



**Missoula Urban Transportation District
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
May 22, 2025**

APPROVED

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Jordan Hess
Colin Woodrow
Allison Segal
Heather Halter
Jen Sweten
Frank Kuhl
Olga Kreimer
Garin Wally
Darlene Craven
Stephane Gariepy

GUESTS

Derek Hitt, Teamsters Local No. 2 Business Agent
Don Groves, Teamsters Local No. 2 Shop Steward
Sen. Willis Curdy, SD 49
Susan Aaberg, Missoula City Chief Civil/Administrative Attorney
Mary Rector
Jamie Sindelar

1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call

12:00 p.m. – Wiener called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call.

12:03 p.m. – Strauss joined the meeting.

2.0 Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

3.0 Approval of Minutes & Financial Statements

3.1 March 27, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes – Oliver moved to approve the minutes, Cilimburg seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

3.2 March 2025 Financial Statements – Wiener moved to approve the March financials as recommended by the finance committee and Sheppard seconded it. Compensation is well under budget even though the agency is fully staffed, resulting in some vacancy savings carrying forward. There is some lag time in property tax reporting. The motion passed unanimously.

4.1 Agency Activity Report – Hess reported that the senior leadership staff conducted productive and informative employee engagement meetings. The non-represented employees participated in a personality-based workplace training called Real Colors facilitated by the MSU Local Government Center. The staff also learned about working for a public entity and board operations. Because the loan grant was executed, the agency is able to pay for the ten new Gillig buses. Elizabeth Wehling and Jasmine Blumenbach were accepted into the Transit New Leaders Institute as program fellows. They will participate in a year-long program with peers from the Washington State Transit Association.

Sweten reported that the maintenance and operations teams were working to commission the eight (out of ten) new buses. Once all ten buses are operational, the fleet will be 90% battery electric. The agency hosted a facility tour for the Zero Emission Bus Resource Alliance conference attendees.

Gariepy said the agency had received a paratransit van from another county that will alleviate restricted service. The staff is working with the contractor to prepare the transfer center for the roof elevation and detour plans are in place for the summer construction season.

Woodrow reported that the certified letter of map revision for the land purchase is forthcoming and the administrative settlement package is ready to go. The staff is preparing a new facility update for the June 11 Federal Transportation Administration Region 8 meeting. The new facility 60% design should be ready for presentation in August at the planning committee and board meetings. A joint meeting with the Missoula Redevelopment Agency board of directors and the Missoula Urban Transportation District board of directors to wrap up the Brooks Street Bus Rapid Transit study has been scheduled for June 12.

Woodrow advised that negotiations with Clever Devices to obtain an accurate automatic passenger count continue. Strauss asked if working with another vendor was feasible. Clever Devices has advised the APC software is proprietary and maintaining a relationship with Clever for the hardware is vital. Because the APC data is required, it will be necessary to work with both vendors to submit an accurate count. Strauss asked if the agency could only work with the new vendor. Woodrow responded that the agency needs to keep working with Clever until the contract expires in 2027 for a variety of hardware needs.

Halter reported that her department will begin the recruitment process to fill the director of operations position and that Elizabeth Wehling has been promoted to operations manager. The staff will present the compensation study at the June board meeting.

Segal said the federal funding request will be processed once the new buses have been processed. A request for proposals was posted for the municipal financial advisor on the new facility project with an expected contracting date in late June.

Wiener asked about the additional wash drive bay scoped into the 30% new facility design. Woodrow responded that the intention had always been to scope it in for future needs.

5. 1 Operations Leadership Transition – Hess advised that Sweten's last day would be May 30, and the board was invited to her sendoff party. He expressed his admiration for her personally and professionally. Sweten thanked the agency for the support throughout her tenure. Hess said Stephane Gariepy would act as interim operations director and Elizabeth Wehling had been promoted to operations manager. Thomas Williams, the maintenance manager, will now report to Hess.

5.2 FY 2026 Draft Budget Review – Segal related that the FY25 approved budget was \$17.3 million in expenditures and \$18 million in revenue. The FY26 budget reflects a \$1 million increase in revenue due to additional federal funding. FY25 compensation is over as a result of implementing vacancy savings that will allow for potential turnover. Expenses increased due to one-time projects that are outside of general operations. Final insurance costs are still outstanding, and adding the new buses will likely result in a premium increase.

Draft revenue from property taxes is projected at a 3% increase over the current year and the federal operating assistance is budgeted for \$4.4 million. Investment income will decrease based on expenditures that will draw down the accounts. State operating assistance could potentially increase to about \$560,000.

Draft expenses are budgeted at \$17.6 million, 76% of which is compensation. Maintenance costs account for \$2 million and administrative services account for close to \$1 million. General operations cost close to \$1 million to run and the transfer center costs about \$100,000. Expenses for each division (operations, general, administrative) break down as follows: operations represents 66% and includes a \$300,000 increase. Fixed route operations costs have decreased through implementing salary savings. Otherwise, there is not much variance between the current budget and FY26.

Administrative expenses include carryover costs and an increase in marketing communications expenses due to midlife vehicle wraps and a website upgrade. The maintenance budget will keep the engine, transmissions and traction replacements. Sheppard asked if more electric buses reduced maintenance costs. Sweten responded that the diesel buses will likely need replacement parts before they age out in 2028.

Cilimburg asked if a contractor would be hired for the website upgrade. Hess responded that the firm that hosts the website will perform some of the upgrades. The bus stops will get technical upgrades using QR codes for real-time travel information.

