



**SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT (METRO)  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES\*  
ADMIN OFFICE, 110 VERNON STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA  
NOVEMBER 21, 2025 – 9:00 AM**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) convened on Friday, November 21, 2025, as a hybrid meeting.

The Board Meeting agenda packet can be found online at [www.SCMTD.com](http://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 9:00 AM by Board Chair Downing.

**2 SAFETY DEBRIEF**

Gregory Strecker, Safety, Security & Risk Management Director, provided a debriefing on safety, emphasizing METRO’s response to an active threat, fire, earthquake and/or medical emergency, and the evacuation routes.

**3 ROLL CALL**

Ex-Officio Director Reiskin announced he is participating remotely for just cause under AB 2449 due to the need to provide care for a family member. The following Directors were **present**, representing a quorum:

<b>Director Rebecca Downing</b>	<b>County of Santa Cruz</b>
<b>Director Jimmy Dutra</b> <i>AR 9:22 AM</i>	<b>City of Watsonville</b>
<b>Director Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson*</b>	<b>City of Santa Cruz</b>
<b>Director Manu Koenig</b>	<b>County of Santa Cruz</b>
<b>Director Fabian Leonor</b>	<b>County of Santa Cruz</b>
<b>Director Donna Lind</b>	<b>City of Scotts Valley</b>
<b>Director Elizabeth Madrigal</b>	<b>County of Santa Cruz</b>
<b>Director Monica Martinez</b>	<b>County of Santa Cruz</b>
<b>Director Scott Newsome</b>	<b>City of Santa Cruz</b>
<b>Director Melinda Orbach</b>	<b>City of Capitola</b>
<b>Director Vanessa Quiroz-Carter**</b> <i>AR 9:15 AM</i>	<b>City of Watsonville</b>
<b>Ex-Officio Director Alta Northcutt</b>	<b>Cabrillo College</b>
<b>Ex-Officio Director Edward Reiskin</b>	<b>UC Santa Cruz</b>

\*Attended virtually from 515 15<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Washington, DC

\*\*Attended virtually from 231 Oakes Road, Santa Cruz, CA

Corey Aldridge  
Nicole Witt

CEO/General Manager  
General Counsel

**4 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 4.1 Today's meeting was broadcast by Community Television of Santa Cruz County.
- 4.2 Hector Guzman from Language Line Services provided Spanish interpretation services for today's meeting.

**5 BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMENTS**

Director Martinez expressed appreciation of the 35X Route that started in September 2025 and is receiving great feedback from her San Lorenzo Valley constituents. She also rode the service and was pleased that it took about the same amount of time as driving a car.

Board Chair Downing thanked the METRO staff and Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commissioners who serve on METRO's Board for their work on the consolidated grant applications. The positive result is most welcome, and we look forward to the improvements and service they will provide our riders, METRO staff, and community. She also announced that the Board will take a five-minute recess after Item 12 on the agenda.

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

**6 ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, spoke of the importance of METRO's RTC representatives focusing on METRO issues. He recognized Director Leonor as doing a phenomenal job representing METRO at the meetings and recommended adding like representatives when determining the committee slates in 2026.

**7 LABOR ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATIONS**

Veronica Velazquez, Internal Organizer, SEIU Local 521, handed out a letter to the Board Members (attached) and spoke to it. Olivia Martinez, SEIU Region 2 Director, commented that SEIU membership does not feel that the Board takes their concerns seriously and because of the Board's previous decisions for the agency, are leading METRO toward a fiscal cliff. She asked the Board to step up and help its employees.

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

**8 ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION TO SUPPORT EXISTING AGENDA ITEMS**

There were six additional communications to the Board of Directors that will be added to the agenda packet.

Hearing nothing further, 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 MONTH OF OCTOBER 2025  
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

- 9.2 ACCEPT AND FILE:  
A. MINUTES OF OCTOBER 24, 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
B. MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 14, 2025 FINANCE, BUDGET AND AUDIT  
STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING  
Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager
- 9.3 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR-TO-DATE MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT AS  
OF OCTOBER 31, 2025  
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.4 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE YEAR-TO-DATE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS  
(KPI) REPORT FOR QUARTER ONE AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2025  
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer
- 9.5 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE METRO PARACRUZ OPERATIONS STATUS REPORT  
FOR JULY, AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2025  
Rina Solorio Gomez, Assistant Operations Manager, Paratransit
- 9.6 ACCEPT AND FILE: FISCAL YEAR 2025 FIRST QUARTER GRANTS  
MANAGEMENT REPORT  
Derek Toups, Planning and Innovation Deputy Director
- 9.7 APPROVE: RECOMMENDED ACTION ON TORT CLAIMS  
Gregory Strecker, Safety, Security and Risk Management Director
- 9.8 APPROVE: 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING SCHEDULE  
Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager
- 9.9 APPROVE: REQUEST TO FUND A TRANSPORTATION PLANNER I/II  
POSITION AND DEFUND THE PLANNING DATA ANALYST POSITION  
Dawn Crummié, Chief Human Resources Officer

