



**SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT (METRO)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES*
WATSONVILLE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 275 MAIN STREET, WATSONVILLE, CA
AUGUST 22, 2025 – 9:00 AM**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) convened on Friday, August 22, 2025, as a hybrid meeting.

The Board Meeting agenda packet can be found online at www.SCMTD.com. *Minutes are “summary” minutes, not verbatim minutes. Audio recordings of Board meeting open sessions are available to the public upon request.

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1 CALLED TO ORDER at 9:03 AM by Board Chair Downing.

2 SAFETY DEBRIEF

Gregory Strecker, Safety, Security & Risk Management Director, provided a debriefing on safety, emphasizing the evacuation routes in response to an emergency.

3 ROLL CALL

The following Directors were **present**, representing a quorum:

Director Rebecca Downing	County of Santa Cruz
Director Jimmy Dutra	City of Watsonville
Director Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson	City of Santa Cruz
Director Manu Koenig	County of Santa Cruz
Director Fabian Leonor	County of Santa Cruz
Director Donna Lind	City of Scotts Valley
Director Martinez	County of Santa Cruz
Director Scott Newsome	City of Santa Cruz
Director Melinda Orbach AR 9:14	City of Capitola
Director Quiroz-Carter* AR 9:07	City of Watsonville
Vacant	County of Santa Cruz
Ex-Officio Director Alta Northcutt	Cabrillo College
Ex-Officio Director Edward Reiskin	UC Santa Cruz

*Attended via teleconference at 231 Oakes Road, Santa Cruz, CA

Corey Aldridge	CEO/General Manager
Julie Sherman	General Counsel

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

4.1 Today's meeting was broadcast by Community Television of Santa Cruz County.

4.2 Language Line Services was unable to provide Spanish interpretation services for today's meeting.

5 BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMENTS

Director Dutra welcomed everyone to Watsonville and provided an update on the Vision Zero Action Plan for Freedom Boulevard. He also encouraged everyone to look at the City of Watsonville's remodeled lobby.

Director Martinez announced that the County Board of Supervisors has appointed Elizabeth Madrigal to METRO's Board of Directors.

Director Leonor thanked Daniel Zaragoza, Operations Deputy Director, and his team for a tour of the ParaCruz facility and providing an overview of the day-to-day operations there and how it is helping our community.

Director Lind thanked METRO staff who participated in the Family Fun Day held on July 19, 2025 in Scotts Valley. This was a collaborative event with countywide parks and recreation agencies.

Board Chair Downing thanked the City of Watsonville for welcoming us today and reminded all that a Week Without Driving is happening September 30 – October 5, 2025. A countywide event will be held at the Capitola Mall on September 30th from 11 AM to 3 PM to promote a week off from driving.

Director Quiroz-Carter mentioned she has started commuting by bus to and from work and expressed that it has been a pleasant experience.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing moved to the next agenda item.

6 ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Rabbit, member of the public, expressed concern with the noise level of METRO's temporary hydrogen fueling station and the impacts to his neighborhood.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing moved to the next agenda item.

7 LABOR ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATIONS

Having none, Board Chair Downing moved to the next agenda item.

8 ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION TO SUPPORT EXISTING AGENDA ITEMS

Having none, Board Chair Downing moved to the next agenda item.

CONSENT AGENDA

All items appearing on the Consent Agenda are recommended actions which are considered to be routine and will be acted upon as one motion. All items removed will be considered later in the agenda. The Board Chair will allow public input prior to the approval of the Consent Agenda items.