MacArthur asked if the agency complied with all five of the Small Transit Intensive Cities program requirements to qualify for additional performance-based funding. Hess responded that initial research revealed that the increase in paratransit trips could have caused the five-requirement compliance, and the agency has not been previously required to comply with five criteria before. The 2023 service expansion and the continued ridership increase may also have played roles in the results. The STIC funding increased from 2% to 3% of total urban funding support.

Segal presented the draft pro forma similar to what has been previously portrayed. Forthcoming capital projects such as the new facility and the transfer center renovation represent the biggest expenses. A discussion on reserve balances is slated for the August board meeting. Recreational shuttles have been added to the proforma. Woodrow confirmed MacArthur's question about fully paying for the charging infrastructure without matching funds. He emphasized that charging infrastructure was vital as the existing chargers were failing nationwide. The agency is applying for a new low- and no-emission grant that will offset the costs if awarded.

5.3 FY 2026 Permissive Medical Levy – Segal explained that the permissive medical levy is necessary because medical expenses go up faster than inflation. Wiener opened the public hearing by asking for comment from the public. Hearing none, the hearing was closed. MacArthur moved to approve the levy, Cilimburg seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

5.4 Transfer Center Roof A&E Contract – Woodrow said the architecture and engineering bids ranged from \$34,000 to \$16,020, and the staff recommended choosing OZ Architecture to produce designs for the transfer center renovation. MacArthur moved to authorize the general manager/CEO to sign a contract for A&E services with OZ Architects for the transfer center renovation in the amount of \$26,000. Oliver seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

5.5 Liberty Proposal for Heliox Charger Installation – Woodrow explained that because the Heliox chargers arrived early, and Liberty Electric was available to install them, it was necessary to execute a service contract with Liberty Electric without the board's authorization. Hess added that deviating from procedure by not obtaining prior authorization was not taken lightly. It was a matter of Liberty Electric being available now or extending the project timeline to accommodate the authorization process. He emphasized that the staff did follow FTA procurement protocol in partnering with the vendor during the grant application process. Rocke moved to ratify the general manager/CEO's approval of a contract with Liberty Electric for installing three chargers and accessories at a cost of \$187,260. MacArthur asked if the staff was aware of the estimated cost. Woodrow said at the time of the grant application, the cost was \$90,000 less but the staff negotiated a discount with Liberty Electric. MacArthur asked if the charger life expectancy aligned with the bus life expectancy and what the warranty was. Woodrow said the warranty was two years and the Heliox chargers would provide necessary charging redundancy. MacArthur wanted to know what the agency is spending on chargers on a per mile basis. Sheppard seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5.6 Electronic Records Resolution & Policy – Hess said the resolution will establish electronic records as the official permanent record, allowing the staff to purge archival records and facilitate public records requests more efficiently. MacArthur moved to approve the resolution, Cilimburg seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

5.7 Bus Disposal – Gariepy advised that Bus #503 had reached the end of its useful life, and the required repairs would be too costly. The agency intends to put the bus on auction and potentially bring in \$5,000. Cilimburg moved to authorize the staff to dispose of Bus #503, MacArthur seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

5.8 Golden West Removal Petition Lega/Legislative Update & Disposition – Strauss moved to take off the tabled motion regarding the removal petition, Oliver seconded, and Wiener opened the matter for discussion. Hess acknowledged the members of the public attending from both the Golden West and New Meadows subdivisions, as well as Sen. Curdy, for their continued attention. He introduced Aaberg who had submitted a memorandum to the board explaining possible approaches for implementing changes required by HB 764. Those three paths are as follows:

1. The board can request concurrence from the petitioners on postponing the removal petition decision until after the effective date.
2. The board could evaluate the petition on its merits following the current statute's requirements. If the board denies the removal petition, the petitioners could refile after October 1.
3. The board could allow the petition to take effect by taking no action and letting the 60-day time period lapse.

Wiener asked what additional information would be needed should the board postpone consideration of the removal petition. Aaberg suggested gaining agreement between the board and the petitioners that the board would take action on or after October 1.

Sindelar asked if postponing the decision was illegal given that it was past the 60-day deadline. She mentioned that she did not receive notice of the New Meadows petition decision until eight days past the deadline. Aaberg responded that the statute required that action be taken, not that notification be delivered, within the 60-day deadline. MacArthur asked when the subdivision would be taken off the tax rolls. Hess replied that the tax bills are assessed in November and May, so as of January 1, 2025, the first bill would assess in November of this year and May of next year. Cilimburg advised that the board abide by the provisions of the law as it exists now and when it changes. Sen. Curdy will provide a review from a legislative staff attorney once that is available.

MacArthur summarized the issue as two issues – whether the subdivision residents would agree to postponing action until October and what the tax implications are. Wiener said the current property tax assessment schedule dictated that the board would need to take action before October 1 to avoid impacting the property owners' November tax bills. MacArthur moved to deny the Golden West petition with the understanding that the board would entertain resubmitted petitions from both the Golden West and New Meadows subdivisions in enough time to avoid additional tax assessments. Wiener seconded the motion, noting that the board will revise its policy in the interim and take action at the earliest possible time in compliance with the law on October 1. Cilimburg seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously. An update on the policy revision will be given at the June board meeting.

5.9 General Manager/Chief Executive Officer 6-Month Performance Review – Wiener closed the meeting for the discussion regarding the GM/CEO's performance review.

6.0 Adjournment – Wiener adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.