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 LEONOR**

**SECOND: DIRECTOR LIND**

**MOTION PASSED WITH 10 AYES (Directors Downing, Kalantari-Johnson, Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Madrigal, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, and Quiroz-Carter). Director Dutra was absent.**

## **REGULAR AGENDA**

- 10 PRESENTATION OF EMPLOYEE LONGEVITY AWARDS FOR:  
(20 YEARS) IDAN ALBARADO, BUS OPERATOR\*  
(20 YEARS) CAROLYN BOWERS, BUS OPERATOR  
(20 YEARS) JUAN FERNANDEZ MAGANA, BUS OPERATOR\*  
(20 YEARS) JOY OLANDER, PAYROLL SUPERVISOR  
(20 YEARS) EZEQUIEL OSORIO, BUS OPERATOR  
(20 YEARS) JAIME RENTERIA, BUS OPERATOR\***

**(20 YEARS) CHRIS SULLIVAN, PARATRANSIT SUPERVISOR\***  
**(20 YEARS) HECTOR TORRES, BUS OPERATOR\***  
**(20 YEARS) VALENTIN ZARATE, BUS OPERATOR**

\*Denotes those in attendance to receive their certificates.

Jaime Renteria, SMART General Chairperson, Local 0023, thanked God for allowing him to be here and looking forward to 10 more years at METRO. He added that the Bus Operators are his second family—they've been there for him, and he will be there for them.

Board Members congratulated all on this accomplishment and for their service to METRO. Director Leonor especially thanked the Bus Operators for getting riders to their destinations. Ex-Officio Director Northcutt thanked the Bus Operators for their courtesy, love and care for the riders.

There were no public comments.

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

## **11 SALES TAX AND FISCAL CLIFF UPDATE**

Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager, provided a brief background on when Reimagine METRO started. It added 30% more service, increased ridership, and allowed METRO to hire over 100 employees. This is funded by a one-time state grant which will run out in 2026. To maintain this level of service, we need an additional infusion of money. METRO worked with Senator Laird to pass legislation in 2023 which allowed a one-half cent sales tax measure specifically for METRO. The current plan is to bring this ballot measure to the voters in November 2026.

We are conducting a voter survey and will present the results to the Board in December. Today, we are looking at four scenarios to see what it would look like with a sales tax, without it, if it doesn't pass, and going to the voters in 2028. Nothing has been decided. As we move forward, we will provide the Board with updates.

Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer, spoke to his presentation providing a high-level overview of the sales tax measure and fiscal cliff. He said this presentation is mainly a stress-test exercise and provided scenarios based on conservative estimates. He reviewed the operating cash reserve balances, base level assumptions on revenue, expenses and capital expenditures for each scenario in detail.

Discussion followed on:

- Pre-COVID ridership numbers
- Contractual wage adjustments
- What a 25% reduction to headcount would entail
- Compounding effects of delaying sales tax measure
- Tax applies to all of Santa Cruz County
- Citizens' initiative
- Additional state funding
- Polling survey
- Election costs
- Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) funds used

- Educating public on the value of METRO's service to the community and what a well-funded METRO looks like
- Congestion pricing
- Population growth/reduction
- Impacts of sales tax measure on each jurisdiction within the County
- Consider implementing cost savings now

Staff responded to all concerns.

There were no public comments.

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

## **12 MOBILE HYDROGEN FUELER-ALTERNATIVE SITE CONSIDERATION AND NOISE MITIGATION UPDATE**

Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer, spoke to this item and provided an update on considering an alternative site for the mobile fueler and the costs to develop a site for hydrogen and battery-electric buses. In addition, she provided the cost of physically relocating the existing mobile fueler and the challenges involved with such a move. She gave an update on the noise mitigation efforts currently taking place and anticipated testing for additional noise reduction.

