



**Sunset Empire Transportation District  
Board of Commissioners  
September 23, 2021  
Draft Zoom Board Meeting Minutes**

1. CALL TO ORDER - Chair Debbie Boothe-Schmidt called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.
2. ROLL CALL: Present: Chair Debbie Boothe-Schmidt, Vice Chair Tracy MacDonald, Secretary/Treasurer Diana Nino, Commissioner Pamela Alegria, Commissioner Charles Withers, and Commissioner Guillermo Romero. Commissioner Rebecca Read excused

Staff: Executive Director Jeff Hazen, Chief Operating Officer Paul Lewicki, Deputy Operations Officer Jennifer Geisler, Financial Officer Kelly Smith, Executive Assistant Mary Parker, Transportation Options Specialist Kathy Kleczek, Human Resources Manager Sue Farmer, Mobility Manager Jason Jones

3. CHANGES TO AGENDA- No changes
4. PUBLIC COMMENT (3 minutes)- None
5. APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 25, 2021, BOARD MEETING MINUTES-  
Commissioner Alegria moved to approve the August 2021 Meeting Minutes  
Commissioner Nino seconded the motion  
Discussion- Chair Booth-Schmidt stated that Commissioner Read’s last name was spelled incorrectly and should be spelled Reed.  
Roll Call Vote:

Name	Boothe-Schmidt	MacDonald	Nino	Alegria	Withers	Read	Romero	
Aye	x	x	x	x	x		x	6
Nay						Excused		0

6-Aye  
0-Nay  
1-Excused  
Motion passed.

6. FINANCIAL EXCEPTIONS AND INFORMATION REPORTS- August 2021- Financial Officer Kelly Smith asked if there were any questions. Commissioner Alegria asked why there was an entry in Accounts Payable for Accounts Conversion. Financial Officer Smith said she will reach out to the accountant about this. There were no corrections or changes made to the Financial Report.  
Commissioner Nino moved to accept the August financial reports.  
Commissioner McDonald seconded the motion.  
Discussion- None  
Roll Call Vote:

Name	Boothe-Schmidt	MacDonald	Nino	Alegria	Withers	Read	Romero	
Aye	x	x	x	x	x		x	6
Nay						Excused		0

6-Aye  
0-Nay  
1-Excused  
Motion passed.

8. REPORTS FROM CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

- a. Chair Boothe-Schmidt- Reported she had attended the SDAO Board training and as always, she learns something new every time. Chair Boothe-Schmidt also said she was going to review the Board Orientation Book she received when she became a Board member and suggested that the other Board members also review the Board policies.
- b. Commissioner MacDonald- Reported that he has been riding more and looked forward to the presentation today for Get There Challenge.
- c. Commissioner Alegria- Reported she has registered for Get There Challenge and watched the Rogue Valley Transportation meeting video.
- d. Commissioner Withers- Nothing to report
- e. Commissioner Nino- Reported that we are currently in the middle of Hispanic Heritage Month which goes from September 15<sup>th</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Nino also said she is getting used to being Secretary/Treasurer and thanked Financial Officer Kelly Smith and Accounts Payable Donna Buganan for their help. She also gave a shout out to our Payroll and Accounting Clerk Donna Buganan for being so organized and helpful.
- f. Commissioner Romero- Reported that he is glad to be here.

9. CONTINUED BUSINESS

- a. IN-PERSON BOARD MEETING RESUMPTION- Executive Director Hazen reported that there have been previous discussions by the Board at the July 22 and August Board meetings about returning to in-person meetings. There was discussion about the COVID-19 variant and its effect on in-person meetings. Hazen said that it was the consensus of the Board to hold off on deciding and see how things progressed over the next few weeks. On Tuesday, September 16th, the TSA announced that the mask requirement was updated and will expire on January 18th, 2022. I attached the September 16th Daily Astorian, where there is an article that reports that the local hospitals are seeing a decline in Covid-19 virus patients. At the August 26th Board meeting, it was the consensus of the Board to not decide and discuss the subject at that September 23rd Board meeting. Commissioner Nino asked if there would be proper ventilation available in the conference room. Executive Director Hazen said it would be challenging and he would probably not have staff in the room to open more spacing for the public and have participants 6 feet apart. Commissioner Nino said it has been so positive to have the meetings on Facebook and if we have masks and spacing it will be hard to transmit the meeting and make it accessible. Commissioner Nino said we only have two more meetings so maybe we should finish up the rest of the year and take this up in 2022 again. Chair Boothe-Schmidt said she agreed with Commissioner Nino.  
 Commissioner MacDonald moved to table the decision until 2022  
 Commissioner Withers seconded the motion  
 Discussion- None

Name	Boothe-Schmidt	MacDonald	Nino	Alegria	Withers	Read	Romero	
Aye	x	x	x	x	x		x	6
Nay						Excused		0

6-Aye  
 0-Nay  
 1-Excused  
 Motion passed.