**9.1 ACCEPT AND FILE: PRELIMINARY APPROVED CHECK AND ACH JOURNAL
DETAIL FOR THE MONTHS OF JUNE AND JULY 2025**

Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

9.2 ACCEPT AND FILE:

A. MINUTES OF JUNE 27, 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager

- 9.3 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE METRO PARACRUZ OPERATIONS STATUS REPORT FOR APRIL, MAY AND JUNE 2025
Rina Solorio Gomez, Assistant Operations Manager, Paratransit
- 9.4 ACCEPT AND FILE: FISCAL YEAR 2025 FOURTH QUARTER GRANTS MANAGEMENT REPORT
Derek Touns, Planning and Innovation Deputy Director
- 9.5 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF DECLARING VEHICLES AND/OR EQUIPMENT AS EXCESS FOR PURPOSES OF DISPOSAL OR AUCTION
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.6 APPROVE: METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) VACANCIES
Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager
- 9.7 APPROVE: FY26 RENEWAL OF PROPERTY INSURANCE COVERAGE AND EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES LIABILITY COVERAGE
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.8 APPROVE: REVISED CLASS SPECIFICATIONS AND WAGE SCALES FOR POSITIONS WITHIN THE PARTS DEPARTMENT
Dawn Crummié, Chief Human Resources Officer
- 9.9 APPROVAL OF A 2% WAGE INCREASE FOR PARACRUZ STAFF DUE TO REALIGNMENT OF JOB DUTIES
Dawn Crummié, Chief Human Resources Officer
- 9.10 APPROVE: CONSIDER A RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER AS THE AUTHORIZED AGENT TO SUBMIT A PROJECT CLAIM AND EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT TO RECEIVE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 CALIFORNIA STATE OF GOOD REPAIR (SGR) FUNDS
Derek Touns, Planning and Innovation Deputy Director
- 9.11 APPROVE: CONSIDER A RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER AS THE AUTHORIZED AGENT TO EXECUTE ALL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS TO CLAIM FUNDS AWARDED THROUGH THE FY2025-2026 CALTRANS SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM
Derek Touns, Planning and Innovation Deputy Director
- 9.12 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION OF SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT'S (METRO) AMENDED CONFLICT OF INTEREST CODE AND APPROVAL OF THE RESOLUTION CONFIRMING THIS ACTION
Julie Sherman, General Counsel

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing called for a roll call vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED

MOTION: DIRECTOR KALANTARI-JOHNSON

SECOND: DIRECTOR DUTRA

MOTION PASSED WITH 9 AYES (Directors Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Leonor, Lind, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, and Quiroz-Carter). Director Koenig was absent.

REGULAR AGENDA

**10 PRESENTATION OF EMPLOYEE LONGEVITY AWARD FOR:
(10 YEARS) CAYLA HILL, GRANTS ANALYST**

Board Chair Downing thanked Ms. Hill for the reports she generates and congratulated her on her years of service with METRO.

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing moved to the next item.

**11 ORAL UPDATE ON CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION AWARD
OF FUNDS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

Sarah Christensen, Executive Director, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC), provided an update on the award of \$128.7 million for various transportation infrastructure projects that will improve mobility, safety, and sustainability across Santa Cruz County. This investment will directly benefit the community by reducing congestion, creating safe travel options for people walking and biking, and improving the quality and reliability of METRO's service within the County. She thanked METRO's team for their close collaboration, the state legislative delegation for championing our projects, and the California Transportation Commission for recognizing our region's commitment to sustainable, multi-modal transportation. Shannon Munz, SCCRTC's Communication Specialist, presented the giant check to the Board.

Board Chair Downing thanked Ms. Christensen for her update.

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing moved to the next item.

12 CEO ORAL REPORT

Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager, began his report by stating that the SCCRTC award is exciting for METRO to receive. These improvements will allow for the rapid corridors project to proceed and have an impact on METRO's ability to have robust stops and should speed up its routes and make them more accessible.

He continued with following updates:

- I have been appointed to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Board of Directors to serve a three-year term as one of the transit system directors on the 25-member board. This appointment will be formally ratified during the upcoming APTA TRANSform Conference next month.
- All on-duty Bus Operators have successfully completed training on METRO's new hydrogen buses, ensuring readiness for service deployment. A New Flyer trainer, along with METRO's Safety Department, have conducted first responder training with local agencies.

