



**Missoula Urban Transportation District  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
October 24, 2024**

**APPROVED**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Don MacArthur  
Jason Wiener  
Sam Oliver  
Amy Cilimburg  
Sebastian Strauss

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Lisa Sheppard  
Eva Roche

**STAFF PRESENT**

Jordan Hess  
Colin Woodrow  
Spencer Starke  
Olga Kreimer  
Heather Halter  
Jordan Hess  
Frank Kuhl

**1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call**

12:02 p.m. – MacArthur called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call.

**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**

**4.1 General Manager’s Report** – Hess reported that a tentative agreement has been reached with the Teamsters for the maintenance contract and it should be ratified by the November board meeting. Wiener asked what the wage increase in the contract entailed. Hess did not know exact figures but stated the wages are comparable with peer systems around the country.

**Marketing & Communications** – Kreimer said that the agency chose a marketing contractor. The homecoming parade featured a mystery mascot and gave great visibility to the community. Strategic planning events are tentatively scheduled for late November and throughout the next couple months. Efforts to refine positive messaging around potential route changes continue. The agency will promote the fifty-five percent electric bus milestone. MUTD is partnering with Missoula in Motion on a promotion that includes incentives. A recent meeting with the Missoula Aging Services Advisory Council was very productive and provided valuable feedback.

**Administrative Services/Human Resources/Finance** – Eight new hires started in the scheduled operator training class. The dispatching team and operators have been working longer days to make up for pre-scheduled leaves and a fourth paratransit coordinator will be added.

Work on the audit continues as well as on the National Transit Database reporting. MacArthur asked if the paratransit coordinator position is a union one. Halter confirmed there were twenty applicants, including internal candidates.

Strauss asked if it was possible to reduce the number of paratransit calls by shifting more people to using the application. Hess responded that adding in-person interviews to the paratransit application process has resulted in some cost savings. Kreimer added that while there is demand for classes about the application, the interview with Missoula Aging Services revealed there is a demographic that prefers speaking to a person.

Strauss asked if there was a significant shift in the operator turnover rate that precipitated the added operator training class. Halter responded that six operators were out on full-time leave, a couple of operators retired, and a high number of sick call-offs dictated the need to add operators.

**Projects/Planning/Procurement/IT** – Woodrow reported that a Wendell staff member had worked with the maintenance staff to establish equipment needs as they approach sixty percent design completion to ensure the right equipment to operate the new building was installed. The survey and the geotechnical work at the new site have been completed. MacArthur asked when a report would be available. Woodrow replied that Wendell should have something by next week.

The City of Missoula should decide on a Grant Creek realignment contractor before Thanksgiving. The agency will hold a full team meeting on November 20. The planning committee will review the thirty percent design at the December meeting. Quality Construction will present its first cost estimate in January 2025. The new chargers have not yet been commissioned due to a technician shortage.

Woodrow thanked the board members for their time and input at the October 21 special board meeting to discuss strategic planning. The requested draft scenarios with associated costs will be presented at the November planning committee meeting, with a final strategic plan to be presented for adoption at the January 2025 board meeting.

The automatic passenger counting (APC) continues to be challenging as the software vendor is not supporting the product adequately. MUTD has a year to certify its APC but the data produced is not accurate based on the different data collection devices and the software vendor's continued laxity in supporting its product. In addition, the vendor is sunsetting the product before MUTD's contract expires. MacArthur pointed out that the APC project had been a considerable investment and suggested withholding payment until it produces and performs per the contract. Wiener suggested using video as a classifier model as an alternative. Woodrow said there are set parameters for collecting and verifying the data and his team would continue working on a viable solution for presenting to the board at a later date.

The agency purchased a new service truck to replace a twenty-year old vehicle that could no longer be serviced. The agency will implement digital signage that will be run by the IT staff for operational control and cost savings.

Wiener asked for details about the land acquisition. Woodrow replied that the transaction depends on the city certifying the Grant Creek realignment with a conditional letter of map revision.

Hess told the board that the agency is now running fifty-five percent electric, and the four new buses are now in service, mostly along Route 8. As it represents a milestone in the electrification initiative, a focused marketing campaign will be launched.

**4.2 Transfer Center Update** – Woodrow said the transfer center renovation is still in the scoping stage as there are five areas the agency would like to renovate. Hess said the local government building renovation is going to take longer so MUTD will need to use the transfer center longer. Improving it for greater functionality makes sense. Also, the city is eager to partner with the agency on redeveloping city hall. MacArthur asked what MUTD’s role would be in that partnership. Hess proposed leading a redevelopment project and cited the example in Boise where Federal Transportation Administration funds were used.

