

MINUTES*

MAC MEETING OF AUGUST 16, 2023



The METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) met on Wednesday, August 16, 2023. The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting. *Minutes are “summary” minutes, not verbatim minutes.

1. **CALLED TO ORDER** at 6:03 PM.

2. **ROLL CALL** - The following MAC Members were **present**, representing a quorum:

Jessica de Wit, Chair
Joseph Martinez, Vice Chair
James Cruse
Veronica Elsea

Michael Pisano
Becky Taylor
James Von Hendy

3. **COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Chair de Wit mentioned the additional written communication received by Cindy Odom on August 15, 2023 (attached with METRO response).

Ms. Elsea mentioned that construction has started on Front Street as well as some challenges with Customer Service.

Hearing nothing further, Chair de Wit moved to the next agenda item.

4. **RECEIVE AND FILE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF APRIL 19, 2023**

MOTION: ACCEPT AND FILE THE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF APRIL 19, 2023 AS AMENDED

MOTION: ELSEA

SECOND: PISANO

MOTION PASSED WITH 6 AYES: de Wit, Martinez, Elsea, Pisano, Taylor, and Von Hendy. Cruse was absent.

5. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC)**

Ms. Elsea asked if a semi-annual report was provided to the Board at the June 23, 2023 Board of Directors (Board) Meeting. Chair de Wit mentioned that she attended the Board Meeting and provided a MAC update and it is included in the agenda packet.

Hearing nothing further, Chair de Wit moved to the next agenda item.

6. **SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE**

a. **Quarterly Ridership Report**

John Urgo, Planning and Development Director, said that the quarterly ridership report will be going to the Board on August 25, 2023. He reported that we are now closer to 70% pre-COVID levels. METRO set a goal of doubling its ridership within the next five years. To meet this goal, ridership would need to increase 15% per year on average. METRO is on track to meet that goal. Director Urgo also mentioned that METRO has had one complete quarter of Youth Cruz free ridership, showing a 300% increase in youth ridership.

b. Bus Stops

b.i. Update on Braille Bus Stop Signage

Ms. Elsea mentioned that she engaged in a survey of all the visually impaired people she could find around the County. She said that what most people wanted on a sign was the Stop ID and phone number. Director Uργο thanked Ms. Elsea for the update.

c. Other Projects

c.i Update on Reimagine METRO

Director Uργο said that a recommendation will be going to the Board on August 25, 2023 for service changes in December. In June, we opened a public comment period and have been doing a lot of outreach on two alternatives.

Ms. Elsea and Mr. Pisano mentioned that they attended some of the Reimagine METRO meetings. Discussion followed on the Reimagine METRO project.

7. UPDATE ON FACILITY TOUR

Margo Ross, COO, said that a tour of our Judy K. Souza Operations Facility will be provided.

Hearing nothing further, Chair de Wit moved to the next agenda item.

8. SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FAIR – SEPTEMBER 13 – 17, 2023

Margo Ross, COO, reported that METRO will be participating in the Santa Cruz County Fair September 13 – 17, 2023. We will be offering free fares on Route 79F (daily) and 79 (weekends only). Ross mentioned that we will be posting more information on our website and will also be partnering with the Santa Cruz County Fair to put information on their website as well.

Hearing nothing further, Chair de Wit moved to the next agenda item.

9. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO CEO

Hearing none, Chair de Wit moved to the next agenda item.

10. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hearing none, Chair de Wit moved to the next agenda item.

11. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA

- Update on Mobility Training Coordinator
- Choose 2024 Dates for MAC Meetings
- Elect a new Chair and Vice Chair
- Recap of Santa Cruz County Fair
- Service Planning Updates

12. DISTRIBUTION OF VOUCHERS

Vouchers distributed by Elizabeth Rocha, Administrative Specialist.

13. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

Chair de Wit announced the next MAC Meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at 6:00 PM at the METRO Admin Office, 110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair de Wit adjourned the meeting at 6:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Rocha
Administrative Specialist

Attachment

Elizabeth Rocha-Rocha

From: Donna Bauer
Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2023 2:07 PM
To: Elizabeth Rocha-Rocha
Subject: FW: ROUTE CHANGES -Agaenda item 3(?)

From: John Urgo <JUrgo@scmttd.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2023 1:06 PM
To: celtiqueco@gmail.com
Cc: Donna Bauer <DBauer@scmttd.com>
Subject: RE: ROUTE CHANGES -Agaenda item 3(?)

Hi Cindy,

Thank you for taking the time to share your concerns regarding METRO's proposed service changes as part of the Reimagine METRO service expansion plan. I apologize for the delay in getting back to you.

First, I want to acknowledge the challenges and service disruptions of the past few years, including the temporary suspension of the 91X and the rerouting of the 69A. METRO lost nearly a third of its bus operator workforce due to retirement and attrition during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated temporary service reductions. I would, however, like to correct some information on those reductions: service to UCSC was cut 25% below pre-COVID levels, where it remained until September 14th of this year, while service in Watsonville was actually above pre-COVID levels in 2020 and 2021 due to the introduction of the Watsonville Circulator, before dropping 9% due to the operator shortages. Throughout the pandemic, service was intentionally prioritized in Watsonville over UCSC, even though that meant thousands UCSC students being left behind by overcrowded buses.

Due to renewed efforts and focus in hiring and training bus operators, METRO is in a position to increase service roughly 10% in December but I would also like to correct some information regarding the planned Reimagine METRO service changes: in Watsonville we are planning a 10% increase *above* pre-pandemic levels, while service to UCSC would be brought back to close to pre-pandemic levels.

Below is a summary of the proposed changes. You can also preview them [here](#):

- Service from Watsonville on Freedom Blvd/Airport Rd to Cabrillo College and Santa Cruz will be doubled from once an hour to twice an hour
- Service from Watsonville on Main Street to Cabrillo College, Capitola Mall and Santa Cruz will be doubled from once an hour to twice an hour
 - o Both of these routes would operate every 30 minutes until 9:00 p.m. and every 60 minutes until midnight; in other words, there will be a bus every 15 minutes between Watsonville and Santa Cruz and at Cabrillo College.
- Service on Route 79 would be doubled to every 30 minutes.
- A new route would serve Ohlone Parkway and connect the new County health facility on Westridge to Freedom Centre and Watsonville Community Hospital
- The 91X would return as a peak period route running every 30 minutes, with plans to increase to all day once we have the workforce to do so
 - o This means there will be 6 buses per hour from Watsonville to Santa Cruz, an increase from the current 4.
- In Santa Cruz, Route 10 would be interlined with Routes 66 and 68 to connect Live Oak to UCSC

Attachment

As part of the service change process, METRO evaluates whether service changes have a discriminatory impact on minority and low-income individuals. The [Reimagine METRO Alternatives Report](#) analyzes in detail how many people are affected by the changes to coverage and frequency in the alternatives on weekdays in the daytime, weekday evenings, weekend daytimes, and weekend evenings. In general, the proposed change would increase access to service every 30-minutes or better by at least 20 percentage points, compared to existing conditions, with greater increases for low income and minority individuals. All alternatives would also increase access to jobs for over 62% of the population, with greater increases for low income and minority individuals. This is due to the increase in frequency on the Freedom/Airport to Santa Cruz and Main Street to Santa Cruz routes.