Discussion followed on:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance
- Total cost and timeline of moving mobile fueler to 809 W. Beach Street
- Impacts to service if METRO paused the temporary fueler today
- Decommissioning aged fleet under the VW Grant and replacing these vehicles with hydrogen buses
- Gaseous fueler
- Mitigating fueling during daytime hours
- Future purchases of buses and infrastructure required
- Vetting new buses and making them road ready
- Bringing the permanent fueler online
- Impacts on Watsonville when moving the temporary fueler there
- Commission a noise study in Watsonville before moving fueler

Jessie Beckett Parr, Ocean Street Extension Association, recommended better communication and transparency to the association going forward.

Gwyan Rhabyt, Ocean Street Extension Association, expressed concern over promises made and broken over the past months regarding the muffler. This involves outreach and communication. He wants assurances that none of this will happen with the permanent fueler.

Heather McDougal, Ocean Street Extension Association, spoke to the disruption to people's lives. Our community has been going through this for six months and is bearing the burden of this problem.

Director Kalantari-Johnson thanked the community members for attending the meeting. She stated that if this is not resolved at the Judy K. Souza facility, moving the mobile fueler to Watsonville will produce the same issues and she wouldn't support that. She requested that staff return to the Board with an update and opportunity for Board action on the following:

- Ensuring effective training and compliance to adhere to the protocols in using the temporary fueler
- Having staff engage in consistent communication to the Ocean Street Extension neighborhood
- Ensuring the proper installation of the muffler on the temporary fueler and confirming this installation will bring the equipment into compliance with the City of Santa Cruz's noise ordinance
- Discontinuing use of the temporary fueler immediately if the muffler does not adequately mitigate the noise and the temporary fueler remains out of compliance when fully installed.
- An analysis of the gaseous fueler option, including the procurement cost, procurement steps and timeline for the Board to consider at its December meeting for possible action.

Director Quiroz-Carter added that she would like the Board to be updated in writing via email on any action that is taken on this item, including the study findings and was in favor of shutting the fueler down if standards are not met.

Director Martinez was concerned that there are continued problems with training and communication when Board Members were assured that staff were addressing these issues. She hopes this is resolved by the December Board meeting.

Board Chair Downing concurred with Director Kalantari-Johnson that she does not want this repeated in Watsonville. She wants adequate communication in place when the permanent fueler comes online to the neighbors.

*The meeting was paused for a break at 10:54 AM and resumed at 11:02 AM.*

*Director Kalantari-Johnson and Ex-Officio Director Northcutt left the meeting at 10:54 AM.*

**13 STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM SHAW, YODER, ANTWIH, SCHMELZER AND LANGE**

Michael Pimentel and Brendan Repicky, Shaw, Yoder, Antwih, Schmelzer and Lange spoke to their presentation. Mr. Pimentel provided an update on where the state is in the 2025-26 legislative session and the changes in legislative leadership. He provided a brief recap of the state budget process, the reauthorization of the Cap-and-Trade Program, and expenditures at risk. Through advocacy from the California Transit Association and METRO, we were successful in protecting all the money previously committed by the state through 2030 and continuing the investment in our TIRCP and LCTOP (Low Carbon Transit Operations Program) programs. He reviewed SB 125 funding, TIRCP Cycle 6, Cap-and-Invest Expenditure plan, and securing state delegation support for several Federal priorities.

Mr. Repicky reviewed the status of the following bills. SB 71, SB 707, AB 394, AB 1250 were signed by Governor Newsom. SB 512 was vetoed by Governor Newsom. SB 752 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Discussion followed on:

- Housing projects and the funding dispersed to Santa Cruz and Watsonville
- Remote participation at meetings
- Highway 1 projects and funding
- Classifying zero-emission buses
- High speed rail and private sector investments
- Local opportunities for engagement with the state
- Legislative conversations around gas tax and toll lanes

All concerns were addressed by Mr. Pimentel and Mr. Repicky.

There were no public comments.

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

#### **14 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM CFM ADVOCATES**

Joel Rubin, CFM Advocates, spoke to his presentation. He reviewed the funding requests that have been awarded to METRO in the 2025 legislative session. For those projects not awarded, he suggested there is a way to modify the grant requests for the next round of requests. He provided an overview of his team's efforts at the federal level and the scope of services his team provides METRO. He reviewed the funding history of Bus and Bus Facility Program and the importance of protecting the gains made over the years. He covered the current transportation reauthorization bill expiring in September 2026. Congress is now working to draft the next reauthorization bill and the push by his team to maintain the \$2.2 billion in the Bus and Bus Facility Program and the Competitive Grant Program along with the challenges they face. He also covered opportunities available in the future and lastly, provided a DC update on the shutdown, appropriations outlook and timing, court battles, and a midterm election forecast.

