cruz
Director Manu Koenig	County of Santa Cruz
Director Fabian Leonor	County of Santa Cruz
Director Donna Lind	City of Scotts Valley
Director Martinez	County of Santa Cruz
Director Scott Newsome	City of Santa Cruz
Director Melinda Orbach	City of Capitola
Director Quiroz-Carter <i>AR 9:12 AM</i>	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
Corey Aldridge	CEO/General Manager
Julie Sherman	General Counsel

5 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

5.2 Hector Guzman of Language Line Services provided Spanish interpretation services.

6 APPROVE: BOARD OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Vice Chair Downing spoke to the slate presented in the agenda packet and opened the dialogue to the other Board Members. One additional slate was presented by Director Rotkin, which consisted of an alternative slate for the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC).

Jacob Wysocki, member of the public, spoke to his email dated February 27, 2025 (included in the agenda packet).

Director Dutra commented that voters elected him by over 11% and want him to represent the Watsonville community. He believes the RTC needs representation by South County. Vice Chair Downing added that she took various points of view into consideration prior to proposing her slate.

Director Martinez said that METRO will be well served by either of the South County representatives on the RTC. She is drawn to the second slate for its diversification. Director Quiroz-Carter added that she has the capacity to sit on the RTC as a representative for South County.

Director Orbach expressed that she would like to see more women represented on the RTC and believes having Director Quiroz-Carter on the RTC will allow another perspective and still provide South County representation.

Director Leonor suggested riders be represented on the METRO Board. It was explained that the current Bylaws (reflecting state law) do not accommodate that composition.

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

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE ENTIRE SLATE 1 AS PRESENTED

MOTION: DIRECTOR DUTRA SECOND: DIRECTOR KOENIG

MOTION DID NOT PASS WITH 4 AYES (Directors Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, and Koenig). Director Orbach Abstained.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE ENTIRE SLATE 2 AS PRESENTED

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN SECOND: DIRECTOR LEONOR

MOTION PASSED WITH 10 AYES (Directors Downing, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, Quiroz-Carter, and Rotkin). There were no abstentions.

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

7 BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMENTS

Director Dutra expressed his disappointment regarding the previous agenda item and public comments concerning him. He also commented that he is trying to represent his community the best that he can and get it the resources it deserves. He expressed concern over trash at the Watsonville bus shelters and would like METRO to address this inequity.

Director Quiroz-Carter expressed gratitude to Director Dutra for all the work he has done for Watsonville and both he and her will continue their efforts to better the Watsonville community.

Ex-Officio Northcutt thanked John Urgo, Chief Planning and Innovation Officer, and Danielle Glagola, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, for meeting with her on the upcoming campaign to negotiate the student contract with METRO. METRO will be represented at the Aptos and Watsonville sites during the campaign. She expressed gratitude for the relationship Cabrillo has had with METRO and hopes it will continue. With the new housing development, there will be a greater need for METRO's service.

Director Rotkin added to let the Board know of any additional help needed for that election. Ex-Officio Director Northcutt invited METRO Board Members to attend the Student Senate meetings that are held every Thursday at 3:30 PM.

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

8 ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rohan Tuli, member of the public, expressed concern about METRO's lack of communication on publishing alerts on suspended or discontinued routes and requested prioritizing this for the riders.

Gina Cole, member of the public, encouraged METRO to work with the County of Santa Cruz to put a rectangular flashing beacon at the intersection of Freedom Boulevard and Bowker Road for safety issues. This intersection is busy and the bus stops located there are used by students.

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

9 LABOR ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATIONS

Olivia Martinez, SEIU Region 2 Director, mentioned the morale of METRO employees is very low. She recommended that METRO bring in a state mediator to help management and the unions repair this damaged relationship, especially with negotiations starting next year.

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

10 ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION TO SUPPORT EXISTING AGENDA ITEMS

Board Chair Downing announced additional communications were sent to the Board on February 27, 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 JANUARY 2025
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

