



**Missoula Urban Transportation District
Planning Committee Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2023**

DRAFT

MEMBERS PRESENT

Don McArthur, Chair
Sebastian Strauss
Amy Cilimburg
Jason Wiener
Jesse Dodson

MEMBERS ABSENT

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

Call to Order and Roll Call

MacArthur called the meeting to order at 11:03 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 September 13, 2023

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

Discussion items

5.1 District Management

The purpose of the meeting, Woodrow explained, is to provide the board with a high-level review of how the district is organized and how MUTD should move forward. The information will play a key role in the pending strategic planning process.

11:05 a.m. – Dodson arrived.

Cilimburg asked for confirmation that the meeting was informational only and no decisions would be made. Woodrow responded that the staff was seeking the board's input on evaluating and understanding the next steps for effectively managing a non-contiguous district. Aldridge added that a proposed strategy and approach will be brought before the board in 2024.

Starke reviewed the current taxing and operating districts, observing that the transit district map was five years old and there have been many petitions for expansion and retraction, creating a piecemeal collection of service area islands and discontinuous boundaries. He pointed out that the current taxing district issues arise from two processes outside MUTD's control: district expansion via subdivision or petition and district contraction through removal petitions.

The incongruence and resulting tax disparity hamper service planning because parcels that should generate tax revenue are not accounted for. Missoula County's planning area and MUTD's boundaries do not coincide resulting in tax revenue for the planning area but not MUTD. For instance, Miller Creek accounts for one-third of the value of properties not in the district but are within the planning boundary.

Estimated tax revenues from properties not in MUTD but within the planning area are \$1.3 – \$1.6 million. Strauss stated that the finance committee projected the baseline increase at twenty percent. Woodrow responded that the estimated figures are soft numbers but confirmed that twenty percent is more accurate than the thirty percent shown on the slide.

The primary impact is Lower Miller Creek because those subdivisions have already been added to the City's planning boundary, but they have not been brought into MUTD's boundaries, resulting in an estimated additional \$500k in tax revenues. Dodson suggested that the issue and resulting resolution should be framed as a mechanism for spreading out the tax burden, rather than lost revenue. Aldridge suggested describing it as potential revenue that will allow for expanded service. The challenge is spreading the tax burden more evenly between the planning area and the district to deliver great transit services to everyone in the district. Strauss pointed out that equitable distribution of services and the costs of those services should be one of MUTD's guiding principles. He requested numbers for how many people not in the district are served by fixed routes and paratransit and how many people in the district are not serviced by the current network. Accomplishing that means continuously rolling out improvements while assembling contiguous boundaries using the existing petition process and referendums, revising state law to improve existing processes that provide new methods for expansion.

There are many unknowns and potential negative impacts regarding enlarging MUTD's boundaries. MacArthur asked how other systems are handling this issue. Sweten replied that most transit funding comes from a portion of the sales tax. One option is to do nothing and keep following the development. Another option is to lead development by establishing future growth planning. The next steps include discussions with other transportation leaders and state representatives, working with local leaders, and creating a timeline plan and budget.

MacArthur asked how the district's growth boundary differs from that of the City. Wiener remarked that the growth boundary is a product of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the county planning board. Growth planning could be a part of the long-range transit planning going forward.

Aldridge said MUTD is meeting with other transit systems and MPOs to discuss funding for transit systems and educating state representatives about potential legislation. MacArthur emphasized that the messaging should include how Mountain Line positively influences the community's overall health and well-being.

Woodrow said establishing a transit coalition for working toward funding legislation would be the most effective approach given the limited tax structure. MacArthur added the main thing is to continue investigating the current process through petitions and redefining boundaries. Wiener

said a high priority is to lower the mil rate over a larger body of residents in a contiguous district. Cilimburg said exploring different options regarding the uneven tax burden makes sense as well. MacArthur said the focus should be on getting more resources to serve growth rather than redistribution.

MacArthur said getting a solid legal opinion on expanding or redefining the district would be helpful. An overlay of what is within the growth boundary that highlights parcels not in the district would also be beneficial. Strauss requested, if possible, to view a report showing how many rides per eligible rider are provided because MUTD's goal should be to maximize that number. Wiener asked to review the enabling legislation for the district.

MacArthur asked if the transit strategic planning consultant would provide something regarding district boundaries. Woodrow said efforts to review revenue that could be captured will continue. Dodson emphasized that the current strategic plan should discuss messaging that emphasizes boundary expansion results in equitable distribution.

Adjournment

12:15 p.m. – MacArthur adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by Darlene Craven