SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT (METRO)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING MINUTES*
ADMIN OFFICE, 110 VERNON STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA
SEPTEMBER 25, 2026 – 9:00 AM
HYBRID MEETING

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) convened on Friday, September 25, 2026, as a hybrid meeting.

The Board Meeting agenda packet can be found online at www.scmetro.org. *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 Koenig.

2 SAFETY DEBRIEF
Gregory Strecker, Safety, Security & Risk Management Director, provided a debriefing on safety, emphasizing METRO's response to fire, earthquake and/or a medical emergency, and evacuation routes.

3 ROLL CALL
The following Directors were **present**, representing a quorum:

Director Rebecca Downing* *AR 9:50 AM*	**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 Monica Martinez	**County of Santa Cruz**
Director Scott Newsome	**City of Santa Cruz**
Director Melinda Orbach	**City of Capitola**
Director Maria Orozco**	**City of Watsonville**
Director Larry Pageler***	**County of Santa Cruz**
Ex-Officio Director Alma Márquez	**Cabrillo College**
Ex-Officio Director Edward Reiskin *AR 9:12 AM*	**UCSC Santa Cruz**

*3800 Broadway St., American Canyon, CA
**275 Main Street, 4th Floor, Watsonville, CA
***1802 South Forest St., Denver, CA

Corey Aldridge	CEO/General Manager
Shayna van Hoften	Legal Counsel

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

4.2 Alma Robinson, Language Line Services, provided Spanish interpretation services.

5 BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMENTS

Directors Lind and Orbach announced that Scotts Valley and Capitola have organized and are participating in a Week Without Driving ridealongs on October 5, 2026. Both have city/county officials joining them. Director Orbach added that this is an opportunity to bring our community together to explore transportation accessibility, mobility, and connection and consider how transportation barriers impact many transit dependent community members (e.g., elderly, youth, and people with disabilities).

Director Lind mentioned that the Board Advisory Committee has developed a standard process for the CEO's annual evaluation. This review will be based on the CEO's self-evaluation, CEO's performance against Board established goals, and the CEO's goals for the coming year. The committee will conduct interviews with key stakeholders including the leadership team and union representatives. The committee will prepare a summary of interview feedback and present that to the full Board to discuss in closed session. Any proposed contractual amendments and approval of these changes will be discussed in an open session. Also, the Advisory Committee will perform periodic check-ins with the CEO throughout the year to review progress towards the goals, discuss emerging issues, and provide feedback and course correction as needed.

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

6 ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brian Peoples, Trail Now, spoke to his emails in the agenda packet—one on "The Cost of Silence: How Avoiding the Rail Debate has Delayed the Coastal Trail" and the second is about METRO and the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission's (SCCRTC) proposal to continue spending money on passenger rail studies. Trail Now supports METRO getting this funding instead. If the METRO Board Members who are on the SCCRTC continue to vote in favor of the train, this will impact public perception of METRO. Trail Now wants to support METRO and make sure it gets the money it needs.

Eduardo Montesino, speaking as a member of the public, stated METRO needs to provide a clear, accountable plan for serving riders and engaging with the community. Riders deserve reliable service and accountable leadership. METRO should explain its priorities and identify who is responsible in carrying them out and provide specific actions and timelines.

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

7 LABOR ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATIONS

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

8 ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION TO SUPPORT EXISTING AGENDA ITEMS

There was one additional document received and distributed to the Board of Directors on September 24, 2026 and will be added to the agenda packet.

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 AUGUST 2026
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

9.2 ACCEPT AND FILE MINUTES OF:
A. AUGUST 19, 2026 METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
B. AUGUST 28, 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager

9.3 ACCEPT AND FILE: FISCAL YEAREND MONTHLY BUDGET STATUS REPORTS FOR JUNE 30, 2026 AND ADOPTION OF THE PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE OF RESERVE ACCOUNT BALANCES
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

9.4 ACCEPT AND FILE: THE FINANCIAL UPDATE JULY 2026 RESULTS
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

9.5 APPROVE: CONSIDER A RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE CEO/GENERAL MANAGER AS THE AUTHORIZED AGENT TO SUBMIT A GRANT APPLICATION AND EXECUTE ACTIONS NECESSARY TO RECEIVE FORMULA FUNDS FROM THE FY26 LOW CARBON TRANSIT OPERATIONS PROGRAM
Derek Toups, Planning and Innovation Deputy Director

9.6 APPROVE: REVISED CLASS SPECIFICATIONS AND WAGE SCALES FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT ANALYST JOB SERIES WITHIN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT
Dawn Crummié, Chief Human Resources Officer

