



**Missoula Urban Transportation District
Planning Committee Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2023**

APPROVED

MEMBERS PRESENT

Don McArthur, Chair
Sebastian Strauss
Jesse Dodson
Jason Struppler
Amy Cilimburg
Jason Wiener
Josephine Hazelton-Boyle

MEMBERS ABSENT

Andrea Davis

STAFF

Corey Aldridge, Gen. Mgr.
Colin Woodrow, Dir. P3
Jen Sweten, Dir. Operations
Olga Kreimer, Comms. Specialist
Darlene Craven, Exec. Asst.
Spencer Starke, Assoc. Planner
Vince Caristo, Planning Consultant

Guests

David Perlmutter, Transit Planning Principal, Via

Call to Order and Roll Call

MacArthur called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m. and roll call was taken.

Changes or Additions to the Agenda

None

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

None

Action Items

4.1 Minutes of July 12, 2023

Dodson moved to approve, Cilimburg seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion items

5.1 On-Demand Transit Study Review – 11:07 a.m.

Woodrow advised the board that the presentation would be informational prior to starting the long-range transit planning. The on-demand transit study is funded by a grant that needed to be closed. Perlmutter was attending the meeting to provide a high-level review of the study results.

Perlmutter introduced the consulting team and stated the overview would cover key findings that would point MUTD in the right direction for implementing on-demand transit service. The final

report will be issued in October. Perlmutter recapped the study's goals as follows: improve access to lower-density areas; improve paratransit services; provide first/last mile connections; and adjust underperforming routes. He pointed out that on-demand could be used to improve the fixed-route network by delivering comprehensive coverage in lower-density areas. Fixed routes could be moved to the main arteries for direct service and faster travel times while keeping on-demand costs in line with fixed-route costs.

Via interviewed other similar transit systems and highlighted the advantages of the following: using on-demand strengths to improve the entire network; planning service to reduce inefficiencies; considering equity and accessibility in service design; and engaging with key stakeholders early and often. The four targeted areas for on-demand services are: Grant Creek, Miller Creek, Rattlesnake, Sxwtpqyen, and Target Range/Orchard Homes. MacArthur noted that some of the areas were not in the mill levy district and suggested that fixing district boundaries might be used as leverage for adding bus service. MacArthur added that MUTD doesn't want to provide on-demand service to those who aren't paying for the service.

Kreimer asked about service for the new developments on the northside. Perlmutter responded that on-demand is a suitable remedy for addressing new ridership in new developments. Caristo added that the same potential existed in the Sxwtpqyen area where on-demand rider data could be used to address a potential fixed route.

Dodson commented that planning for urban boundaries is appropriate and brought up the issue of how paratransit would be distinguished from on-demand. Because there is a long-term strategic transit network in the city's 40-year plan with fixed routes, any reforms should consider those factors. MUTD will need to work with the city to align transit with land use. Caristo added that on-demand data could be very valuable for informing future decisions.

MacArthur observed it would be interesting to see what new residential developments wouldn't be added to the transit network because MUTD doesn't want to stretch on-demand service for a one-off place. Staying on top of what developments become high-intensity use will inform how the network is expanded.

Perlmutter displayed statistics around supply, demand, and service quality, noting a balance of all factors was vital. MacArthur asked if commuters could use on-demand and Perlmutter responded in the affirmative because it provides for short wait times and dependability, two factors essential for good, quality service.

Kreimer asked whether the vehicles would be ADA compliant, and Perlmutter responded that at least one vehicle per zone should be accessible.

Dodson asked for confirmation that on-demand service would act as a collector taking passengers to fixed-routes stops. Perlmutter responded that approximately one-third to one-half of the trips would connect riders with fixed-route service. Perlmutter pointed out that on-demand is effective for low-density communities where a fixed route couldn't be adjusted.

Hazelton-Boyle asked how pickup points would be selected. Perlmutter responded that the software associated with the program picks a point using intersections based on algorithms. Real-time adjustments can be made for maximum efficiency. Responding to MacArthur's question about the software working with the fixed-route schedule, Perlmutter answered that the applications talk to one another from day one.

Hazelton-Boyle asked if there would be trouble with the union regarding additional driving responsibilities and vehicles. Struppler and Sweten both agreed it was a manageable issue and Sweten noted there were many different service delivery options.

Perlmutter pointed out specific parameters, including a booking model, maximum wait times, maximum vehicle detours, trip restrictions, vehicle capacity, maximum walking distance, and hours of operation.

Aldridge said one question to be answered is whether to charge a fare. MacArthur assumed it would be zero-fare. Perlmutter responded that the tradeoff with zero-fare is higher cancellation rates and no shows.

12:21 – Hazelton-Boyle left the meeting.

Perlmutter confirmed the commingled option is a potential model. Dodson said it doesn't seem like accessible vehicles are viable for on-demand.

Perlmutter reviewed demographics, revealing that Miller Creek offers the largest opportunity for service zones, noting that two vehicles would likely be needed in each zone. The best performing zones are estimated to be Miller Creek, Sxwtpqyen, and Northside/Rattlesnake. Delivery of on-demand services could be done in-house for greater control, which is more common, or outsourced. MacArthur said MUTD could do it better and Aldridge added control, cost, and space would be deciding factors.

Perlmutter estimated first-year costs in each of the targeted zones would be as follows: Grant Creek - \$680 thousand; Miller Creek - \$770 thousand; Sxwtpqyen - \$600 thousand; Target Range - \$680 thousand; and Northside/Rattlesnake - \$680 thousand.

Perlmutter summarized the remaining recommended on-demand action items as follows: service KPIs; 3-year financial plan; service implementation; selecting partnership model; procuring software; finalizing zero fare; recruiting drivers; engaging ridership outreach and promoting service; and using data to monitor performance.

MacArthur asked if the costs shown were strictly operational and Perlmutter answered that the figures included installation, technician fees, driver wages, leases, and fuel. Sweten asked if there were federal funding options. Perlmutter replied there were many opportunities and competitive sources.

Wiener asked how the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) reacted during the stakeholder discussions. Woodrow replied that MDT did not care how the money was used.

Adjournment

1:02 p.m. – MacArthur adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by Darlene Craven