MINUTES*

MAC MEETING OF AUGUST 19, 2026

The METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) met on Wednesday, August 19, 2026. The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting. *Minutes are "summary" minutes, not verbatim minutes.

1. **CALLED TO ORDER** at 6:04 PM by Chair de Wit.

2. **SAFETY DEBRIEF**
   Gregory Strecker, Safety, Security and 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**
   The following MAC Members were **present**, representing a quorum:

   Jessica de Wit, Chair
   Becky Taylor, Vice Chair *AR 6:26 PM*
   James Cruse
   Veronica Elsea
   Curtis Halpin
   Joseph Martinez *AR 6:15 PM*
   Michael Pisano

4. **COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
   Veronica Elsea mentioned that she was unable to find the Zoom link for the MAC meeting on the agenda packet.

   Michael Pisano mentioned that Zoox in Las Vegas has completed its free trail and transitioned to a paid service. He asked whether METRO would be interested in exploring a similar approach in Santa Cruz County as a potential pilot program. Discussion continued on this service.

   James Cruse mentioned that the MAC information in the METRO ParaCruz Customer Guide is incorrect. The guide states that MAC meetings are held monthly; however, MAC meetings are held quarterly. Staff will look into correcting this information.

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

   Chair de Wit announced that Item 10 and Item 14 will be combined and pulled up.
   Derek Toups, Planning and Innovation Deputy Director, spoke to the attached presentation for Item 10 and Item 14.

10. **UPDATE ON ROTKIN TRANSIT CENTER SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING**
    Derek Toups, Planning and Innovation Deputy Director, introduced some of the different types of signage that will be installed at the Rotkin Transit Center. He shared examples of the signage and wayfinding, including where the signs will be located and the information they will provide. The signage will help riders and pedestrians find their way around the transit center and locate areas such as the bus terminal, bus boarding area, bike hub, and Customer Service.

14. SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE

a. Quarterly Ridership Report

Jeff Wootton, Transportation Planner I, provided an update on the quarterly ridership report. He spoke to the slide in the attached presentation. Overall, total ridership for FY26 Q4 increased about 7.8%.

b. Bus Stops

b.i. Update on Braille Bus Stop Signage

Deputy Director Toups provided an update on the Braille Bus Stop Signage. He discussed the braille and text-to-speech (TTS) features that will be included with the new digital signs. The information can be broadcast in both English and Spanish.

b.ii. Update on Rapid Corridors Project

Deputy Director Toups provided an update on the Rapid Corridors Project. He spoke to the Rapid Corridors Project slide in the attached presentation. Deputy Director Topus reported that the project is currently in the design phase. This project will improve about 100 bus stops and pedestrian crossings while also helping to speed up bus service. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2028.

c. Other Projects

c.i. Update on Reimagine METRO

Deputy Director Toups provided an update on Reimagine METRO. He spoke to the Reimagine METRO slide in the attached presentation. He reported that ridership has increased and METRO is well on its way to achieving its goal of 7 million trips by 2028.

c.ii. Update on River Front Transit Center

Deputy Director Toups shared an update on a pilot project to install electronic ink (e-ink or e-paper) digital displays at the River Front Transit Center at the end of August 2026. He gave a brief overview of the displays, and Michael Bois, Communications and Marketing Manager, followed with a demonstration.

c.iii. Update on Rotkin Transit Center

Deputy Director Toups provided an update on the Rotkin Transit Center. He spoke to the Rotkin Transit Center slides in the attached presentation. He reported that the Rotkin Transit Center is still scheduled to open in 2026.

c.iv. Update on Watsonville Transit Center

Deputy Director Toups provided an update on the Watsonville Transit Center. He spoke to the Watsonville Transit Center slides in the attached presentation. The project is moving along and is currently in the final stages of the design phase. METRO's housing partner for this project is MidPen Housing, and the development

will include 79 affordable housing units. He mentioned that during construction, the Watsonville Transit Center will temporarily relocate to a new location.

Staff answered all questions and concerns.

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

5. RECEIVE AND FILE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF MAY 20, 2026

MOTION: ACCEPT AND FILE THE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF MAY 20, 2026 AS AMENDED

MOTION: ELSEA SECOND: PISANO

MOTION PASSED WITH 7 AYES: de Wit, Taylor, Cruse, Elsea, Halpin, Martinez, and Pisano.

