



**Missoula Urban Transportation District
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
August 22, 2024**

APPROVED

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jason Wiener
Lisa Sheppard
Sebastian Strauss
Amy Cilimburg
Sam Oliver

MEMBERS ABSENT

Don MacArthur

STAFF PRESENT

Jordan Hess
Jennifer Sweten
Colin Woodrow
Heather Halter
Allison Segal
Darlene Craven
Garin Wally
Allison Segal

Guests

1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call

12:04 p.m. – Cilimburg called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call. The new general manager, Jordan Hess, introduced himself.

2.0 Changes or Additions to the Agenda

None.

3.0 Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

4.0 Discussion Items/Reports/Comments

Cilimburg welcomed the new board member, Lisa Sheppard, executive director of Missoula Aging Services.

4.1 General Manager Report

Operations/Maintenance – Sweten reported that she and Hess had attended the Center for Technology & the Environment Small Urban Networks conference in Alexandria, Virginia. Both the in-ground bus scissor lifts are currently not operable, and the lift vendor has been non-responsive, so the lift manufacturer sent technicians who repaired one of the lifts. Parts have been ordered for the second one. Two new technicians will start in September which will complete the maintenance team. Three new buses have been delivered and a fourth one is expected within the week. Post delivery inspections and IT work are needed before the buses are operable.

Two paratransit cutaway vans have also arrived. Two new dispatching supervisors have been hired to start in September.

Communications/Marketing – Hess related that Kreimer was not able to attend. RFP development on the marketing and communications contract continues. MUTD is sponsoring and participating in a number of events in September, including Roots Fest and various strategic planning outreach events.

Administrative Services – Halter reported that four new employees are starting in September and there are eight slots open for the September 16 new driver class. A road supervisor and driver retired in August. The maintenance collective bargaining agreement is close to final. The equal employment opportunity program and analysis have been submitted to the Federal Transit Administration.

Finance – The UPWP narrative and Fiscal Year 2025 budget have been submitted to the Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). June financials and fiscal year end accounts have been completed. Segal drafted a sources and uses summary for the new facility and reconciled the Fiscal Year 2024 year end. Halter attended a labor law conference where the Teamsters Union president spoke.

Projects/Planning/Procurement/IT – Woodrow reported that the land acquisition documents were signed and sent over to the seller's attorney. MUTD hosted a thirty percent design meeting with the architecture and engineering and the construction manager at risk teams on Tuesday, August 20.

The charge management launch has been challenged with getting the chargers installed. Woodrow is working with Segal on a long-term scope change to address overages caused by higher than anticipated bus costs. Funds for the buses and the trolley will come from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program provided by the MPO. The trolley should be delivered in late winter or early spring 2025. A third charger is needed to close the power gap.

Strauss asked if the trolley could be used to mitigate the situation. Woodrow replied that the trolley battery is smaller but considering other ways to use the trolley could be helpful.

Strategic planning has moved to the second phase with a series of outreach meetings and a survey. An open house strategic planning meeting is scheduled for September 11 and a representative from the strategic planning consultant will attend the September planning committee meeting to discuss short-term scenarios.

Maintaining transit as a priority is a main goal of the community planning efforts. The staff has developed an outline for the bus stop master plan. The Transform Brooks-Connect Midtown committee has arrived at a consensus for establishing a southern terminus and traveling along Stephens and Orange Street. Though a decision between side running or bi-directional center running has not been reached. Because that decision hinges on cost, the project is paused.

Wiener asked why reaching consensus has been difficult. Woodrow replied that the chief issue is whether the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) will approve side running and the level of passenger amenities. Right-of-way acquisitions are costly and MUTD would have to add two more vehicles. Hess added that the Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) and the City of Missoula advocate center running, the project design default, so the issue is getting MRA to back the side running option instead. Wiener asked if a contract amendment was necessary. Woodrow

responded that MRA is the direct client and MUTD is the fiduciary administering the grant funding. The goal is to ensure that the planning grant is used for its intended purpose while properly scaling the project to stay within budget. Hess said the project's success hinges on aligning the goals of stop, station and transit-oriented development with MRA's goal of economic development that creates a tax base.

Strauss requested that the planning committee discuss how to make the bus the best alternative to sitting in traffic. He also wants to review comparisons that show how service speed is affected by side running as opposed to center running.

Hess thanked Sweten for her leadership during her tenure as the interim general manager.

