

**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**

FRIDAY

10:00 A.M.

April 29, 2022

PRESENT:

**Neoma Jardon, Reno City Council Member, Chair
Ed Lawson, Mayor of Sparks, Vice Chair
Vaughn Hartung, Washoe County Commissioner
Oscar Delgado, Reno City Council Member
Bob Lucey, Washoe County Commissioner**

**Bill Thomas, RTC Executive Director
Adam Spear, Legal Counsel
Darin Tedford, Deputy Director of NDOT (Alternate)**

NOT PRESENT:

Kristina Swallow, Director of NDOT

The special meeting, held in the Chambers of the Washoe County Commission, 1001 E. 9th Street, Reno, Nevada, was called to order by Chair Jardon. Following the roll call and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of our country, the Board conducted the following business:

Item 1 SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

There were no special recognitions.

Item 3 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On motion of Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Lucey, which motion unanimously carried, Chair Jardon ordered that the agenda for this meeting be approved.

Items 4.1 thru 4.13 CONSENT ITEMS – taken out of order

Minutes

4.1 Approve Minutes of the March 18, 2022, meeting (For Possible Action)

Reports

4.2 Acknowledge receipt of the monthly Planning Activity Report (For Possible Action)

4.3 Acknowledge receipt of the monthly Engineering Activity Report (For Possible Action)

4.4 Acknowledge receipt of the monthly Public Transportation/Operations Activity Report (For Possible Action)

4.5 Acknowledge receipt of the monthly Procurement Activity Report (For Possible Action)

- 4.6 Acknowledge receipt of the monthly Summary Report for the Technical, Citizens Multimodal, and Regional Road Impact Fee Advisory Committees (For Possible Action)

Planning Department

- 4.7 Approve the Electric Vehicle and Alternative Fuel Infrastructure and Advanced Mobility Plan (For Possible Action)
- 4.8 Acknowledge receipt of the 2021 Bicycle & Pedestrian Data Collection Annual Report (For Possible Action)

Public Transportation/Operations Department

- 4.9 Approve Change Order #1 in the amount of \$129,000 for price increases related to the purchase of fifteen (15) compressed natural gas (CNG) fueled paratransit vehicles utilizing the State of Nevada Fleet Vehicles procurement contract number 99SWC-S490 (For Possible Action)
- 4.10 Approve a Zero Emissions Transition Plan (ZETP) to satisfy the federal requirement that any application to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for grants for projects related to zero-emissions vehicles include a ZETP (For Possible Action)

Engineering Department

- 4.11 Authorize the Executive Director to negotiate a Reimbursement Agreement with the City of Reno for its micro-mode pilot project in Downtown Reno, in and amount not-to-exceed \$400,000 (For Possible Action)

Executive, Administrative and Finance Departments

- 4.12 Approve modifications to RTC Management Policy P-31, Transit Passenger and Visitor Conduct (For Possible Action)
- 4.13 Approve modifications to RTC Personnel Rule 2.3 (Unclassified Service) and 5.7 (Salary Adjustments and Pay-for-Performance) (For Possible Action)

On motion of Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Lucey, which motion carried unanimously, Chair Jardon ordered that Consent Items 4.1 through 4.13 be approved.

Item 2 PUBLIC INPUT – *taken out of order*

Chair Jardon opened the meeting to public input and called on anyone wishing to speak on topics relevant to the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) that are not included in the current agenda.

Mr. Tom Daly, local resident, commented on the dangers that currently exist on Mt. Rose Highway and would like safety improvements made. He believes the removal of the advance warning signals and the timing change of the signals has significantly impacted the safety of the road.

Ms. Kelly Hyatt, local resident, said that although she found out that there is no project currently in the works for Toll Road, she is still opposed to any future project that may come up, but would approve of an animal bridge across Geiger Grade for the horses to safely cross over the roadway.

Ms. Dora Martinez, local resident, would like the paratransit drivers to have high pay in the upcoming union negotiations. She also commented that Uber and Lyft drivers are not trained in ADA assistance for passengers and there is no accountability because there are no cameras in the cars.

