



**Missoula Urban Transportation District
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
August 25, 2022**

Approved September 22, 2022

Members Present

Doug Odegaard, VC
Don MacArthur, Secretary
Andrea Davis, Treasurer
Amy Cilimburg
Sebastian Strauss

Members Absent

Jesse Dodson, Chair
Anna-Margaret Goldman

Staff

Corey Aldridge, General Manager
Mary Hanson, Director of Finance
Jennifer Sweten, Director of Ops.
Shanti Devins, Coms Manager
Colin Woodrow, Project Manager
Dan Stone, Transit Planner
Heather Halter, HR Manager
Heidi Lutterman, Staff Accountant

Guests

None.

Call to Order and Roll Call

Odegaard called the meeting to order at 12:04 PM. Roll call was taken.

Changes or Additions to Agenda

None.

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

Discussion Items

General Manager's Report

Hanson reported that Jasmine Blumenbach completed five supplemental payrolls and incentive payouts for the month of July, per union contracts, and three regular payrolls during that month. She continues to stay current on all accounts payable. Blumenbach is also working with a representative to transfer accounts for local retirement consultation for non-represented employees.

Heidi Lutterman has worked on summarizing all fixed asset purchases and disposals for the past fiscal year. Lutterman is also working on audit schedules that will take place in September. Jason Blodgett, MUTD's Information Technology Specialist, has made numerous upgrades to the agency's electronic systems resulting in many new purchases and many outdated items coming off the asset schedule listing.

Hanson continues to work with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Region 8 on grant applications for approval. Two grant applications are currently in the FTA review process. She

has worked to complete the Schedule of Federal Expenditures of Awards for the audit and other year-end schedules. Last week, Hanson attended the CTAA conference in Manchester, New Hampshire, and learned from other agencies' recent experiences with Triennial Reviews.

Don MacArthur joined the meeting at 12:15 PM.

Sweten reported on operations, informing the board that Mountain Line currently employs 60 bus operators, three operators short of where the agency anticipated being in advance of the July service expansion. The next operator training class will begin on September 6th; this class will help offset planned attrition later this year, with a final training class planned for October. The service expansion is going well, with staffing estimates seeming to be accurate. Labor Day will be the first federal holiday that Mountain Line will operate under the new expanded schedule; on that day, buses will run on a Sunday schedule.

New Flyer buses have been removed from service out of extreme caution to respond to a high-temperature battery light. A New Flyer representative is working on a solution to ensure buses are safe to operate. Sweten also attended the SUN Conference in Manchester, New Hampshire, and presented on mitigating operator assaults and de-escalation techniques. Sweten reported that other agencies and vendors, like Mountain Line, are experiencing delays in receiving ordered cutaway vehicles; the industry is expressing pessimism at the ability to get cutaway vehicles in a timely fashion. She also attended the Human Trafficking Coalition Build conference in Helena earlier this month.

Woodrow gave an overview of ongoing projects. MUTD was awarded a Low or No Emissions grant of just over \$10,900,000 to purchase ten battery-electric buses (BEB), two chargers, six charger pedestal stations, and charge management for 28 buses. As applied, the project total is \$12.9 million, with \$1.95 million required as a local match.

MUTD contacted Gillig for a placeholder order for four 35' 686 KWH Gillig BEBs under the FY21 Low or No Emissions grant award. Woodrow informed the board that operators prefer the electric Gillig buses and the vendor's excellent customer service.

Fleet analysis of existing BEBs and charging infrastructure is targeted for completion in late June 2023, coordinated with the Center for Transportation Excellence (CTE) and ChargePoint. Plans are in the works for Energy Demand Analysis (winter), Charge Management, Rate Case Battery Electric Storage System, and a Transition Plan to encompass a full fleet replacement schedule, including potential funding sources. Procurements are currently in place for a bus lift and furniture to complete the Shakespeare Street remodel project. Future procurements include a bus wash, Bus Stop Master Plan Phase I and II, and Transfer Center Planning. Future planning continues for land, construction design, cost estimation, and financing of a new facility.

There are still three possibilities for land procurement referenced: Rodgers, Schramm (off North Reserve), and Dougherty. The estimated timeline for land procurement is as follows: negotiations to begin in September, Planning Committee to determine the project delivery method in October, selecting a project team this winter, and ready financing for the spring application with land procured.

Finally, a sub-recipient agreement is being prepared for the RAISE Bus Rapid Transit grant overseen by the Missoula Redevelopment Agency.

Devins reported on Communications, citing that: the agency celebrated its first full week of seven-day, seven-night service with a ribbon cutting ceremony in July, hosted several Federal

Transit Administration officials for a site tour, continued outreach about expanded service, earned successful media coverage for the most recent Lo-No award, and recently hosted a fellow from Senator Jon Tester's office for a facility tour.

Devins cited upcoming outreach, including River City Roots Festival & Family Roots Festival, University of Montana outreach, the Electrify the Big Sky Conference happening on September 12 and 13, Climate Smart Missoula's Clean Energy Expo on September 17 and Missoula in Motion's Sunday Streets September 18.