- b. MANDATORY VACCINATIONS- Executive Director Hazen reported that since the last Board meeting the President has made it mandatory that employer with over 100 employees mandate the Covid 19 vaccine for all their employees. This will affect employers in Oregon due to the State having an OSHA plan. The States mandatory vaccine plan will have to be the same as the Federal one or more strict. We are not affected because we have fewer that 100 employees. Hazen said the FTA sent out an email requesting that transit agencies to ensure their workers and communities have every opportunity to get the

vaccine. Federal OSHA is writing the mandate and State OSHA will have to adopt the Federal rules or develop stricter requirements. Special Districts feels this will roll down to government employers as well. SETD will not be effected because we have less than 100 employees. Executive Director Hazen said the Board has had this conversation before and some Board members have strong feelings about it. Even though we have a vaccination rate of 80 % we still have 9 drivers who have not had a vaccination. Executive Director Hazen said he had explained in the cover document that he put out a survey to the unvaccinated drivers with incentives for getting the vaccine and received 3 responses that the incentives did not matter, so if we were to mandate, we would lose all 9 of the drivers. Hazen said he had recommended in the cover report that the Board view the August Rogue Valley Transportation Board Meeting where the Board discussed mandatory vaccinations but the motion to approve did not pass. Hazen said that he sat in on the September Rogue Valley meeting yesterday. The Union President, Vice President and their labor attorney attended. They all wondered why the Rogue Valley Board had not invited them to the previous meeting and were not involved from the beginning. They said we are dealing with lives and strongly recommended vaccinations. Then several employees spoke and did a great job. The first one who spoke had the most effect on the Board. He did a great job explaining his religious convictions explaining his beliefs and what would happen. The Board discussed it and referenced the employees that talked and decided to table the decision and postpone making the decision until the next meeting. Executive Director Hazen said if the SETD Board wants to move forward with mandatory vaccinations staff will need time to develop policies, work with the union, work with our attorney and prepare testing supplies. Hazen said this is my update and I do not want to have to cut any more service. Chair Boothe-Schmidt said she agreed and that she is worried for the drivers health but also did not want to see services cut any more than they have been and afraid of what would happen if we did make it mandatory. Executive Director Hazen added that all transportation services have put protections in place and taken great steps to protect the drivers as much as possible. Commissioner Withers asked if there is some way we could test or take temperatures of employees that are not vaccinated prior to them entering the workplace. Commissioner Withers has lost 5 family members in Texas. I do not want to lose drivers or cut service either. Hazen said that Rogue Valley planned on doing testing 3 times a week, and we have access to purchasing testing kits. Commissioner Withers said that at a minimum we could be doing temperature scans. Commissioner Romero said he works for Department of human services Child Welfare and has been a union steward for 9 years. The governor mandated all state employees to be vaccinated by October 18<sup>th</sup>. As a Union Steward, we have had meetings with HR and labor about their religious beliefs. Commissioner Romero said one of the things that the Union is looking at is periodic testing however there are some issues with availability and accuracy of testing, and someone is looking into rapid testing. We must provide safety and security for our customers which is a balancing act and respect those employees not wanting a vaccination for whatever reasons. Things are not going to get better for a long time. We need to provide safety for our employees and our customers and at the same time continue providing services in any way we can. Commissioner Romero added if that means, there are extra costs on our behalf for testing then that is my position on it. I would hate to see anybody lose their job over not being vaccinated. Commissioner Romero said that one of his coworkers who he is representing as a steward told him he loves his job but also holds tight to his religious beliefs and so if they want to fire me, they can. Commissioner Nino stated that for now we comply and so far, we are doing a very good job of cleaning and spacing, and our drivers are disciplined in wearing their masks. We have all these things in place, and I do not want to put anyone in a position to have to quit because of this. Our drivers have had a rough 2 years and we should respect that. Maybe we could arrange with public health to have standing appointments where drivers can go in and have weekly testing. Then when things get colder, and the windows must be closed we may have to reconsider due to the reduced air circulation. Commissioner Alegria said she is a strong supporter of everyone receiving the vaccination, protecting the public, protecting the workers, and respecting how our workers feel. Commissioner Alegria said mandatory testing would help alleviate some of the concerns since bus drivers do not just stay on the buses and associate with others outside of the bus. Commissioner Alegria said we should contact those that are in the know like Public Health and OHA and develop a procedure for testing for Covid 19 and variant. Commissioner MacDonald said that he works part time, and he is required to wear a mask, his temperature is taken when he arrives. If his temp is not normal, he goes home but is paid. Commissioner MacDonald said he thinks we should try to at least do that, and he said people should have their own