Commissioner Lucey requested to speak on the Mt. Rose Highway comments and agreed with all of the safety concerns mentioned. He added that this is a mountainous area and should not be designed in the same manner as a flat region, such as in Texas. He believes the safety matters in our region are not being adequately addressed by NDOT.

Mr. Gary Watson, President of Teamsters Union, Local 533, expressed his disapproval of the way RTC and specifically, Bill Thomas, handled the situation during the Keolis employee strikes and believes the Board should call for his resignation.

Mr. Ky Plaskon, representing TMBA, submitted a letter for the record pertaining to Item 4.11 under Consent on the agenda for April 29th. (attached)

Emails and voicemails were submitted with comments in opposition to any project on Toll Road by the following:

Rhonda Gerych, local resident:

I went on the RTC site and scanned through the South Meadows Multimodal Study. I received the info on Toll Road from someone at our HOA meeting. I found the thread on ND and saw your update. Thank you! I am not 100% positive of the person's name at our HOA mtg, however, I believe I could guess from some of the posts on ND. I am relieved to know the truth and that this is not something on the radar in the near future! It could have truly devastating effects on SO many if it were implemented as it initially appeared. With your information, I can see the bigger picture and appreciate the input and insight.

Rene Averett, local resident:

My name is Rene Averett and I own property in Via Bianca Estates. I bought my home in 1998 and have been part of this community since then, serving on the Board of Directors for several years. Like many in the association, I am retired and live on a fixed budget, even with my 401K fund.

While my home is not threatened by the proposed road through our neighborhood, the people who live in the north end of the association are like me. We bought homes and land here because we loved the area, wanted a place we could afford, and planned to retire and live out our lives here. Now, this proposal to put an additional road to connect to US 395 threatens not only those who will lose their homes, but those of us living here with changes to our neighborhood, additional noise, and possible crime by opening it up closer to the public roads. It also affects our HOA, which relies on the assessments, if we lose the income from about 30 homes in the area.

But the most important part is that it will displace 30 families, whether it's two people or five or six, by forcing them out of the homes they bought because they could afford it. Even if they got around \$250,000 to \$300,000 for their house, where will they find an affordable house to move into with the same amount of space? I doubt the offer will give them upwards of \$500,000 to buy a new home.

The proposed road is about two blocks from the existing road on Geiger Grade. Why not move it farther down Toll Road to one of the places where it's easier to cut across to US395? A road a few miles down would also provide another important feature that has been largely ignored in providing another exit road from Toll Road should a fire break out in the canyon. There is currently no other road for the people on the south side of US395 to escape. In our own association, we only have one exit and that is to Toll Road, meaning we are trapped if that exit is blocked. Theoretically, there is an easement to the south, but it is unusable and runs through property owned by others who do not wish to allow it.

I feel there are other options for this proposed road. People can exit to the north via Equestrian to Curti Ranch Rd. and on to Veterans Parkway. A study done before all the apartment buildings were allowed at the roundabout at Geiger Grade reported that the additional building would not impact the traffic flow. But, it appears that it does now.

Please reconsider this plan. I am strongly opposed to taking the homes and land from people who bought here for the same reasons I did. I say no to this plan.

One other concern is why we had no notification or information regarding this plan until one of our owners read something on Facebook.

Craig and Kimberli Tobeler, local residents:

We have lived on toll road in the Via Bianca estates for forty two years. We are completely opposed to this plan and we will be attending the April 29 2022 meeting, thank you.

Laura Byrne, local resident:

I was recently informed about the "Toll Rd extension". While I understand the need for something to change to decrease the risk of accidents and traffic, I feel taking homes is the wrong route. I recently just bought my first home in the Via Bianca estates in September of 2021. I picked the home I did because as a single income household, I couldn't afford anything else in this market right now. I am not one to say take someone's business but if you take business instead of the homes then you won't be displacing so many people. I know you must pick the options that helps the most, but I implore you to think about the people who you will be removing from their homes. I worked very hard to be able to afford my first home in this horrible market and I struggled to be able to get the home I did. If you were to take my home, I won't have another option. I love my home very much and I will be devastated if you remove me from it. I know in the grand picture it is a tiny house to you but to me, it is my home. I planned to have many memories in this home with my family and friends. This past two years have been hard enough on us without something like this happening.