- 11.2 ACCEPT AND FILE MINUTES OF:
A. JANUARY 24, 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING
B. FEBRUARY 14, 2025 FINANCE, BUDGET AND AUDIT STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING
Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager
- 11.3 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR-TO-DATE MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF JANUARY 31, 2025
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 11.4 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR-TO-DATE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) REPORT FOR QUARTER TWO AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2024
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 11.5 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE METRO PARACRUZ OPERATIONS STATUS REPORT FOR OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, AND DECEMBER 2024
Rina Solorio Gomez, Assistant Operations Manager, Paratransit Division
- 11.6 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF DECLARING VEHICLES AND/OR EQUIPMENT AS EXCESS FOR PURPOSES OF DISPOSAL OR AUCTION
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 11.7 APPROVE: REVISED 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING SCHEDULE
Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager
- 11.8 APPROVE: CONSIDER A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS AND EXECUTE AGREEMENTS FOR GRANTS FROM THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION AND FROM THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
John Urgo, Chief Planning and Innovation Officer
- 11.9 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF AUTHORIZING THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER TO EXECUTE A 2ND AMEND-MENT EXTENDING THE CONTRACT FOR SIX (6) MONTHS WITH OXFORD GLOBAL RESOURCES, LLC FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, INCREASING THE CONTRACT TOTAL BY \$250,000
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 11.10 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF AUTHORIZING THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER TO EXECUTE THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES (AHSC) PROGRAM AWARD AND ALL AMENDMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT FOR THE DOWNTOWN LIBRARY MIXED USE PROJECT
John Urgo, Chief Planning and Innovation Officer

Ex-Officio Director Reiskin requested Item 11.4 be pulled for further discussion.

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing called for a roll call vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ITEM 11.4

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN

SECOND: DIRECTOR KOENIG

MOTION PASSED WITH 11 AYES (Directors Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, Quiroz-Carter, and Rotkin).

REGULAR AGENDA

12 PRESENTATION OF EMPLOYEE LONGEVITY AWARDS FOR JANUARY: (10 YEARS) RINA SOLORIO GOMEZ, ASST. OPERATIONS MANAGER – PARATRANSIT DIVISION*

(25 YEARS) RAYMUNDO MARQUEZ, VEHICLE SERVICE DETAILER*

*Signifies those present to receive their certificates in person.

Board Chair Downing thanked both recipients for their contributions to METRO.

Rina Solorio Gomez, Asst. Operations Manager – Paratransit Division, thanked METRO for supporting her over the past 10 years.

Raymundo Marquez, Vehicle Service Detailer, also thanked METRO for his past 25 years with the agency.

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

**13 RETIREE RESOLUTIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR:
ED DAVIDSON, BUS OPERATOR
TEODORO GUERRERO, VEHICLE SERVICE DETAILER
SARA HEWITT, PARATRANSIT OPERATOR
ISAAC HOLLY, IT & ITS DIRECTOR
ROBERT PAUL MALDONADO, BUS OPERATOR**

Board Chair Downing congratulated the retirees on their retirements and thanked them for their years of service at METRO.

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing called for a roll call vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE RETIREE RESOLUTIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR ED DAVIDSON, TEODORO GUERRERO, SARA HEWITT, ISAAC HOLLY, AND ROBERT PAUL MALDONADO.

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN

SECOND: DIRECTOR KALANTARI-JOHNSON

MOTION PASSED WITH 11 AYES (Directors Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, Quiroz-Carter, and Rotkin).

Item 11.4 previously pulled from the Consent Agenda for further discussion.

11.4 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR-TO-DATE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) REPORT FOR QUARTER TWO AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2024

Ex-Officio Director Reiskin expressed appreciation for the detailed KPI report and the effort staff puts into preparing them. His questions centered on the following slides:

Slide 6 – ParaCruz Cost Per Trip - The decline in trips due to outsourcing the eligibility process. Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer, explained that prior to and during the pandemic, ParaCruz was giving everyone a ride regardless of whether they qualified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Now METRO is using ADA Ride and following the ADA guidelines. Director Leonor mentioned that he works with the disabled community and shared that some do not have access to a computer and it is hard for them to navigate the site. He suggested there be a METRO employee available to help these individuals. COO Ross remarked that ADA Ride will walk those individuals through the process and is available 24/7. Daniel Zaragoza, Operations Deputy Director, added that our Customer Service Representatives will help people through the application process, but ADA Ride provides a comprehensive service. This decline applies to the people whom METRO gave certification for one year during COVID and they are not reapplying. Director Leonor praised METRO for scheduling the rides for his clients. Board Chair Downing mentioned that an ADA Ride representative attended the last METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) meeting to answer questions and MAC seemed satisfied with the response.

Ms. Martinez commented that this position used to be held by a METRO employee and was very hands-on. The union thought this contract was only going to be temporary and then it became a permanent decision. She thinks METRO should revisit that decision.