- METRO's Fall Service starting September 11, 2025 introduces several new routes, improved connections, and schedule adjustments designed to enhance rider experience and operational efficiency.
- METRO is pleased to welcome Jorge Ovando Zalapa who joined the agency on August 18th as Director of Information Technology. He has more than 18 years of experience leading technology teams in healthcare, government, and education. He's passionate about using technology to enhance accessibility, streamline operations, and improve the rider experience. His leadership style emphasizes transparency, teamwork, and continuous improvement — values that align closely with METRO's commitment to service excellence.
- METRO received good news regarding its pension plan. The pension plan's return for the fiscal year ending 6/30/2025 is estimated to be 11.6%. That is 4.8% higher than the goal of 6.8%. Although rates will not adjust until 7/1/2026, we are expecting to reduce most or all of the outstanding unfunded portion of our pension next year.
- August 2 & 3 – Strawberry Festival was held in Downtown Watsonville. METRO provided increased service/free fares from the South County Building to the Watsonville Transit Center. METRO worked with the City of Watsonville to promote METRO's service and the festival, and it was quite successful.
- August 19 – 55 Employees attended the Blood Pressure Clinic held at Operations and ParaCruz.
- August 27 – Employee Health Fair
- August 29 – Mid Town Block Party – METRO will have a One-Ride-At-a-Time bus present as well as a booth.
- September 9 – 14 – Santa Cruz County Fair. METRO will provide free fares and all riders who take METRO to the Fair will receive a coupon off the fair admission. METRO will also have a booth in the first responder's area.
- September 18 – RSVP Deadline for the Bus Rodeo & Picnic. Ms. Bauer shared the volunteer link with the Board Members to serve as a judge or announcer. Any time Board Members can contribute is greatly appreciated!
- September 24–25 – Employee Flu Clinic
- September 29 – October 5 – Week Without Driving.
- Since the June 27 Board meeting, we've welcomed seven new team members: Contracts & Purchasing Deputy Director, Financial Analyst, Marketing Specialist, Customer Service Representative, Paratransit Clerk III, IT Director, and Vehicle Service Worker I. In addition, two internal promotions have been made: one employee advanced to HR Analyst II and another promoted to Lead Mechanic.

Board Chair Downing congratulated CEO Aldridge on his appointment to APTA's Board of Directors and requested further details on the upcoming service changes.

CEO Aldridge provided the following:

- Route 35X – Santa Cruz/Boulder Creek Express - New express service operating from 7 AM to 7 PM, replacing most Route 35 trips during that timeframe.

- Route 34 – Scotts Valley Drive/Emeline - New route replacing Route 4 to Emeline and Route 35 on Scotts Valley Drive before 6 PM. Select trips will serve Vine Hill Elementary and Scotts Valley High Schools, addressing a service request from the Scotts Valley Unified School District.
- Route 16 – UCSC via Main Gate - School-term-only service resumes with distinct schedules for Monday/Wednesday/Friday and Tuesday/Thursday.
- Highway 17 Express - Direct trips between Santa Cruz and San Jose will increase from 10 to 16. Trips serving Scotts Valley will be reduced from 17 to 13; however, four trips per day in each direction will operate exclusively between Scotts Valley and San Jose, also serving Scotts Valley Drive.
- Route 55 –Will now serve Aptos Village via Soquel Drive, replacing service along Highway 1.

Board Chair Downing thanked him for his detailed report.

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing moved to the next agenda item.

13 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER TO ACQUIRE REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 809 WEST BEACH STREET IN WATSONVILLE FOR THE PURPOSE OF STORING METRO BUSES AND APPROVING A CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer, spoke to this item and reminded the Board that METRO is currently leasing this property to store METRO buses and emphasized the need to acquire a permanent location for parking and storing its buses with its fleet expansion. With the current lease due to expire, METRO has been in discussions with the property owners to sell the property to METRO.

There were no public comments.

Hearing nothing further, Board Chair Downing called for a roll call vote.

ACTION: MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER TO ACQUIRE REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 809 WEST BEACH STREET IN WATSONVILLE FOR THE PURPOSE OF STORING METRO BUSES AND APPROVING A CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

MOTION: DIRECTOR DUTRA

SECOND: DIRECTOR QUIROZ-CARTER

MOTION PASSED WITH 9 AYES (Directors Downing, Dutra, Kalantari-Johnson, Leonor, Lind, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, and Quiroz-Carter). Director Koenig was absent.

RECESSED TO CLOSED SESSION AT 9:41 AM

There were no public comments regarding the closed session.

14 CONFERENCE WITH REAL PROPERTY NEGOTIATORS (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54956.8)

Property: 809 West Beach Street, Watsonville, CA

Agency Negotiator: Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

Under Negotiation: Price and terms of payment

RECONVENED TO OPEN SESSION AT 10:01 AM

15 REPORT OF CLOSED SESSION

Julie Sherman, General Counsel, reported that the Board provided direction to its real estate negotiator with no other reportable action.

16 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

Board Chair Downing announced the next regular Board meeting will be held on Friday, September 26, 2025 at 9:00 AM at the METRO Admin Office, 110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz, CA

17 ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Downing adjourned the meeting at 10:02.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna Bauer
Sr. Executive Assistant