Let me give you some of my back story so you can understand where I am coming from. I moved to California in 2011 so that I could help others by being a drug and alcohol counselor at an inpatient rehab after getting sober myself. While I was doing so during the pandemic, my family was struck with tragedy when we lost my father. I took this as a sign to be able to return to Reno to be closer to my family. This was one of the best decisions I ever made, and I couldn't be happier. One of the reasons I was so happy was because I was able to finally afford my own home, a place I could call my own. I am begging you to reconsider taking this from me. When I bought the home, it had been a rental home for many years and needed a lot of TLC. I spent months and 10's of thousands of dollars fixing it up and making it a place that not only I was proud of but truly loved. I used all of my savings to do so because I didn't have more than my own paycheck to pay for it. I recently did landscaping and put in some beautiful trees that I was very eager to watch grow over the years.

I am at the mercy of this committee to please don't take my home from me. I don't have any options if you were to take this home from me. I have put my heart and soul into this home as it is and you will be crushing that part of me if you choose to do so.

Voicemail from Beth Hartman, local resident, is opposed to any extension of Toll Road to US 395 South because it looks like it will go through her mother's yard.

Voicemail from Sherry Cairo (sp), local resident, is opposed to any extension of Toll Road to US 395 South because it looks like it will go through her house and she put everything she has into her home.

Voicemail from Laura Byrne, local resident, is opposed to any extension of Toll Road to US 395 South because it looks like many homes will be taken, including hers, and she will not be able to purchase another home.

Voicemail from Margie White, local resident, is opposed to any extension of Toll Road to US 395 South because it looks like many homes will be taken in Via Bianca.

There being no one else wishing to speak, the Chair closed public input.

Item 5.1 thru 5.2 DISCUSSION ITEMS AND PRESENTATIONS

- 5.1 Review and evaluate Executive Director Bill Thomas' performance, and adjust compensation accordingly, as it pertains to (1) the proper duties of the position and accomplishments of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 goals, with the effective date of any salary increase and/or bonus to be effective retroactively to July 1, 2021, and (2) the proper duties of the position and accomplishments of Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 goals, with the effective date of any salary increase and/or bonus to be effective July 1, 2022 (For Possible Action)**

Chair Jardon introduced this item, explaining that this is Mr. Thomas' first evaluation since being hired in April 2020. She then asked if the commissioners would like to begin with their comments.

In response, Vice Chair Lawson said that because this is a public evaluation, he would like Executive Director Thomas to tell everyone what he's accomplished in the past two years.

E.D. Thomas began with an explanation of the way the staff report recommendation is written. He said it is written so that it could be addressed as two separate evaluation years. He went on to say that a detailed list of his goals and their current status were included in the Board packet and then concluded by giving a presentation describing some of those goals and achievements by both himself and the agency as a whole.

Commissioner Hartung would like the RTC to focus more on moving transit to where the housing is, using FlexRIDE or another manner, whatever works well to provide public transportation to the outlying areas, such as Spanish Springs or the Cold Springs area.

He went on to say that he believes E.D. Thomas has done a very good job with the multitude of things he inherited, especially during an epidemic.

Mayor Lawson asked if funding has been set aside for new technology in the agency and a plan for the future.

E.D. responded that the short answer is yes and additional information on that would be brought with the budget at the next meeting.

Commissioner Lucey said that E.D. Thomas has stepped into the role of Mr. Gibson, who had 20+ years of experience in transportation, but also during a pandemic. He believes E.D. Thomas has done a phenomenal job overcoming the challenges of building a new culture within the organization and found a functional role for everyone within the organization to grow. He added that Mr. Thomas has created more efficient processes within all branches of the RTC and has overcome the challenges of running an organization such as the RTC.