Slide 9 – UCSC Ridership – requested an update on the transition from GFI to Clever APC. Mr. Urgo said this slide is inaccurate. Staff has spent the last two weeks combing the data and are now showing a 0.7% increase in the ridership. The Planning Department pulled the quarterly ridership report from this agenda packet and will bring it back in March with updated information.

Slide 13 – YTD FY25 Passengers/Service Hours by Route – noted that Route 16 still shows the highest ridership followed by Routes 18 and 19, which were supposed to absorb Route 16 and has contributed to the increased pass ups shown on Slide 25. Ex-Officio Director Reiskin asked if METRO can put the higher-capacity buses back on these routes. Mr. Urgo commented that we do not have the articulated buses to pick up the slack due to maintenance issues. METRO is expecting nine new hydrogen articulated buses around the middle of 2025. COO Ross added that the articulated buses only serve the campus routes.

Slide 15 – Traffic Accidents – the trend is concerning. COO Ross said that we have over 100 new Bus Operators. Even though the accidents have been minor, it can pull buses out of service. Gregory Strecker, Safety, Security and Risk Management Director, added that we are also increasing mileage on the buses with the increase in service, which isn't reflected in these numbers. We expect the next quarter to be more normalized.

Director Rotkin asked about the temporary fueling station and if it will be able to fuel an articulated bus as quickly as the shorter buses? Can we prioritize fueling them? Mr. Urgo said it will take a little longer to fuel the articulated buses, but METRO will have to cycle through all of its buses to keep them operational to service all routes.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing called for a roll call vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO ACCEPT AND FILE THE YEAR-TO-DATE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) REPORT FOR QUARTER TWO AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2024

MOTION: DIRECTOR ROTKIN SECOND: DIRECTOR KALANTARI-JOHNSON

MOTION PASSED WITH 11 AYES (Directors Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, Quiroz-Carter, and Rotkin).

14 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF AUTHORIZING THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A SHORT-TERM LINE OF CREDIT OR BRIDGE LOAN

Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer, spoke to the presentation and reviewed the delivery schedule of the hydrogen buses, when they are expected to be placed in service, the total funding expected, and how the timing of these funding reimbursements will impact METRO's cash flow. He addressed the pros and cons of a line of credit and a bridge loan and requested the Board approve METRO entering into a short-term line of credit or bridge loan.

Discussion followed on:

- Does METRO have financial policies to provide guidance on the type of financial institution it uses for this type of borrowing?
- Secured versus unsecured loan
- Worst case versus best case scenarios
- Operating reserves and what is available to use before borrowing
- Competitive selection process
- Temporary and permanent fueling stations
- Implementation issues
- Reimbursement from the VW Mitigation Fund
- Consequences of not moving forward with a line of credit or bridge loan

Director Rotkin added that this item came before the Finance, Budget and Audit Standing Committee and it recommended bringing this item to the full Board. Director Kalantari-Johnson recommended that this be a standing item on the committee to receive regular updates and if anything significant occurs, bring that to the full Board. Director Koenig thanked CFO Farmer for the quick work and foresight and for making sure we have this cushion moving forward.

Staff responded to all questions/concerns. CFO Farmer added that he will return to the Board to keep them abreast of the process.

Ms. Martinez raised the issue of where METRO is going to put all these new buses when they come in.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing called for a roll call vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A SHORT-TERM LINE OF CREDIT OR BRIDGE LOAN

MOTION: DIRECTOR KOENIG SECOND: DIRECTOR NEWSOME

MOTION PASSED WITH 11 AYES (Directors Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson,

Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, Quiroz-Carter, and Rotkin).

15 UPDATE FROM CAL-ITP ON RECOMMENDED FARE POLICY CHANGES AND INTEGRATED TICKETING

John Urgo, Chief Planning and Innovation Officer, spoke to the Integrating Ticketing Project and explained that METRO has not updated its fare structure since 2011, and our current fare boxes need to be replaced. METRO has received funding for this project. He introduced Calli Cenizal, Principal Consultant with Rebel (one of the contractors for the California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP)). She spoke to the presentation and provided an overview of Cal-ITP, contactless open loop payments, METRO's project vision, fare policy guidelines, analysis of METRO's current fare structure and how they are being utilized, recommendations for restructuring the fares, where riders are purchasing their fares/passes, fare medium available, and implications for future payment system.

Discussion followed on:

- Contract-based plans
- Age breakdown on fare products
- Providing cash options
- Who is covered under the Youth Cruz Free
- Paying cash versus fare cap
- Providing equity for those who can't afford technology based fees
- Transit agencies similar in size to METRO where this has been implemented

Staff addressed all concerns. Mr. Urgo emphasized that METRO is going to perform on-board surveys to collect more data, and we will come back in the fall to present recommendations to the full Board prior to implementation.

