

MINUTES*

MAC MEETING OF FEBRUARY 18, 2026



The METRO Advisory Committee (MAC) met on Wednesday, February 18, 2026. The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting. *Minutes are “summary” minutes, not verbatim minutes.

1 CALLED TO ORDER at 6:08 PM by Chair de Wit.

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 ACKNOWLEDGE NEW MAC MEMBER

Chair de Wit welcomed Curtis Halpin to the METRO Advisory Committee.

4 ROLL CALL

Veronica Elsea announced she is participating remotely using just cause due to medical reasons. The following MAC Members were **present**, representing a quorum:

Jessica de Wit, Chair
Becky Taylor, Vice Chair
James Cruse
Veronica Elsea

Curtis Halpin
Joseph Martinez
Michael Pisano

5 COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Martinez inquired about the Headways being retired. Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer, confirmed that the last Headways will be published in Spring 2026. Michael Bois, Communications and Marketing Manager, added that METRO will be adding route-specific guides to bus shelters and Customer Service booths during this transition. Ms. Elsea asked what the plan is for tourists. Mr. Bois mentioned that in addition to the route guides, there will be the Transit App and online tools available for trip planning. Mr. Pisano asked if QR codes will be available on the buses, bus shelters, and Customer Service booths to get the Transit App. Mr. Bois said the QR codes are currently in the Headways and in the Spring, we will use car cards on the buses to further promote the Transit App. With 700 bus shelters, the initial effort will probably be at the major bus shelters. Mr. Martinez asked who owns the downtown trolley and if it is still operated. Chair de Wit responded that the City of Santa Cruz owns that and it is not currently being utilized.

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

6 RECEIVE AND FILE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF OCTOBER 15, 2025

Ms. Elsea suggested amending the minutes on Item 8 to reflect that riders didn’t always know where to catch the fair bus and the Committee’s hope to improve on that in 2026.

There were no public comments.

MOTION: ACCEPT AND FILE THE MINUTES FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF OCTOBER 15, 2025, AMENDING ITEM 8 AS STATED ABOVE.

MOTION: ELSEA

SECOND: PISANO

MOTION PASSED WITH 5 AYES: de Wit, Elsea, Halpin, Martinez and Pisano. Members Cruse and Taylor were absent.

7 COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Ms. Elsea mentioned that she gave her semi-annual update to the Board of Directors on December 19, 2025 and provided an overview of the items covered and that it was well received by the Board Members.

There were no public comments.

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

Chair de Wit announced that Item 12 will be heard before Item 8.

8 RECAP OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY WEEK WITHOUT DRIVING 2025

Rebecca Downing, Board of Directors' Chair, spoke to her presentation and provided background on how the program was started and slowly grew into a national campaign. She provided her philosophy on the campaign and getting elected politicians to engage in this experience so when they write legislation, they have this lived experience. 2025 was the first year of promoting this campaign within Santa Cruz County and it involved multiple sponsors, including METRO. Several local events were attended to encourage public participation. She mentioned that planning for 2026 is underway and provided MAC members with ways in which they can participate.

MAC members thanked her for the update.

There were no public comments.

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

9 INTRODUCTION OF BOBI WOOD, MOBILITY TRAINING COORDINATOR

Michael Bois, Communications and Marketing Manager, introduced Bobi Wood to MAC and mentioned her involvement in the community. Ms. Wood spoke about projects/events she is involved in.

Ms. Elsea suggested implementing a "Buddy System" with the senior population. She also mentioned meeting Ms. Wood in December and discussing the challenges of a visually impaired person with a dog. She thanked Ms. Wood for her time and said Ms. Wood was doing a great job.

There were no public comments.

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

10 UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE NEW METRO WEBSITE AND APPS

Mr. Bois reported on the updates to the Splash Pass and Transit App. He also reported that the new website went live and requested any feedback be directed to staff. Ms. Elsea said she is having trouble navigating the website. Mr. Bois said the Customer Service team is available from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM seven days a week (except holidays) to help and he also offered a one-on-one session.

There were no public comments.

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

11 UPDATE ON OPERATIONS

Margo Ross, Chief Operations Officer, provided an update. METRO currently has 18 fuel-cell buses in service and they are working well. METRO starts construction tomorrow on the permanent fueler. We hope to have it commissioned in July and using it in August. We have one 60' articulated bus from New Flyer and training has begun for the Bus Operators. We have six more buses in production.

Mr. Martinez asked where the temporary fueler will be moved to in Watsonville. COO Ross said it would be located at the Beach Street property METRO purchased last year.

There were no public comments.

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

12 SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE

a. Quarterly Ridership Report

John Urgo, Chief Planning and Innovation Officer, stated that Clever Devices lost some of METRO's ridership data for July and August but it has now been recovered. METRO also lost its Data Analyst in October, so METRO is missing three quarters of ridership reports. We've hired a Transportation Planner I and he will work to get the ridership reports restored.

b. Bus Stops

b.i. Update on Braille Bus Stop Signage

There were no updates.

b.ii. Update on Rapid Corridors Project

The funding awarded for the project has been secured. METRO is going with a baseline funding agreement with Caltrans so it can receive \$13.8 million awarded on a competitive grant from the state. METRO is matching that with funding received in 2023 from the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program. Recently, METRO was awarded funding from the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Community grant that is funding the redevelopment of the Watsonville Transit Center with affordable housing, transit signal priority, and bus stop upgrades. Going forward, we will be focusing on developing the design process for this project.

c. Other Projects

c.i. Update on Reimagine METRO

Mr. Urgo mentioned that METRO stopped making service changes for the last two quarters. Ridership is up 43% since we started the implementation of Reimagine METRO and is approaching 5 million rides per year. This project was funded with state money received in 2024 that provided three years of operating capacity to run Reimagine METRO. We are hoping to put a sales tax measure on the November 2026 ballot to sustain and grow that service.

c.ii. Update on River Front Transit Center

Mr. Urgo reported additional shelters were placed by METRO's Facilities Maintenance team.

c.iii. Update on Pacific Station North

Mr. Urgo reported that Pacific Station North is moving along and we are working on design issues with the tarmac and solar array canopy. It is scheduled to open in late 2026.

c.iv. Update on Watsonville Transit Center

Mr. Urgo mentioned the project is currently in the design process with MidPen Housing and going through the entitlement process with the City of Watsonville. The project is essentially fully funded.

Director Downing requested Mr. Urgo explain what the Rapid Corridor Project is for the benefit of the new MAC member. Mr. Urgo obliged.

There were no public comments.

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

13 COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

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

14 COMMUNICATIONS TO THE METRO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

15 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA

- Service Planning Updates
- Update on 2026 Week Without Driving
- Update on Website and Apps
- Update on Operations
- Update on SB707

16 DISTRIBUTION OF VOUCHERS

Vouchers were distributed by Donna Bauer, Sr. Executive Assistant.

17 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

Chair de Wit announced the next MAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the METRO Admin Office, 110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz.

18 ADJOURNMENT

Chair de Wit adjourned the meeting at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bauer
Sr. Executive Assistant