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Board meeting

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Agency: METRO Regional Transit Authority

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Summary

- Labor and fringe benefits make up 77% of METRO's budget, with monthly healthcare costs for each employee just under \$2,000.
- \$6 million has been paid to the Federal Transit Authority as partial repayment for an unused grant for a rail project from three decades ago. If not for this payment, 2025 METRO would have been on budget, with expenses coming in \$9.4 million under budget.
- METRO seems to pride itself on training employees. One employee was trained in CPR and saved a life while off duty that same day. Training statistics and other KPIs (key performance indicators) were given in the committee reports for 2025, detailing where METRO is doing well and where it needs to improve.

Follow-Up Questions

- What is "the rail"? Are they referring to the planning stages (like the 3C+D corridor) to increase passenger rail connections in Ohio? At one point, "Sandyville rail" was mentioned. Google noted that there is an abandoned Sandyville and Waynesburg

Railroad in Stark County.

Notes

[Board Meeting Packet with Agenda and Members](#)

9 a.m. meeting started; 40 in attendance, including members of the board, staff and audience

METRO RTA seems to pride itself on the training hours it puts into each employee. Some examples include: one employee, Jasmine Golson, was trained in CPR, and, while off duty, saved a life later that same day.

Other employees recognized were Tara Brooks and Darkeus Dearmon, each with 25 years of safe driving and no passenger complaints. Assistant Maintenance Director John Sutherland is retiring after 26 years at METRO. He left right after his ceremony to respond to a fire alarm.

February Board meeting minutes passed unanimously.

Customer Experience & Service Performance Committee

Vice Chair Christine Marshall reported on 2025 highlights given by METRO employees:

- Operating staff at near-budget level with a few vacancies
- Met with Akron Public Schools college prep, automotive, marketing and IT academies
- On-time goal performance was 81% (same as 2024), with a goal of 95%
- METRO Select had 93% on time, with a goal of 95%
- Noted that January 2026 had a lot of significant weather events that made running buses on time difficult
- Routes 1, 2, 3, 8, 10 best on-time records
- Routes 61, 31, 23, 32, 1 often have problems (Route 1 was mentioned in both categories)

Internal & External Engagement Committee

Board Member John Valle reported:

- The 2025 average health care cost per employee, per month was \$1,983. Overall, for 2025, health care costs were up more than \$2,000 compared to 2024.

- There were \$1 million more in health care claims in 2025 over 2024
- 2025 health care was 15.6% of the total METRO budget (this is the highest percentage in at least five years. 2022, for example was 8.9% according to data from the agency.)
- Hours absent per operator in 2025: Average 45 hr/mo (x 285 operators); 13,000+ hrs /mo. These gaps were filled and scheduled by the dispatchers.
- [METRO Select](#) (a service for people who qualify) was up 600 rides from last 2024, with most calls between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m.. Caller wait time for this improved mostly improved year over year with one exception during the 4 p.m. time slot.
- Single rides and one-day passes were the most popular purchases

Culture and Planning Committee

Chair Robert DeJournett gave a report of 2025 highlights:

- Increased frequency of buses on routes 8 & 29 and expanded Sunday service hours
- Launched a Community Advisory Council made up of riders and community partners to help shape METRO services
- Secured \$1.8 million in grant funding to add nine bus shelters, do several technological enhancements and other improvements
- He also mentioned improvements for accessibility for those who need METRO the most
- [Resolution 2026-08](#) - A resolution authorizing the award of a contract for system-wide schedule review/optimization, support and training services. Passed full board.

Finance & Technology Committee

Chair Robert Konstand reported highlights for 2025:

- 1-2 week turnaround for paying construction invoices
- Beginning upgrade payroll and finance software
- IT concerned about cybersecurity
- Added “liquidated damages protection” to procurement contracts if providers have a breach to protect METRO
- One-time payment for a rail grant repayment (\$12 million) put METRO in deficit, but Konstand said he hoped that METRO would get some or all of it back once METRO works out everything with rail partners. The committee report says “The rail repayment expense will be categorized in the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report as a non-operating expense not to exceed \$12,825,000.”
- Previous years overestimated sales tax, but it is now back in line with the budget estimate

- METRO was \$9.4 million under budget for 2025 expenses (not including payments made and set aside for “the rail”)
- Labor and fringe benefits make up 77% of total operating expenses. 2025 fringe benefits, specifically hospital and medical for METRO employees, are almost \$10 million/year

Development and Protection Committee

Chair Renee Greene reported a lot of KPIs (key performance indicators) for 2025:

- Averaged 73.3 training hours per employee
- Preventable accidents decreased by 11% while preventable accidents on the Select service increased by 10%
- Types of preventable accidents included: fixed objects went up by 23.5%; turns down 18% and sideswipes down 22%
- Zero onboard accidents in 2025 with over 5.3 million miles serviced. Over the past two years, there have only been two onboard accidents in 11.1 million miles driven.
- 130,726 miles between preventable accidents in 2025, up 19% from 2024
- In January, METRO had over 2,000+ training hours, averaging 30 minutes per employee
- Also in January, METRO had 18 accidents; five were preventable on METRO Direct; For January, there were approximately 94,000 miles between preventable accidents (the goal according to agency date is 150,000 miles.)

Governance Committee

Chair Donald Christian reported:

- METRO RTA Board of Trustees president Mark Derrig and Vice President Dana LaGarde were nominated to stay in those positions for consecutive terms regarding the election of officers and the board approved both nominations.

Other business

- Chief Culture Officer Tatia Harris had a rail report:
 - Working on an appraisal and mindful of the timeline, which was originally March 31, but it is more comprehensive for the Sandyville rail, so METRO asked the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for an extension until April 30 and it was approved. Partial payment of \$6 million (out of \$12 million METRO has set aside) has been paid to the FTA, according to staff member.
 - METRO is still negotiating the final payment to the FTA

- There is a final repayment deadline of May 2028 though METRO has an internal deadline of Dec. 31, 2027

Officers' reports

Derrig said that hearing the year end reports means METRO is doing well and he was proud and happy to be a part of the team.

Chief of Staff and Chief Operating Officer Jarrod Hampshire thanked everyone for acknowledging year-end reports. He said “everybody has a KPI that, that, you know, maybe we're not really proud of internally, that, you know, we're putting out to the board to say this is an area where we need to measure and do better.” He said this important to not just show the good, but to show things they are working on.

Meeting concluded 9:33 a.m.