Halter reported that the new-hire class is almost full, with seven out of the eight operator spots filled. The new class is set to begin training on September 6th, with a final 2022 training class slated for October 17th. Halter recruited at a job fair with the Missoula Job Service on August 22nd; she informed the board that the agency is currently recruiting a new Administrative Assistant. Halter reported that Mountain Line has successfully soloed 60 operators. She will attend a Drug & Alcohol training in September and prepping policies for the triennial audit.

Aldridge recognized the significance of the recently awarded Lo-No grant, the largest the agency has ever received. As a result, he reported being contacted by agencies across the country asking him to present on MUTD's electrification efforts. He has already presented at, or is slated to present at, other conferences this fall.

Strauss congratulated the team on the Low or No Emissions grant award and the successful rollout of seven-day, seven-night service. Davis echoed Strauss's congratulations.

Action Items

Minutes of June 23, 2022

MacArthur made a motion to approve the minutes of June 23, 2022, seconded by Davis. The motion carried unanimously.

June 2022 Financial Statements

Hanson reported that year-end transfers were completed to the reserve accounts. The Facilities Capital Project reserve has a year-end balance of \$10 million. The Fleet Replacement and Operating reserve accounts have a balance of \$5 million each. Expenses for the year were lower than budget by 21%. Seven-day service was budgeted for half a year but not implemented until July 2022. Capital procurements are being carried over fiscal year-end numbers are expected in November when the audit is complete.

Davis made a motion to approve the June 2022 financial statements, seconded by Strauss. The motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 22-02 Capital Facility Reserve

Hanson presented a formal resolution to commit up to \$10 million in capital facility reserve funds as a local match to federal funds awarded to MUTD. The board discussed the intent and potential ramifications of the resolution.

MacArthur motioned to table the agenda item and revisit it during the next Planning Committee meeting, seconded by Strauss. The motion carried unanimously.

Davis left the meeting at 1:00 PM, before the vote on this action item.

Resolution 22-03 Riverfront Trails Subdivision Petition for Inclusion

Stone proposed a resolution to expand the transportation district's boundaries to include the Riverfront Trails Subdivision property. The developers of the Riverfront Trails subdivision submitted a petition into the Missoula Urban Transportation District to fulfill a condition for City annexation and subdivision approval. The developers are also seeking a rezone and Growth Policy amendment for this project. This project is a proposed major subdivision of 176 mixed residential lots in the Lower Miller Creek area. Board approval is required to include this property in the transportation district.

MacArthur motioned to approve Resolution 22-03 to expand the boundaries of the Transportation District to include the Riverfront Trails subdivision, conditionally to include the property between Old Bitterroot Road and Lower Miller Creek Road and any property in the subdivision application. The motion was seconded by Strauss and carried unanimously.

Resolution 22-04 Mountain Home Estates Lot 3 Petition for Inclusion

Stone presented a resolution for inclusion to expand the boundaries of the transportation district to include Mountain Home Estates Lot 3 property. Staff received a petition from the developers of Mountain Home Estates, Lot 3, on June 8, 2021. This petition was submitted as a City of Missoula requirement for a Townhome Exemption Development proposed for this location and requires board approval to include it in the transportation district. This property is in the Upper Rattlesnake off Tamarack Street.

Cilimburg made a motion to approve Resolution 22-04 to expand the boundaries of the Transportation District to include the Mountain Home Estates subdivision Lot 3, seconded by MacArthur. The motion carried unanimously.

The board requested Stone provide an overview of how property is included in the district at the next Planning Committee meeting.

Purchase of Office Furniture

Woodrow presented a request to purchase and install assorted office furniture from Allsteel, Inc. of Muscatine, IA, for a total of \$102,263 plus a 6% contingency. This procurement provides furniture to accompany the remodel of MUTD's Shakespeare Street headquarters to create additional spacing and improved workstations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This procurement uses a State of Montana cooperative purchasing contract for office furniture led by the State of Utah in 2017, in coordination with other states and the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO). This contract, which is national in scope, allows for qualifying entities, such as MUTD, to purchase furniture from six (6) different manufacturers through local authorized resellers at discounts of up to 80% compared to retail prices. Staff evaluated offerings from Missoula-based resellers representing three different manufacturers, and decided the offerings from Allsteel Inc, through the authorized reseller Office Solutions and Services (OS2) of Missoula, MT, will provide the best value for MUTD. This procurement includes furniture to outfit each working space that comprises the Operations and Administration departments at MUTD's Shakespeare Street facility. This includes five (5) offices, six (6) cubicle workstations, and the boardroom, entrance lobby, small conference room, and staff breakroom.

Based on the competitive process associated with the NASPO procurement, the price for this procurement is determined to be fair and reasonable.

MacArthur inquired what MUTD would do with old furniture and if staff accounted for adjustable heights. Woodrow confirmed all stations, and the new conference table will be height adjustable.

In addition, Woodrow stated that old furniture would be reused or recycled, though that inventory is limited.

