



**Missoula Urban Transportation District
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2023**

APPROVED

MEMBERS PRESENT

Don MacArthur
Jesse Dodson
Andrea Davis
Jason Wiener
Sebastian Strauss
Amy Cilimburg
Dr. Josephine Hazelton-Boyle

MEMBERS ABSENT

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Corey Aldridge
Jen Sweten
Colin Woodrow
Allison Segal
Heather Halter
Olga Kreimer
Jasmine Blumenbach
Vince Caristo
Dan Stone

Guests

Susan Aaberg – Missoula County Chief Attorney

Call to Order and Roll Call

12:03 p.m. – MacArthur called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call.

Changes or Additions to the Agenda

None

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

4.1 General Manager’s Report

Administrative Services

Halter said the employee count is 104, and six new staff will start the training class on October 2, 2023. The new accountant’s first day is on September 25, 2023. The new handbooks for represented and non-represented employees are nearly ready to be handed out. Interviews for a third-party administrator (TPA) for the 401K account are in process, as is the conversion to electronic human resources files to meet the January 1, 2024, deadline. The auditors from JCCS will be in the office on September 25, 2023.

Operations

Sweten stated the bus lift project is progressing and should be completed by year-end. The bus stop amenity project will resume next week. Proterra can now start to liquify its assets based on a ruling from the bankruptcy court. Wiener asked if MUTD was a creditor, and Aldridge replied that because the warranty on the existing 4-year-old Proterra buses is expired, MUTD is not a creditor. Sweten pointed out that finding parts for those buses would now be challenging.

MacArthur asked if the FTA was aware and involved. Aldridge replied that they knew but hadn't heard if FTA would get involved.

Sweten presented to the Colorado Electrical Vehicle Coalition. The charging reels are now UL-certified, and payment has been authorized.

Projects/Planning/Procurement

Woodrow told the board that Knife River would complete the last seven stops, including the Veterans' Administration stop. Aldridge testified at a recent hearing for the temporary restraining order brought by Russ' Auto Body Shop based on its objection to the bus stop in the right-of-way in front of its business. The judge ruled in favor of MUTD, and an appeal has been filed. Wiener asked if the city had sanctioned the bus stop, and Aldridge confirmed MUTD had approval to put the stop where it is.

Poteet will complete its portion of the bus stop improvement plan this fall.

MUTD is proceeding with the land acquisition for the MOAB, and HC Peck has been hired as a right-of-way consultant. Wendell has been chosen as the architects and engineers (A&E) team for the MOAB project based on its experience, consistency, and customer service. Contract negotiations and drafting a master agreement are underway, and Woodrow anticipates presenting it to the board at the November meeting.

The PPP team will present the Naloxone vending machine project at the October board meeting.

Wiener and Hazelton-Boyle are on the selection committee to choose a strategic planning consultant. The intent is to bring this to the November board meeting for approval with an intended 2024 start. Via's final on-demand transit study report will be presented at the November planning committee meeting.

Results from Panorama's recently conducted ERP discovery sessions will be presented at the November board meeting.

Aldridge mentioned that the mission/vision/values work product will be on the October board meeting agenda, and approval will be requested at the November board meeting. Aldridge reported that MUTD is attempting to create a coalition with other metropolitan organizations and small transit districts across Montana to seek dedicated state funding for transit. Most states fund transit systems anywhere from twenty to fifty percent. Montana gives around ten thousand dollars through a gas tax. The Montana Transit Association has not been effective, so the individual districts want to do it on their own.

4.2 Ridership – Stone reviewed the following data points:

- Ridership has increased slightly due to the service expansion since the pandemic but is still below pre-pandemic levels.
- Ridership increased 32% over last year.
- Average weekday ridership is up 21%, and Saturday ridership also has increased.
- Routes 1 and 2 comprise approximately 50% of the total ridership.
- Ridership is still down around 30% overall from pre-pandemic levels.
- Cost per fixed-route trip is \$9, staying around the same as last year.
- Paratransit ridership is up around 36%.
- Cost per paratransit trip is down about 5%, and the average cost per trip is \$39.73.

Davis asked how to increase ridership. MacArthur noted that MUTD is at 65% of pre-pandemic ridership and questioned whether concentrated “big splash” efforts would be a productive way to increase the numbers. He also wanted to know where the cost per ride increase came from. Aldridge stated it was labor costs, and Stone pointed out that ridership decreased while operating costs continued to rise. Strauss asked for a more detailed breakdown of the cost increases. Aldridge explained that transit systems with a majority of transit-dependent riders have recovered, but typically, behavior changes leading to using public transportation arise from a pain point. Wiener wanted to know the denominator for the cost per ride calculation. Aldridge responded that this information and the BBER study results will be presented at the October board meeting.

Action Items

5.1 Minutes of August 24, 2023, Board Meeting – Wiener moved to approve the August board meeting minutes, Cilimborg seconded, and the motion was approved.

5.2 July 2023 Financial Statements – Strauss reported that MUTD’s overall position is good, and reserves increased to \$12 million for the MOAB. Fleet replacement reserves are \$6.5 million, and operations reserves are \$5 million. Expected tax revenues should align with what has been budgeted. Davis commended Segal on her financial report. Wiener moved to approve the July financial statements, Davis seconded, and the motion was approved.

5.3 Property Acquisition Resolution – Aldridge explained that the board must declare its intent to purchase property through agreement or eminent domain, and a resolution makes the process public knowledge. Wiener asked whether eminent domain would be likely, and Aldridge responded that this is the unknown. The sellers have expressed a desire to sell, but the price they are asking is a sticking point. Dodson explained that passing the resolution empowers the staff to pursue the purchase through an agreed upon price or through eminent domain. The resolution also aids the seller in deferring capital gains taxes if the property is sold to a public entity. Strauss asked whether the resolution should contain a cap on the sales prices. Dodson replied that a cap wouldn’t be effective because the seller wants more than the appraised value. Woodrow pointed out that the FTA has to review and agree to the price and terms, so the price has to be fair. MacArthur asked if the resolution authorized MUTD to obtain the property using whatever means possible. Dodson replied that the resolution’s full intention is to procure this particular piece of land unless the board decides it doesn’t want to purchase this property. Aldridge noted there is a time limit for using the allotted funds. He added that the final purchase price and agreement will be brought to the board once the negotiations are completed. Strauss pointed out the resolution is to initiate the purchase process. Dodson said full agreement with the sellers is the expectation but without the resolution, the process for outright sale or eminent domain becomes much more difficult. Davis asked for clarification on the parcel size, and Aldridge responded the property was big enough to allow for growth. Dodson noted that MUTD prefers this property out of all the explored sites because it meets all the requirements. MUTD does need the entire site because it allows room for growth.

Dodson moved to approve, Cilimborg seconded, and the motion passed.

5.4 Purchase of 2 150-kW DC Fast Chargers – Caristo explained that the chargers are needed for four new electric buses scheduled for delivery in spring 2024. Because of space constraints, Verdek’s charger will fit into the lean-to in the back of the property. The total price of \$319,364 will be paid through a Minnesota state contract. The chargers meet the Buy America standard, installation is minimal, and the chargers can charge more than one bus at a time. MacArthur asked about the pricing, and Caristo responded that using state contracts improves pricing. In response to Strauss’ question about charging, Caristo confirmed that the units will charge six

buses sequentially. Woodrow pointed out that purchasing the correct equipment now will reduce costs when it's time to move. Cilimburg moved to approve, Dodson seconded, and the motion passed.

1:41 p.m. – The board went into a closed session.

2:00 p.m. – The regular meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Darlene Craven