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Veronica Elsea referenced the letter she wrote, which was included in the agenda packet. The letter included some of the challenges riders with disabilities are currently experiencing. She shared that riding the bus has been difficult and talked about her experience with Route 18.

Michael Bois, Communications and Marketing Manager, reassured everyone that routes and schedules are available on METRO's website. He also said that staff will follow-up with Ms. Elsea and work with her to address the concerns she raised in her letter.

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

7. DISCUSS EMAIL FROM KEVIN MAGUIRE DATED APRIL 12, 2026

The MAC members acknowledged and discussed the email from Kevin Maguire, which was included in the agenda packet. Some of the topics discussed included UCSC routes, UCSC shuttle for students, and trip-chaining routes.

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

8. UPDATE ON WEEK WITHOUT DRIVING 2026

Michael Bois, Communications and Marketing Manager, reminded everyone that Week Without Driving 2026 will take place from October 1 through October 8, 2026. He also shared that a Capitola Mall Community Celebration Event will be held on Friday, October 2, 2026, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM. He encouraged everyone to sign up and participate in Week Without Driving 2026. Additional information about the event, including how to register and participate, is available at cruzintogetherscc.org.

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

9. UPDATE ON OPERATIONS

Margo Ross, COO, provided an update on operations. She reported that all hydrogen buses have been received and Bus Operators have provided very positive feedback on the buses. The permanent hydrogen fueling station is expected to be ready in October 2026 and will have the capacity to fuel all 53 buses. Bus Operators are also currently undergoing training on the 60-foot articulated buses.

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

11. UPDATE ON TAP2CRUZ

Michael Bois, Communications and Marketing Manager, provided an update on TAP2CRUZ, a contactless fare payment technology for riders. He reported that testing of TAP2CRUZ is continuing, and that it is being rolled out in collaboration with the State of California ‘s Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP). While there is no confirmed launch date at this time, the goal is to launch in September 2026. Discussion continued on discount fare riders, including self-enrollment and in-person enrollment.

Staff answered all questions and concerns.

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

12. UPDATE ON ADA RIDE PROCESS FOR PARACRUZ ELIGIBILITY

Michael Bois, Communications and Marketing Manager, provided a brief overview of ADA Ride, which was onboarded in 2023 to manage the eligibility process for ParaCruz. He reported that since November 2023, ADA Ride has averaged about 81 certifications per month. Since November 2023, ADA Ride’s denial rate has been about 2.5% of all applications. Applicants who are denied eligibility receive a denial letter from ADA Ride and have the opportunity to appeal the decision. He emphasized that METRO’s overall denial rate remains very low. Mr. Bois also reported that over the last year, only 5 recertifying riders have not finished the process, down from 17 in the prior year.

Discussion continued on the eligibility process.

Margo Ross, COO, reported that no formal complaints have been received regarding the ParaCruz eligibility process.

METRO’s Customer Service can be reached at 831-425-8600 for assistance with completing the application.

Staff answered all questions and concerns.

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

13. 2026 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FAIR – SEPTEMBER 16 TO SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

Margo Ross, COO, reported that METRO will be participating in the Santa Cruz County Fair from September 16 through September 20, 2026. METRO will be offering free fares on Route 79F (daily) and 79 (weekends only). ParaCruz will also provide free daily service to and from the fair. She mentioned that riders who take Route 79F, 79, or ParaCruz to the fair can also receive discounted admission. Riders should request a voucher from the Bus Operator upon arrival at the fairgrounds.

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

15. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

None.

16. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

None.

17. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA

- Service Planning Updates
- Quarterly Ridership Report
- Update on Reimagine METRO
- Update on Transit Centers
- Update on Rapid Corridors Project
- Update on TAP2CRUZ
- Recap of 2026 Week Without Driving
- Elect New Chair and Vice Chair
- Choose 2027 Dates for MAC Meetings
- Update on Operations
- Follow-up on Accessible Route Planning
- 2026 Strawberry Festival Ridership
- Recap of 2026 Santa Cruz County Fair

18. DISTRIBUTION OF VOUCHERS

Vouchers were distributed by Elizabeth Rocha, Administrative Specialist.

19. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

Chair de Wit announced the next MAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 21, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the METRO Admin Office, 110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz.

20. ADJOURNMENT

Chair de Wit adjourned the meeting at 8:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Rocha
Administrative Specialist