Strauss motioned to approve the purchase and installation of assorted office furniture from Allsteel Inc. of Muscatine, Iowa, for \$102,263 plus a 6% contingency, seconded by MacArthur. Motion passed unanimously.

Purchase of a Vehicle Lift

Woodrow presented a request to approve the purchase and installation of a Stertil-Koni ECO 60 lift from Northwest Lift & Equipment of Portland, OR for a price of \$200,610.70, and the purchase of pit construction services from Northwest Lift & Equipment for a price of \$131,785, plus a 5% contingency.

This procurement will replace an aging vehicle lift in MUTD's maintenance shop. Currently, only one vehicle lift is compatible with all the buses in Mountain Line's fleet. Vehicle lifts are needed to perform maintenance work on all buses, cutaways, and service vehicles and are essential equipment for transit operations.

The Stertil Koni ECO 60 Lift was chosen primarily because of its low installation depth compared to standard post lifts and compatibility with Proterra battery-electric buses. This will enable the new lift to be installed without disturbing the existing lift's subsurface. The lift meets all required specifications, including compatibility with buses of up to 40 ft in length and 60,000 lbs in total weight.

This is a two-part procurement, with separate processes for purchasing and installing the lift equipment and purchasing construction services to remove the old lift and prepare a new pit. MUTD used a State of Montana cooperative purchasing contract for the lift equipment with Northwest Lift & Equipment, LLC.

However, the State contract did not cover construction services to remove the old equipment and prepare a new pit. Staff determined it would be in the agency's best interest to award the construction and installation contract to Northwest Lift & Equipment on a sole-source basis. Northwest Life & Equipment is our region's only authorized Stertil Koni dealer. Due to the project's complexity and magnitude, MUTD expects a significant duplication cost to select another firm for these services. The price for these services is determined to be fair and reasonable. This lift will be able to be moved to the new facility.

Odegaard inquired how much over budget this purchase would be, with Woodrow replying that it was originally budgeted at \$200,000. This increase in cost is primarily due to a doubling in labor costs. Hanson informed the board that the difference would be absorbed in other budget line items, including previous cost savings in fleet replacement.

Strauss made the motion to approve the purchase and installation of a Stertil-Koni ECO 60 lift from Northwest Lift & Equipment of Portland, OR, for a price of \$200,610.70, and the purchase of pit construction services from Northwest Lift & Equipment for a price of \$131,785, plus a 5% contingency, seconded by Cilimburg. Motion passed unanimously.

Ridership Reports

Stone presented a ridership update for the past year. Stone reported that the district's adoption of two new technology platforms in 2022 had impacted ridership reporting.

First, Clever Devices Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) software was installed on all buses earlier this year. This system replaced previous ridership-counting software to consolidate technology vendors when possible. This transition involved having two ridership-reporting systems operating concurrently on different buses during the transition, which compromised data integrity. Stone noted that the district has until October 2023 to validate the new Clever Devices ITS system.

The second technology shift was in the demand-response software used for Paratransit. MUTD now contracts with Via Transportation for Paratransit software. This transition was less disruptive to ridership reporting since it does not rely on automatic passenger counters and instead relies on trip reservations.

Ridership data has been impacted over the last three years due to these technology transitions and how Mountain Line adjusted operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic resulted in several service changes because of staffing shortages and other pandemic-related impacts. Service levels were changing by the day, and the past ridership reporting software was not flexible enough to sample data accurately during such significant service shifts. The software was able to extrapolate monthly data using averages. Stone feels the monthly ridership data is acceptable during this time but is looking forward to increased accuracy moving forward.

Odegaard inquired if the district has an automatic passenger counter (APC) failure, is there a way to remedy the data loss? Stone responded that monthly data is less impacted by APC failures due to the software algorithm averaging ridership based upon similar times and days across the month. This averaging is acceptable to the FTA, but it means data may be less robust and more impacted at the granular data (for example, ridership by stop or specific route).

Stone reported an overall upward trend in fixed-route ridership; however, return to pre-pandemic ridership levels is taking longer than expected. The district is still down approximately 40% in fixed-route ridership compared to pre-pandemic levels. This mirrors the overall national trend in ridership, which is sitting roughly 35% lower when compared to pre-pandemic.

Paratransit ridership has exceeded pre-pandemic ridership levels, reaching an all-time high in March 2022 with over 4,000 trips per month. This level of ridership has stayed consistently above 4,000 riders per month since. This equates to the district seeing roughly a 50% increase in Paratransit ridership over the last year.

Finally, Stone gave a preliminary report on ridership related to the July 10, 2022, service expansions. Weekday ridership in July compared to April of this year was up 2%, with Saturday service up 20%. Paratransit ridership increased 49% on Saturdays, with little to no change reported on weekdays. Sunday service numbers were also reported without opportunity for comparison since Sunday service is new in the district.

Discussion ensued related to understanding the costs and efficiencies of operating electric vehicles versus diesel or other fossil fuel-powered ones.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:11 PM.

Submitted by Shanti Devins.