Ben Finke, Bus Operator, stated that a lot of the riders who pay cash are elderly or houseless. He appreciates there is a push for retail partnerships but feels it could be a hurdle for some of these riders. He suggested METRO work with the County of Santa Cruz on those receiving SNAP benefits or Medi-Cal to be eligible for discounted fares. Derek Touns, Planning and Innovation Director, stated there are pathways to achieve this and METRO is looking at them.

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

16 CEO ORAL REPORT

Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager, presented the following:

- On February 6th, he testified at the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee Hearing in Sacramento along with LA Metro and San Francisco Muni. The hearing focused on the implementation and benefits of SB 125 programs and furthered discussions on the needs of California transit agencies moving forward.
- While in Sacramento, he met with state delegates, legislative staff, and the Senate and Assembly Budget Committee staff to discuss METRO's state agenda.

- Additionally, he was in Washington, DC this past week meeting with federal delegates and legislative staff to discuss METRO's federal agenda. We will continue those discussions by hosting staff from Senator Schiff, Senator Padilla, and Representative Lofgren's districts on March 5th and provide a tour of METRO's facilities, along with our federal lobbyist, CFM, who organized this event.
- Provided handouts of the 2025 State and Federal Legislative Agendas for the Board's review.
- METRO has contracted with Moore & Associates to perform on-board and online rider surveys to receive feedback on METRO's service. The first survey will be on UCSC routes from March 11 - March 15. Surveys for Highway 17 and local routes are tentatively scheduled for March 25 – 29. METRO will promote the surveys on its website, social media, and on the buses and at transit centers.
- On the hiring and promotions front since our January meeting, METRO has hired 1 new Planning Data Analyst and had 7 promotions (1 Transit Supervisor, 2 Mechanic I's, 1 Mechanic III, 1 Electronic Technician, 1 Vehicle Service Detailer).
- He thanked METRO's Facilities team for their hard work in finalizing the installation of 30 bus shelters, benches, and Bigbelly trash cans that were funded by the Clean California Grant under the Bus Stop Improvement Project, which was a collaborative effort between the Clean California Program, Caltrans, and METRO.
- METRO has several upcoming events that it will be participating in:
 - One Ride At a Time photographer, Jodi Frediani's, will have an event for her book *Wild Monterey* at the Seymour Center on March 9th. METRO will be displaying the Orca Whale bus that Jodi contributed to.
 - On March 11th, we will be participating in Scotts Valley High's Career Day held at the Scotts Valley High School Gym.
 - March 18th is Transit Driver Appreciation Day. We will be celebrating our operators and staff by hosting a special event at JKS.
 - On March 19th, METRO will be participating in San Lorenzo Valley High School College & Career Fair held at the San Lorenzo Valley High School.
- Lastly, on Tuesday, February 25th, METRO's One Ride At a Time Program was recognized at the APTA Ad Wheel Awards in Long Beach, CA with two awards—1st place for best print media and 1st place for best comprehensive campaign. He congratulated Ms. Glagola on her hard work.

Discussion followed on:

- Political climate in Washington DC
- Location of Bigbelly trash cans in Watsonville
- METRO's obligation in picking up the garbage throughout the county
- Consider photos of Watsonville in future calendars produced

CORRECTION TO TITLE

- Morale needs to be addressed in the agency
- Phone numbers posted at bus stops to report garbage
- Request for community events to be held in South County
- Need collaborative effort between city and county agencies to address garbage issues
- My Santa Cruz County app to report quality-of-life issues to local officials
- Transit app launching soon

All concerns were addressed by staff. METRO will continue the conversation with Director Dutra and the City of Watsonville staff to address the garbage issues at the Watsonville bus shelters.

Board Chair Downing thanked Director Martinez for her guest commentary article in the Sentinel related to health and how we view things. It's important for riders to feel safe and healthy at a bus stop and the lack of trash will encourage more ridership. She requested an update on the garbage issues to come back to the Board later in the year.

There were no public comments.

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

- **17 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING**

Board Chair Downing announced the next regular Board meeting will be held on Friday, March 28, 2025 at 9:00 AM at the Scotts Valley City Council Chambers, 1 Civic Center Dr., Scotts Valley, CA

- **18 ADJOURNMENT**

Board Chair Downing adjourned the meeting at 11:45 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna Bauer
Sr. Executive Assistant