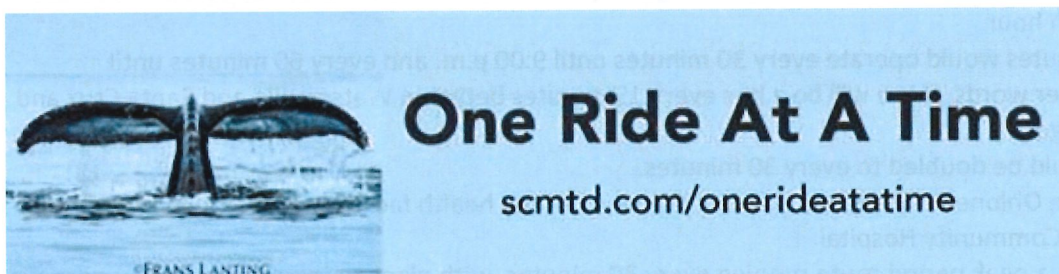
In terms of outreach, the process can always be improved with more time and resources. An initial round of outreach was held in March and April. As part of that process, METRO staff, including bus operators and union representatives, were invited to attend a three-day workshop, although it's a valid point that more could be done to involve staff and bus operators. A second round of outreach started in June to solicit public feedback on the service proposals. The project team hosted an online public meeting in July that drew over 90 attendees; stakeholder conversations were held with 20 organizations; rider focus groups involved 30 riders who had participated in the initial round of outreach from throughout the service area; three in-person outreach events were held in Watsonville and one in Live Oak; an online survey solicited responses from over 800 individuals; and the project website logged over 1,500 unique visitors.

I hope that summary addresses some of your concerns but please feel free to reach out with additional questions or comments. I ride the bus almost every day with my three year-old to daycare, and it's been encouraging to see the recent increases in ridership, particularly among high school students taking advantage of METRO's free fare for youth program and Cabrillo students returning to in person classes. I believe the service changes planned for December will help create a network that is useful and attractive for more people's trips while improving the experience of current riders, with additional service expansions planned for the future.

Sincerely,

John

JOHN URGO
Director, Planning & Development
T: (831) 420-2537 | jurgo@scmttd.com
Santa Cruz METRO
110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060



Attachment

From: Cindy O <celtiqueco@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 21, 2023 10:08 PM
To: boardinquiries@scmtd.com
Subject: Fwd: ROUTE CHANGES -Agaenda item 3(?)

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

You have not previously corresponded with this sender.

~ Please exercise caution when clicking links or opening attachments. ~

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Cindy O <celtiqueco@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Aug 15, 2023, 10:25 AM
Subject: ROUTE CHANGES -Agaenda item 3(?)
To: <mac@scmtd.com>

I am writing with my concerns over the Metro's proposed changes in routes which severely negatively impact Watsonville. I am a 72 year old woman who lives in Watsonville & uses the bus 4-5 times a week to go to Capitola or Santa Cruz with my bike. Before I moved here 7 years ago I lived in Santa from 1971. Although I had a car until 1991 I mostly have used a bicycle. Since living in Watsonville, you have only cut bus routes here. Last winter's elimination of an early express bus and the 69A altogether was a huge hardship for Watsonville working people. The route through Rolling Hills was ridiculous & useless. Not once when I rode the bus did we pick up/drop off anyone. Now you are planning to cut express busses to Watsonville. This is unconscionable, depriving the least affluent working people of an efficient travel mode to work. This is done to provide more service to UCSC students from privileged, wealthy families who can afford a university. Many parents buy houses here for their kids. The university has built no housing for the them, at the same time there are many times more students than were ever planned for the campuses. They don't pay taxes here, they are here only part of the year. The idea of giving them preference over Watsonville citizens is the antithesis of "public service/ public transit". One could also call it classist or racist considering the large percentage of Hispanic citizens ride the bus from Watsonville.

Your servers were completely bogus as they were only on-line, targeting students & young people. Older people, Hispanic people never saw them! To be fair you need to put paper surveys, signs, notices on the busses, at the bus stations. Please, don't load your own surveys, then claim you never hear from South County. The people who come up with new schedules & routes NEVER RIDE THE BUS, let alone depend on it for transportation to work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Cindy Odom 831 201 3249

Talk to your bus drivers! They all tell me you don't