4.2 Quarterly Ridership Report – Wally reported that total ridership is up about twelve percent from FY2023. Weekdays and Sundays are up ten percent and Saturday ridership is up 26 percent. Ridership is overall still down about thirty percent from FY2019's all time high (pre-COVID). Demand response ridership (paratransit) continues to grow, with weekend trips up to 45 percent on Saturdays.

Halter asked if the number of workers downtown Missoula are remote was available. Wally said the national downward trends indicate a post-COVID aversion to public spaces and transit. Sweten said national recovery rates are about 25 to thirty percent. Cilimburg asked what routes are most popular on Sundays. Wally said he had not reviewed any numbers showing those statistics. Oliver asked why the ridership numbers are still rebounding. Sweten said COVID caused a departure from a commuter workforce that is just now starting to swing back to working in person but many still fear public spaces. Woodrow said midday riding had increased, and service workers were riding on the weekend. Cilimburg pointed out the campaign to encourage more recreational ridership. Halter noted that many workplaces adopted more flexible work hours that changed how and when people need to ride the bus. Sheppard said paratransit ridership would continue to increase based on the demographics and demand over time. Cilimburg noted that the uptick resulted from launching the zero-fare program.

Strauss asked what data was needed to impact service. He also asked what proportion of total commuter trips can be attributed to MUTD versus car commuters. He wanted to know how MUTD compares to other transit alternatives.

5.1 CEO/General Manager Contract Review and Approval – Wiener said that an oversight subcommittee of board members should be formed to support Hess and ensure a successful transition. Strauss moved to approve the CEO/general manager contract with Jordan Hess, Oliver seconded and the motion pass unanimously. Strauss and Oliver volunteered to participate on the subcommittee to support Hess in reaching stated goals and measurable deliverables.

5.2 July 25, 2024, MUTD Board Meeting Minutes – Hess explained a minor correction in the communications section regarding the website partner's work scope. Oliver motioned to approve the revised minutes, Strauss seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

5.4 May 2024 Financial Statements – Strauss explained that there was no quorum at the July finance committee meeting to approve the financials. As of May, revenue was roughly thirteen percent above budget and expenses were approximately eleven percent below budget equaling a \$3.6 million operating funds gain. Oliver motioned to approve the May 2024 financials, Cilimburg seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

5.4 June 2024 Financial Statements – Straus said June represented the FY2024 year-end, but the statements had not been audited. That audit will be completed at year end. Because property tax revenues had been posted, the June statement reflects a 21 percent above budget increase. Expenses are still about nine percent below budget. The operating funds total increased from \$3.6 million to \$4.6 million. Strauss moved to approve the June 2024 unaudited financial statements. Oliver seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

FY24 Reserve Replenishment Plan – Segal said the finance committee recommends a \$5.2 million transfer into the operating reserve fund to provide five months of operating funds. A \$115,000 transfer to bring the fleet reserve balance to \$6.5 million is also requested as well as a \$1 million transfer into the facilities fund. Strauss explained that reserve policy stipulates that the reserve funds should be sufficient to cover expenses for five to seven years. Given the upcoming new facility project and a potential bus rapid transit transfer center, the facilities reserve may not cover the upcoming needs. The finance committee is recommending allocating a total of six million dollars that is not currently designated for any specific purpose. The facilities reserve balance will be adjusted later in the year depending on future projects and potential funding opportunities. Sheppard motioned to approve the recommended funds replenishment plan, Strauss seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

1:15 p.m. – Wiener left the meeting.

5.6 Resolution 24-05 Petition for Inclusion into the District (Linda Vista Estates-Phase 2) – Strauss moved to approve the resolution to add Linda Vista Estates-Phase 2 into the district, Cilimburg seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

5.7 Resolution 24-06 Petition to Enlarge Boundaries (Roller Coaster Subdivision) – Oliver motioned to approve the resolution adding Roller Coaster Subdivision to the district, Sheppard seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

5.8 Petition to Remove New Meadows Subdivision – Wally said the petition had been verified by the Missoula County Elections Office. The New Meadows subdivision is part of a larger area that was approved for annexation into the district in 1983. The subdivision is within the MUTD planning boundary. Because an area can only be removed from the district as part of the area with which it was added, the recommendation is to deny the petition for removal.

Cilimburg said MUTD is using the district boundaries when reviewing how to improve service. Strauss said efforts to petition out of the district will continue, forcing a clarification of direct service for which the agency needs to prepare.

Oliver motioned to deny the petition, Cilimburg seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. Strauss noted no members of the public were present to comment on any of the agenda items.

1:28 p.m. – The meeting was adjourned.