He said one thing he would be critical about is communications with the federal delegation and our grant process. Because the current CFO is leaving, it is even more important to continue to improve those relationships.

Commissioner Delgado said overall, E.D. Thomas has done a good job by continuing to provide transit service to those in need during the pandemic while implementing improvements to the system. He would like to see E.D. Thomas building opportunities for greater and better communication to build ridership.

Chair Jardon said that it takes a very solid and talented team to be successful. She then said that the Virginia Street BRT project is incredible and the vanpool program has grown significantly. She also asked if there is any manner in place to track driver behavior of the vanpool drivers. She had one pass her going approximately 90 mph on I-80 eastbound.

Chair Jardon continued, saying that she has seen an improvement in communications in the past six months, probably due to more face-to-face meetings. She believes the driver roundtable meetings have been productive and great feedback that comes from them is extremely valuable. She added that face-to-face communications with direct staff and contractor staff is also invaluable.

She agrees with the other commissioners on the successes of so many goals and is very happy about being 13 years ahead of schedule on having a 100% alternative fuel fleet.

Commissioner Hartung said he would like staff to look at the FlexRIDE app and some of the other apps being used around the nation to see how well they work. He has heard that the FlexRIDE app is difficult to use, so should be improved.

He also asked if the FlexRIDE vans have ADL onboard and if not, it should be adopted.

E.D. Thomas said that it does already exist.

Commissioner Hartung asked E.D. Thomas to see if there is any possibility of looking into a rail option with Amtrak going out to the TRI-Center area and/or work with the neighboring county to build a rail system together.

Chair Jardon commented that NDOT has caused great frustration about their projects in the region and would like to have the RTC potentially step in to help with some of those projects.

She would also like to take a new look at the Somerset/Verdi FlexRIDE program to find out why ridership has been so low.

Lastly, she wants RTC to be more realistic about which roads are capacity roads and which should be more pedestrian, scooter and bicycle mode, instead of all roads being all things to all people.

Chair Jardon then called Angela Reich, Director of Administrative Services, to the podium to provide a snapshot of what prior raises have been.

Ms. Reich said that she does not have the percentage for this year yet, but the prior year the average staff increase was 5%. In the year 2020, there was a flat 2.1% increase due to the pandemic. She then predicted that the minimum increase for this year would be 5% and possibly a little higher.

Commissioner Hartung asked if the executive director receives a COLA like staff.

Ms. Reich responded that the RTC does not have a COLA and there have been no salary adjustments for E.D. Thomas in the past two years.

Vice Chair Lawson said he would like to know what E.D. Thomas thinks his salary adjustments should be.

E.D. Thomas' expectation is that he should get something slightly less than what the employees get, so he asked for a little less than 5% for the prior year and 4.5% for the upcoming year.

Chair Jardon asked Counsel Adam Spear how the motion should be taken, as one year at a time or both at once.

Mr. Spear said it is at the Board's discretion.

Commissioner Hartung asked if the increases would be retroactive because that is not something that is generally done at the County.

Commissioner Lucey then made a motion to give E.D. Thomas an increase of equal to what the employees received in 2021 at 5%, to be retroactive, and 4.5% for 2022. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hartung and passed unanimously.

5.2 Acknowledge receipt of an update on the FY 2023-2027 Transit Optimization Plan Strategies (TOPS) and provide input and direction regarding the plan (*For Possible Action*)

Mr. Jim Gee, RTC Service Planning/Innovations Manager, addressed the Board to explain the purpose of the TOPS report, which came about in response to Commissioner comments, questions and requests made at the RTC Board Retreat held in January.

He then introduced Mr. Gary Hewitt of TMD (Transportation Management Design), who gave a presentation going over the details of the report and related suggestions for improvement to the overall service plan.

Upon his conclusion, Chair Jardon asked Mr. Hewitt about his background and experience in the industry.