space and judgement as far as getting the vaccine or not. Commissioner Withers asked if the employees were against everything related to Covid 19. Executive Director Hazen said he did not know. Commissioner Alegria asked if any decision we make will go to the union? Executive Director Hazen said yes but we have a good relationship with the union, but any decision the Board makes must go to the union. The union wants to be at the table to make sure it is fair and just for all. Executive Director Hazen said that everyone is waiting for the Federal OSHA mandates to be released. Hazen suggested that in the meantime we could make temperature scanners and rapid tests available for the employees. Chair Boothe-Schmidt said she thought it would also be a good idea to start preparing a policy and procedure at this time too. Commissioner Romero suggested we also provide incentives to employees for testing.

- c. DRIVER SHORTAGE UPDATE-Executive Director Hazen reported that a new driver has been hired. The new driver worked at SETD over 10 years ago and will quickly be caught up and ready to work. Hazen also reported that Human Resources Manager Sue Farmer and Mobility Manager Jason Jones attended a Job Fair last week in Astoria. It was not very well attended but contacts were made. Executive Director Hazen is looking at grants available that can assist us in hiring new drivers. Hazen said he wants to attack the driver shortage from all sides by increasing wages, increasing the employee referral bonus, increasing sign on bonuses and make it attractive to come and work for us. Commissioner Alegria asked if the National Guard could assist us with drivers on a temporary basis until the driver positions are filled. Executive Director Hazen said he would investigate that. Commissioner Nino asked about the increase in wages planned for new hired employees is given right away or over a 2-year period. Executive Director Hazen said the wages would be increased over a 2-year period because we only have a short period of time to spend the grant money, but we are also looking at our options with bonuses and how to spread them out incrementally. There was further discussion about the use of employee bonuses instead of wage increases because bonuses can also be given to current employees. Hazen said we want to make it fair and said he would not give bonuses to new employees without giving them to the existing employees. Executive Director Hazen said he and Chief Operating Officer Paul Lewicki have been looking at another option for providing public transportation called Micro Transit which is basically on demand transportation like uber or lift which we would design. This type of service usually uses smaller vehicles which has less than 16 seats which does not require the driver to have a CDL. Hazen said that we will be looking into this and have more to discuss in the future.

## 10. NEW BUSINESS

- a. OREGON GET THERE CHALLENGE-DRIVER SHORTAGE-SERVICE ADJUSTMENTS-Transportation Options Specialist Kathy Kleczek presented information about the upcoming Get There Challenge 2021 which will be running from October 4<sup>th</sup> through October 17<sup>th</sup>. The Get There Challenge requires that you are age 18 or older live or work in Oregon to participate. Participants first have to go to the Get There website and create an account. Then go to the dashboard to log in your activities and achievements which included the dates, types of transportation and the length of your trips. Whether you are commuting, carpooling, walking, riding a bike, riding the bus, working remotely, meeting remotely, or driving your car you enter this information. The program then tracks your statistics and adds up your points from your participation. This information is then calculated in to points and submitted for you to be eligible for prizes. Kathy also explained options for traveling and how to submit them on the dashboard. If anyone has questions, please contact Kathy and she will walk you through it.

11. CORRESPONDENCE- Executive Director Hazen read an announcement and displayed the picture of one of the new Gillig buses taken at the Astoria Column by Operations Officer Paul Lewicki who had submitted it to the Rural Transit Assistance Program's recent photo contest. Paul had won Honorable Mention. Paul has also submitted the photo to a contest for SDAO.

12. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT- Executive Director Hazen reviewed his report. Hazen said that he has changed the lease agreement at the Seaside Office to a 3-year lease instead of 5 years. The name Returning Citizens is the name that has been put on the program to set up CDL training programs at prisons. Executive Director Hazen reported that there is a lot of interest and excitement nationwide and in Oregon. He recently met

with Northwest Oregon Works and will be meeting with the Sheriff and the head of Parole and Probation next week.

13. LEADERSHIP TEAM REPORTS- Review of Team monthly reports and open discussion with Board.

14. OTHER ITEMS- None

Meeting was adjourned 11:11 AM

Mary Parker, Recording Secretary

Secretary/Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Diana Nino

DRAFT