Discussion followed on:

- Grant proposal for property in Watsonville
- Nationwide drop in building buses
- Low or No Emission Grant Program

There were no public comments.

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

#### **15 CEO ORAL REPORT**

Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager, did not provide an oral update to expedite the meeting, and will email the report to the Board Members instead.

There were no public comments.

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

**16 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2025 AT 9:00 AM AT THE ADMIN OFFICE, 110 VERNON STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA**  
Board Chair Downing

**17 ADJOURNMENT**  
Board Chair Downing adjourned the meeting at 12:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bauer  
Sr. Executive Assistant

# Attachment



SERVICE EMPLOYEES  
INTERNATIONAL UNION  
CTW-CLC

## SAN JOSE H.Q.

2302 Zanker Road  
San Jose, CA 95131

Phone: 408-678-3300  
Fax: 408-954-1538

## BAKERSFIELD

1001 17th Street  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Phone: 661-321-4160  
Fax: 661-325-7814

## FRESNO

5228 E. Pine Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93727

Phone: 559-447-2560  
Fax: 559-261-9308

## HANFORD

101 N. Irwin St., Suite 203  
Hanford, CA 93230

Phone: 559-587-1521  
Fax: 559-587-1524

## REDWOOD CITY

This location has been  
closed. Please mail  
correspondence to our  
San Jose Headquarters

Phone Calls / Facsimiles  
received at our San Jose  
Headquarters:

Phone: 650-801-3500  
Fax: 650-595-1930

## SALINAS

334 Monterey Street  
Salinas, CA 93901

Phone: 831-784-2560  
Fax: 831-757-1863

## SANTA CRUZ

517B Mission Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Phone: 831-824-9255  
Fax: 831-459-0756

## VISALIA

1811 W. Sunnyside Avenue  
Visalia, CA 93277

Phone: 559-635-3720  
Fax: 559-733-5006

[www.seiu521.org](http://www.seiu521.org)

November 21, 2025

Board of Directors  
Santa Cruz Metropolitan District  
110 Vernon Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Board of Directors of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan District,

We are concerned about decisions that the district is taking which will presumably negatively impact employees in 2026. The district is discussing a financial cliff-fall, which brings up issues with the following:

- **110 Vernon Office Remodel:** Currently, the district is remodeling the 110 Vernon offices. Where is the money coming from? Are you considering layoffs in 2026 to cover this shortfall?
- **Increased Use of Consultants:** In 2024, District Management reclassified their titles and were given high wages increases. However, we are concerned that we are seeing an increase in consultants performing some of the duties that fall under management responsibility.
  - For example, the use of Hanson Bridgets for everyday questions that Human Resources should have knowledge of and provide answers for is concerning. The reason that METRO defunded the local staff attorney was a cost savings measure, yet it seems the district is spending more money using the firm.
- **Management Job Descriptions:** We recently found on METRO's website that management job descriptions were updated on May 15, 2025; however, we did not see the update passed to the Board of Directors for review. We are concerned that Human Resources updated management job descriptions without having final approval from the Board.
- **Disparity of Remote Work:** While management gets to work remotely, staff have little to no opportunity to do the same. Management gets to work from home and benefits by keeping their appointments, picking up their kids, or going on vacation out of state while claiming they are working remotely. They are allowed to work remotely due to home emergencies and even are allowed to work from home when recovering from medical procedures.
  - That we are at critical times in METRO and do not have management in the office is concerning. Staff question if this behavior is a misappropriation of public funds.
- **Personal health issues:** We question whether the behavior discussed above constitutes misappropriation of public funds. By not having Management use



# Attachment

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Board of Directors  
November 20, 2025

their personal accrual time, or by failing to follow the Management Compensation Policy, which was recently revised and approved by the Board at the May board meeting, we are led to this conclusion.

**Provisional Hires and Temporary Workers:** We are concerned that the district is consistently using provisional hires or temporary workers for budgeted positions, specifically for customer services positions. Setting up the conditions for a high turnover among temporary or provisional positions is a disservice to the public.

We have officially hit the six-month mark since SEIU produced and overwhelmingly passed a vote of no confidence to the CEO and HR Director. The METRO Board of Directors has not responded or reached out to address the concerns or discuss improvements that we are seeking. We have done our part and humbly request accountability from the Board of Directors and to represent the workers that make METRO possible to operate.

Sincerely,

*Veronica Velazquez*

Veronica Velazquez  
Internal Organizer  
SEIU Local 521

VV:sjw