Mr. Hewitt said TMD is based in Carlsbad, CA, and specializes in transit planning. This should be done every 5-15 years, but RTC does it every 5 years or so. They work with very large transit systems, such as Los Angeles and Honolulu and small town systems with only 10 buses. His personal background was as the transportation planning manager with the Orange County Transportation Authority and he has significant experience with microtransit and fixed route services planning and operations.

Mr. Hewitt mentioned that we at the RTC already had a great deal of useful data that he was able to use, which is not normally the case.

Commissioner Hartung asked Mr. Gee why passengers on FlexRIDE keep getting their rides cancelled. He read the complaint that was sent to the FlexRIDE app.

Mr. Gee said he will look into the cause for those cancellations and mentioned that those comments are monitored by RTC staff. Approximately 95% are a thumbs up.

Commissioner Lucey asked Mr. Gee asked about the FlexRIDE routes proposed for the South Meadows area and the Route 52 current ridership. He would like more distinction on both Routes 52 and 56. He is glad that improved bus stops are currently under construction, which is a good thing, but would also like some modifications made to routes 52 and 56 with better connectivity. He would like the proposed FlexRIDE route to be modified to address more businesses that are currently under construction.

Commissioner Lucey also recommended a company he knows of that would be useful for our passengers to see where their bus is at any given time, similar to an “Uber” system.

Commissioner Delgado has a concern about removing bus route 19 on Wells Avenue.

Mark Maloney, Director of Public Transportation and Operation, explained that there are routes on each side of Wells that have much more frequent buses, so ridership has shifted to those routes instead of using the Wells route as it only has a bus every hour.

Discussion continued about education and feedback from passengers and additional updates will be brought in the near future.

On motion of Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Lucey, which motion carried unanimously, Chair Jardon ordered that receipt of the update be acknowledged.

Items 6.1 thru 6.3 REPORTS

6.1 RTC Executive Director Report

New Staff Introductions:

He announced the addition of two new RTC staff members:

- Christian Schonlau joins the RTC as our new Finance Director. Christian comes to us from the Nevada State Board of Pharmacy where he served as the Chief Financial Officer. He managed the staff and operations for the agency's financial functions, provided testimony before the Legislature, Board of Examiners, and other government bodies and committees, and ensured compliance to State and Federal statutes. He will be working with Stephanie to ensure a smooth transition.

We will be celebrating Stephanie’s retirement at our May 20th Board meeting, which also happens to be her last day with the RTC.

- Graham Dollarhide joins the RTC as a Senior Technical Planner. Graham has 10 years of experience in the transportation planning field. He has worked at the state, regional, and local government levels.

We are excited to have you both join our team! Please join me in extending a warm RTC welcome.

1. Congratulations to the following employees for their milestone service anniversaries:
 - Ed Park, Senior Technical Transit Planner, with 25 years on May 5
 - Mark Maloney, Director of Public Transportation, with 5 years on May 5
 - Stephanie Haddock, Director of Finance, with 25 years on May 13
 - Karin Copeland, Procurement and Contracts Analyst, with 20 years on May 13
 - And Lon Harter, IT Analyst, with 15 years on May 29

He noted that, if RTC's Public Affairs Manager, Michael Moreno, were still with us, he would have reached his 20-year work anniversary on May 13. He thanked everyone who came to the previous board meeting to honor Michael's contributions to our community.

2. Next, he acknowledged the retirement of Senior Technical Transit Planner Tina Wu. Tina retired recently after spending 26 years with the RTC. She has been instrumental in upgrading our passenger amenities, such as solar bus stops, transit technology projects, and was our lead grant writer for the transit department with success most recently with awards for hydrogen fuel cell and a digital twin research project with the University of Nevada, Reno. We thank her for her service to the community and wish her well in her future endeavors.
3. RTC's very own Judy Tortelli was named the Engineer of the Year for 2022 by the Truckee Meadows Branch of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)!!! He said he's sure he speaks for all of us when he says we are extremely proud of Judy and honored to be part of her team. Well-deserved and well done!!! Congratulations!
4. Also at the ASCE event, the Virginia Street Project received the Project of the Year Award! This landmark project in the heart of our city has made Virginia Street a safer, more inviting, and more transit-focused place for everyone from Midtown all the way to the University of Nevada, Reno. He congratulated Project Manager Jeff Wilbrecht and his team, including NCE, CA Group, SNC, and Atkins, for a job well done. The entire community is benefitting from their efforts. Congratulations!