9.7 APPROVE: CONSIDERATION OF DECLARING VEHICLES AND/OR EQUIPMENT AS EXCESS FOR PURPOSES OF DISPOSAL OR AUCTION
Chuck Farmer, Chief Financial Officer

9.8 APPROVE: ACCEPT THE PROPOSED OVERALL DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (DBE) GOAL OF 0% FOR FEDERALLY FUNDED PROCUREMENTS FOR FFY27–FFY29 AND OPEN THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD BEGINNING OCTOBER 6, 2026
Chuck Farmer, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Liaison Officer

9.9 APPROVE: REVISED CLASS SPECIFICATIONS FOR FACILITIES MAINTENANCE MANAGER AND FLEET MAINTENANCE MANAGER WITHIN MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT
Dawn Crummié, Chief Human Resources Officer

9.10 APPROVE: CLASS SPECIFICATION AND WAGE SCALE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MAINTENANCE SPECIALIST I WITHIN FLEET MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT
Dawn Crummié, Chief Human Resources Officer

There were no public comments.

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

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED

MOTION: DIRECTOR LIND SECOND: DIRECTOR NEWSOME

MOTION PASSED WITH 8 AYES (Directors Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, Orozco, and Pageler). Directors Downing, Dutra, and Kalantari-Johnson were absent.

REGULAR AGENDA

10 PRESENTATION OF EMPLOYEE LONGEVITY AWARDS FOR:
(10 YEARS) DONNA BAUER, SR. EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT*
(10 YEARS) LUCAS IRIGUCHI, FACILITIES MAINTENANCE WORKER II
(5 YEARS) JAMES SEILENBINDER, MECHANIC II*
***Denotes those in attendance to receive their certificate.*

Board Chair Koenig thanked all the employees for their years of service.

There were no public comments.

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

11 RETIREE RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FOR URIEL MENDOZA, BUS OPERATOR (26 YEARS)
Board Chair Koenig thanked Mr. Mendoza for his years of service and presented him with a plaque.

Mr. Mendoza expressed his gratitude and relayed a story of how at the age of five he realized how a watch took over his life and everything ran on a schedule. With retirement, that is no longer the case, and the watch no longer controls his life.

Jaime Renteria, SMART Chairperson, also presented Mr. Mendoza with a plaque from members of SMART. He commented that Mr. Mendoza is a hard worker, great with the public, and he's been there personally and professionally to others.

There were no public comments.

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

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE RETIREE RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FOR URIEL MENDOZA, BUS OPERATOR

MOTION: DIRECTOR LIND SECOND: DIRECTOR ORBACH

MOTION PASSED WITH 8 AYES (Directors Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, Orozco, and Pageler). Directors Downing, Dutra, and Kalantari-Johnson were absent.

12 APPROVE: RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT OPPOSING CALIFORNIA PROPOSITION 43 ON THE NOVEMBER 3, 2026 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT

Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager, spoke to the item and explained that the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association circulated a petition that any special election by a special district had to pass by a two-thirds majority vote. The petition passed and will now be on the November 3, 2026 ballot as Proposition 43 for the voters to decide its fate. If it passes, it means all the work that Friends of Santa Cruz METRO did on behalf of Santa Cruz METRO would be moot and METRO would need to pass its 2028 ballot measure by a two-thirds majority vote. He requested the Board to approve the resolution before them.

Discussion followed on:

- How it affects all of Santa Cruz County's jurisdictions
- How it takes important decisions out of the hands of local voters and deprives voters of options

Ben Finke, Bus Operator, pointed out that a citizen initiative already requires a massive effort to gather signatures and get on the ballot. By raising the threshold to two-thirds, it takes power away from the people who act in their communities, gather signatures, and see ballot measures that they support put into action.

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

ACTION: MOTION TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SANTA CRUZ METROPOLITAN TRANSIT DISTRICT OPPOSING CALIFORNIA PROPOSITION 43 ON THE NOVEMBER 3, 2026 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT

MOTION: DIRECTOR ORBACH SECOND: DIRECTOR LIND

MOTION PASSED WITH 8 AYES (Directors Koenig, Leonor, Lind, Martinez, Newsome, Orbach, Orozco, and Pageler). Directors Downing, Dutra, and Kalantari-Johnson were absent.

