

**Macatawa Area Express Transportation Authority**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, January 27<sup>th</sup> 2025**  
**Proposed Minutes**

The Macatawa Area Express Transportation Authority Board met at 3:30 pm in the training room at the MAX Operations building – 11660 Greenway Dr., Holland, MI 49424

**Members Present:** Chair Russ TeSlaa, Secretary Meika Weiss and Treasurer Jason Latham; Board Members Doug Becker, Margo Walters, Kristin Myers, Jason Latham, Abbe Baas

**Staff Present:** Beth Higgs, Lynn McCammon, Juana Lopez and Sandra Kohorn

**11.24.1 Approval of the Minutes for December 2024 Board Meetings**

Approved motion made by Myers, supported by Latham

**11.24.4 Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**11.24.4a Marketing Committee**

Higgs reported that MAX is focused on looking into marketing firms to assist in launching new Fixed Routes. MAX has also already picked a venue to rent for Employee Appreciation.

**3.24.4 Executive Committee**

**3.24.4a MDOT 2026 Grant Application - Action**

The Macatawa Area Express (MAX) is preparing the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) grant application for Fiscal Year 2026, which will begin on October 1, 2025. This grant application is primarily for estimating and earmarking purposes. Staff recommends requesting a total of \$2,150,178 in MDOT Operating Assistance, based on 30.5895% of expenses totaling \$4,795,610. MAX is eligible to receive up to 60% of eligible expenses under Act 51.

For Section 5307 Capital Match, staff proposes a 20% local match request for various capital expenditures, including \$2,000 for miscellaneous support equipment, \$3,000 for computer hardware to replace a service vehicle, \$16,000 for maintenance equipment replacement, and \$175,423 for bus replacements.

Regarding the Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program, MAX plans to apply for \$142,500 in New Freedom funds to continue its Night Owl Service, requiring a 50% local match. Additionally, staff suggests requesting \$100,000 in New Freedom funds to support mobility management efforts, with a possible 20% local match (\$20,000).

For the Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Program, MAX proposes applying for \$165,076 in Federal funds, with a \$33,015 state match (20%), to support bus replacement.

The action requested includes approval to submit the FY2026 grant application to MDOT, publication of the intent to apply in the local newspaper, and adoption of the attached Resolution of Intent. The resolution also appoints the MAX Director as the Transportation Coordinator for MAX and authorizes the Interim Director to execute necessary grant contracts and amendments.

Motion to approve was made by Becker, supported by Walters. Motion carried unanimously.

**3.24.4b Resolution of Intent – Action**

The Macatawa Area Express Transportation Authority (MAX) is applying for state financial assistance for local transportation services under Act No. 51 for fiscal year 2026. MAX designates Interim Director Beth Higgs as the official representative to handle all public transportation matters and communicate with the State Transportation Commission. MAX has certified no changes in eligibility documentation and has reviewed a balanced budget totaling \$4,795,610, with federal, state, and local funds of \$1,322,716 each. Weiss voiced there needs to be language changed in the Resolution of intent. Motion to approve was made by Weiss, supported by Latham. Motion carried unanimously.

**3.24.4b Notice to Advance Procurement – Action**

Higgs presented the request to advance procurement of Three (3) Relief Vehicles for Fixed Routes with an estimated cost to MAX of \$115,000.00. A Request for Quote (RFQ), Request for Proposal (RFP) or Invitation for Bid (IFB) will serve as the method of procurement, and will include specifications, terms, clauses/certifications, requirements and conditions of the purchase in accordance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations. Procurement shall commence on or about February 1, 2025. The calendar date for the completion of work for this project shall be on or about July 1, 2025. Motion to approve was made by Meyers, supported by Latham. Motion carried unanimously.

**3.24.4b Huntington Bank Commercial Card – Action**

Higgs proposed moving our existing Fifth Third Bank credit card to Huntington Bank's commercial card. While the current provider has met our needs, we believe switching to Huntington Bank will offer key advantages, including improved customer service with more responsive support, and easier integration with our existing accounts. MAX transferred all banking accounts to Huntington Bank last year, as recommended by the City of Holland, and this move will further streamline our processes.

Additionally, staff recommends increasing the credit limit from \$15,000 to \$20,000 and issuing separate cards to the following authorized users with specified spending limits: Beth Higgs, Deputy Director (\$10,000 for online invoices, miscellaneous and emergency purchases), Shelby Pedersen, CS Manager/Marketing Specialist (\$8,000 for office supplies, marketing event purchases, and IT equipment), and Doug Mytton, Building & Grounds Supervisor (\$2,000 for service parts, small equipment, tools, and maintenance

needs). Motion to approve was made by Weiss, supported by Latham. Motion carried unanimously.

**3.24.4f Vehicle Accessibility Plan - Information**

A MAX Vehicle Accessibility Plan (VAP) is required by the Michigan Department of Transportation as part of the FY2026 grant application process to request New Freedom grant funding. This is an annual review of our VAP, making any revisions from the current 2023 VAP. This year's review of the plan includes updates to some LAC members, and the number of accessible vehicles in our fleet. The Local Advisory Committee reviewed and approved changes to the Vehicle Accessibility Plan at the meeting held December 5, 2024, and the approved minutes will be submitted with our grant application due February 1. Attached is the February 2023 Vehicle Accessibility Plan, as well as approved changes to that plan on December 5, 202

**3.24.4f Ridership Reports**

Higgs was pleased to report that since the implementation of our new Via scheduling software on August 29, 2024, we have seen a notable increase in ridership on our Reserve-A-MAX demand response service. MAX Data Analyst Charlie Veldhoff highlighted a significant milestone in September with 252 rides recorded on September 25, marking the highest post-COVID-19 pandemic increase. In December, ridership reached 275, a 34.03% increase from December 2023. The attached ridership report provides further data and comparisons.

The new scheduling software has improved operational efficiency, enhancing both accuracy and convenience for riders, as well as better planning and resource allocation, leading to more frequent and timely service.

Additionally, we are excited to report a 17.52% increase in ridership on our fixed routes from December 2023 to December 2024. We are committed to sustaining this growth and continuing to enhance our services to better serve the community.

**3.24.4g Financial Reports**

There was no discussion.

**3.24.4h Expenditure Reports**

There was no discussion.

**Interim Directors Report**

Higgs provided an update on the Executive Director recruitment process. MAX received 51 applications, 8 of which were reviewed. The next step is to move forward with selecting 3-4 candidates for in-person interviews. Higgs encouraged board members to attend the interviews and tours to meet the applicants.

Kohorn reported on the Fixed Route Launch Committee has commenced to meet twice so far, with the first meeting being in early January. This committee focuses on any concerns, missing stops, signage, transfer locations and being able to be preventative of issues with MAX route changes.

Higgs wanted to celebrate MAX being able to assist the Holland community in a vehicle pile-up. There were over twenty people who were stranded on the highway and MAX was able to aid with transportation and bringing citizens to a warming center.

### **3.24.5**

#### **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Weiss and supported by Becker to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.