5. The RTC recently received an award for the Sun Valley Boulevard Multimodal Improvement Project Phase 1 at the Nevada Chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA) 2022 Spring Conference for Transportation projects \$5 million to \$10 million. The project includes roadway reconstruction, new sidewalks, new bike lanes, improved bus stops, and increased safety. This project has been recognized as a much-needed and appreciated improvement for the Sun Valley community. This is a great achievement for the RTC. Congratulations to Maria Paz Fernandez and her team, including Jacobs, NCE, Washoe County Public Works, Q&D Construction, and to all of the RTC.
6. With gas prices on the rise, the RTC continues to offer transportation solutions for our community. The RTC encourages people to visit our website, rtcwashoe.com, to check out different options for their commutes, including our RIDE, FlexRIDE, VANPOOL, and carpool-matching services. In addition to saving on fuel and reducing wear and tear on your personal vehicle, taking transit, VANPOOLing or carpooling are great ways to reduce traffic congestion on our roadways.
7. Last but not least – May is Older Americans Month. As part of Older Americans Month, the Human Services Agency, the RTC and KOLO Cares have come together to host this year’s Stuff A Bus Drive-By Donation Drive. New, never-been-used donations will be accepted at the Sparks Target, on Thursday, May 19, from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Donations will be stored at the Washoe County Senior Center to be given to seniors in need throughout the year.

Needed items include: hygiene products, toothbrushes/toothpaste, deodorant, soap, shampoo and conditioner, disposable razors and shaving cream, combs and brushes, sweatshirts, sweatpants, bus passes, gift cards, Uber/Lyft gift cards, Uber Eats/DoorDash gift cards, jackets, cleaning supplies, coloring books, large-print word search books, reading books, movie passes, blankets, slippers, socks, gloves/hats, shorts, t-shirts, shoes, coloring items (crayons/markers/pens), and crossword puzzles in large print.

6.2 RTC Federal Report

E.D. Thomas mentioned that a written report was included in the agenda packet for this meeting and briefly mentioned some of the funding programs that staff are currently evaluating which are coming out as part of the infrastructure bill.

6.3 NDOT Director Report

Mr. Darin Tedford, NDOT Deputy Director, provided the monthly report presentation which included updates on traffic safety, the Advisory Working Group, the Spaghetti Bowl Express Project (SBX), the Mt. Rose Corridor Study, the McCarran Boulevard Corridor Study, US 395 and the North Valleys, Pyramid Highway improvements, Lake Tahoe highways, and lastly, development. He then offered to answer any questions.

Commissioner Hartung thanked Mr. Tedford for safety improvements that have been made on Pyramid and asked about the timing for the other listed projects. He added that he continues to receive complaints about the removal of the advanced signal warning flashers.

Commissioner Lucey asked for more information be brought about the previously discussed accident that occurred at Thomas Creek and Mt. Rose Hwy. He would also like a particular piece of roadway off of Virginia St. currently maintained by NDOT to be handed to the County for improvements. Lastly, he would like to see additional improvements made to the roadway and lighting near Crystal Bay as soon as possible, including improvements to the stormwater drainage.

Item 7 COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Chair Jardon congratulated E.D. Thomas on his evaluation.

Item 8 PUBLIC INPUT

Chair Jardon opened the meeting to public input and called on anyone wishing to speak on topics relevant to the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) that are not included in the current agenda.

There being no one wishing to speak, the Chair closed public input.

Item 9 ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

NEOMA JARDON, Chair
Regional Transportation Commission

***Copies of all presentations are available by contacting Denise Thompson at dthompson@rtcwashoe.com.*