Woodrow listed the five areas in the transfer center needing renovation as the island roof, creating a new breakroom and bathroom, and redesigning the retail space. The island roof needs to be raised about a foot to accommodate the new buses’ higher height. The next priority, and a longstanding union request, is installing a separate bathroom for the staff. Redesigning the retail space and adding digital signage are also going to be scoped. MacArthur asked if there was any assistance to pay for the work, if some of the work could be delayed based on priority, and whether obtaining a grant to finish the work would be feasible. Hess responded that the FTA requires all assets to be maintained until they can be fully depreciated. If MUTD uses federal funds for the transfer center renovation, the transfer center would have to be maintained for twenty years. MacArthur recommended a proposal that detailed priorities and costs for each of the five areas. Woodrow said the goal is to do everything very minimally to avoid extra costs. MacArthur said that based on the project scope, an architect is statutorily required and suggested recruiting the architecture and engineering vendor for the new facility to craft an acceptable design and plans for submitting to the city.

**4.3 RAISE-Transform Brook-Connect Midtown** – A scope change was given to the vendor for further investigating the side-running versus center-running bus rapid transit (BRT) options. The additional scope costs approximately \$37,000 which will be split between MUTD and the Missoula Metropolitan Organization (MPO). The vendor, HDR, will present at the December planning committee meeting, with a more thorough analysis to be presented at the February planning committee meeting. MacArthur asked why the property the city bought was ten blocks short of the original southern terminus location. Woodrow said there is too much traffic congestion to take the route all the way to Walmart on Highway 93 and ridership potential is low. Woodrow said the redevelopment potential around the mall is much greater and if the southern terminus were too far south, it would not function as a transfer center. MacArthur said spending the money to analyze the BRT running orientation is a good thing. Wiener observed development around the property the city purchased was quite dense.

## **5.0 Action Items**

**5.1 September 26, 2024, Board Meeting Minutes** – Wiener motioned to approve the minutes with the revisions he and Cilimburg requested regarding a statement MacArthur made and elective pay to reduce cost for design based on the Federal Inflation Protection Act. Strauss also requested a revision regarding BRT. MacArthur seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**5.2 August 2024 Financial Statements** – Strauss said the statements show that expenses are twenty percent below budget due to staffing and the timing of budgeted expenses. The investment income that the county manages will be significantly below budget. MacArthur asked if MUTD had any choice as to how the money was invested. Segal replied in the negative and explained that the county invests all the funds it manages into three different funds and dividends are paid based on a daily average for the month. Wiener suggested that higher interest rates could have yielded the windfall. Strauss said it might be worthwhile to inquire about alternatives for investing and

MacArthur concurred. Strauss motioned to approve financial statements as presented, Wiener seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

**5.3 Disposal of Bus #108** – Hess said this bus was a twin to the bus the approved disposing at the September meeting. A religious institution in Great Falls purchased #108. Wiener seconded the motion to approve the bus disposal, Oliver seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

**5.4 Branding & Marketing Contract** – Kuhl said the agency interviewed three candidates and chose Six Pony Hitch as its marketing contractor. The two-year contract is for \$180,000 with the option for three one-year extensions at an \$250 hourly rate not to exceed \$90,000 annually. Kreimer said Six Pony Hitch demonstrated a thorough understanding of MUTD's goals and has a lot of local connections and community knowledge. The fee arrangement is different than the one with the previous vendor and the contract will provide for flexibility to use other vendors based on need. Wiener asked what the first tasks were. Kreimer responded that accessibility updates to the branding material were first on the agenda as well as a tagline update. A library of recruiting materials with new branding and color palette is also scheduled. MacArthur asked what the long-term plans included. Kreimer responded that storytelling and community partnerships were on that list as well as identifying future needs. Strauss moved to authorize the execution of a branding and marketing contract with Six Pony Hitch. Cilimburg seconded the motion. Hess asked Kuhl to list out the scoring criteria as follows: proposal quality including work plan and approach – 25 percent; qualifications of assigned personnel – 25 percent; present and projected workloads and capacity for project requirements – 10 percent; familiarity with the community, culture and/or transit industry – 10 percent; and price – 10 percent. The selection committee consisted of Hess, Kreimer, Halter and Kuhl who scored the proposals independently first, then met and chose the top three for interviewing. MacArthur said it was crucial to gauge the return on investment and the contractor's performance in providing products and services. Kreimer noted the hourly contract provided for regular meetings and constant evaluation to determine performance and direction. Strauss and MacArthur expressed concern about using up the budgeted amount before the end of the year. Kreimer observed that the contractor had performed well on the marketing audit and communications plan development that provided a foundation for ensuring performance. Craven pointed out that Six Pony Hitch had applied for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification that would help MUTD reach its goals.

**5.5 Service Truck Purchase** – Kuhl explained that the oldest service truck has been unreliable over the past few years and it was time to replace it. The Chevrolet dealer sent the lowest bid at \$52,621, eighty percent of which will be paid for with budgeted federal funds. The truck will be used for snowplowing. Cilimburg mentioned that the city water department was using electric vehicles. MacArthur observed that a heavy vehicle was needed for mounting the snowplow. Strauss asked if the truck needed to be a new one since federal funds are paying for it and suggested that a used truck should be considered in the future. Oliver motioned to authorize the truck purchase, Cilimburg seconded it and the motion carried unanimously.

1:56 p.m. – MacArthur adjourned the meeting.