



**Missoula Urban Transportation District
Board of Directors Retreat Minutes
January 8, 2025**

APPROVED

MEMBERS PRESENT

Don MacArthur
Eva Rocke
Sam Oliver
Jason Wiener
Amy Cilimburg
Lisa Sheppard

MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Jordan Hess
Colin Woodrow
Jen Sweten
Heather Halter

The facilitator, Rachel Huff-Doria, initiated conversations regarding the transit strategic plan and the new facility cost estimates. She emphasized the need for a high-level perspective and guiding principles for future decision-making, encouraging open dialogue among board members. The team highlighted significant achievements over the past five years, including the successful passage of a mill levy and a substantial federal grant for facility improvements. Discussions also touched on the transition to electric buses and the importance of public support for upcoming projects.

Financial projections were a major focus, with the budget for FY 25 projected at \$17.9 million in revenue against \$17.4 million in operating expenses, resulting in a prospective positive gain. Concerns were raised about potential financial challenges, including a looming financial cliff and the risks of losing tax revenue due to legislative changes. The group discussed the implications of these financial scenarios on service delivery, particularly regarding paratransit, and the need for a balanced approach in strategic planning. Participants were organized into small groups to discuss key points and share insights, with an emphasis on aligning perspectives for future planning while addressing financial constraints.

Consensus was built around ensuring that the award for building the new facility was not squandered and prioritizing capital investment that provides service. Another emphasis was on staying within the budget without asking for more funding by expanding the service with minimal cost impact.

1:15 – Rocke and Oliver left meeting

The team also discussed broader community support through timely messaging and setting values that would compel the community to endorse and pay for transit service. The new facility is the best tool for continuing to deliver community-oriented service. The goal is to invest in a facility that grows with the community's and the agency's needs. If the agency is tied to a particular future, it may not be able to pivot service delivery based on changing community needs. The challenge is providing service today while adapting existing tools for future use.

Maintaining priorities while balancing risk versus opportunity requires aligned values and shared vision.

The facilitator advised that the first survey revealed that consensus leaned toward service expansion while the second survey showed further emphasis in the same direction.

Community goodwill dictates organizational health, not how much money is in the bank. The group aligned on being community oriented and that the community understood the agency's value.

Upcoming events in the next five weeks include finalizing and approving the strategic plan, and internal discussions about building the new facility using alternate project scopes and phased development for adequately servicing the future debt. A decision about what drives capital investment should also be made. The board will review the 30% cost estimate at the January meeting, and the February planning committee meeting will focus on the strategic plan.

The following priorities were established at the meeting: balancing the cost of the new facility against service expansion; understanding the consequences of investing in the new facility; valuing infrastructure to better serve the community by leveraging current resources to the maximum extent possible; and understanding specific price points for the new facility and how that affects reaching long-term goals.

The meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.