13 TRAINING ON PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS WHEN BALLOT MEASURES ARE PENDING

Shayna van Hoften, Legal Counsel, mentioned that Friends of Santa Cruz METRO qualified its ballot measure to implement a new sales tax within METRO's entire jurisdiction via a citizen initiative but the election will not be held until March 2028. That is 18 months away and a long time of being in a restrictive communications environment. The main thing to remember in an active election environment is that METRO can educate but not advocate for the passage of the ballot measure. She spoke to the presentation and reviewed what is allowed in educating the public and the types of advocacy that are prohibited; the citizen initiative; what METRO can and cannot do (with communication examples of each); staff conduct rules during work hours versus on personal time; use of public funds in marketing efforts; citizen initiative campaign responsibilities; and next steps METRO can take in outreach efforts.

She highlighted the importance of providing neutral, factual information and refraining from persuasive advocacy.

Discussion followed on:

- Various scenarios on phrasing responses to inquiries
- METRO's responsibility on managing signage near bus stops
- Advocating on personal time
- METRO presentation versus campaign advocacy
- Placing factual information on buses is acceptable
- Mass mailings are not allowed if it relates to a ballot measure; the agency must take a neutral stance

SMART Chairperson Renteria thanked Ms. van Hoften for the presentation and expressed that METRO needs to make sure the drivers are trained on what they can and cannot say.

Mr. Finke asked for clarification on how a Bus Operator can respond to being asked how they are personally going to vote. He suggested that previous budget projections if the ballot measure didn't pass be revisited so that information is not taken out of context.

Legal Counsel van Hoften responded to all concerns. CEO Aldridge added that initially METRO was looking at November 2026 and now we are looking at March 2028 with regards to the budget. Staff is working on a detailed plan to bring back to the Board which will provide a clearer picture of what those changes will look like in 2028 if the measure doesn't pass.

Board Members thanked Legal Counsel van Hoften for this educational information.

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

14 CEO ORAL REPORT

Corey Aldridge, CEO/General Manager, spoke to the following items:

- Human Resources (HR) Professionals Day is September 26th, and he extended gratitude towards the HR Team. HR recently hosted a well-attended employee Health Fair, and through their efforts, METRO has rolled out two new supplemental benefits to employees--Longterm Benefit Care and Prepaid Legal Services.
- Upcoming activities include a Week Without Driving October 1 - 8 including the community celebration at the Capitola Mall on Friday, October 2nd, from 4:00 – 7:00 PM and to consider joining a ridealong during the week.
- METRO will be offering system-wide free fares on Wednesday, October 7th, for California Clean Air Day.
- METRO will have a booth at the Museum of Discovery "Zoom Honk Smash" Touch-A-Truck Event at the Capitola Mall parking lot on October 3rd from 10:30 AM - 3:00 PM.
- METRO is hosting its annual Bus Roadeo and company picnic on Saturday, October 10th. We are still recruiting volunteer judges so if any Board Members are interested, please reach out to Donna Bauer.

- METRO has maintained an active community presence over the past month by participating in several events such as the Cornucopia at UCSC, local resource fairs, the Downtown Farmers' Market, and the Santa Cruz County Fair in which METRO provided free rides to the fairgrounds and discount admission tickets.
- METRO hosted the 2026 Central Coast Transit Summit on September 22nd, bringing together transit leaders and partners from across the Central Coast to connect, exchange ideas, and strengthen our shared focus on the future of public transportation. We were pleased to welcome representatives from San Benito, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Gold Coast, and Monterey-Salinas transit agencies. The summit provided a valuable opportunity to share perspectives, explore opportunities for collaboration, and build stronger connections across our region.
- CEO Aldridge visited Washington, DC last week and met directly with Representatives Zoe Lofgren and Jimmy Panetta, senior staff of Senators Alex Padilla and Adam Schiff's offices, and officials from the Department of Transportation to advocate for METRO's capital grant applications and policy priorities. Additionally, as President of The Bus Coalition, he lead advocacy on Capitol Hill, including our Built in America roundtable and meeting with Congressional Bus Caucus Co-Chair Darren LaHood to ensure that bus capital funding remains a federal priority.
- CEO Aldridge also visited Sacramento on September 18th to attend the California Transit Association's Executive Committee Meeting to align statewide legislative priorities, transit and operations funding, and state regulatory strategies impacting METRO's zero-emission transition. These leadership tables ensure Santa Cruz METRO remains directly tied to funding decisions and policy momentum both in Sacramento and on Capitol Hill.

There were no public comments.

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

15 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

Board Chair Koenig announced the next regular board meeting will be held on Friday, October 23, 2026, at 9:00 AM at the Admin Offices, 110 Vernon Street, Santa Cruz, CA.

16 ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Koenig adjourned the meeting at 10:22 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bauer
Sr. Executive Assistant