Macatawa Area Express Transportation Authority
Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 24, 2026
Approved Minutes

Members Present: Chair Russ TeSlaa, Secretary Meika Weiss, Treasurer Jason Latham, Board Members; Margo Walters, Kristen Myers, Doug Becker,

Members Absent: Michael Schiltheis

Staff Present: Ryan Novotney, Beth Higgs, Kait Riegling, Sandra Korhorn, Juana Lopez, and Lynn McCammon

8.24.1 Public Comment

Mary Swisser came to the board today because she wants MAX to consider Sunday service to church. She stated she has spoken to other riders, and they would like to see service during church hours. Mary had biking accident leading her to not want to cross US-31 and thinks that the community would appreciate 8am-12pm Sunday service.

8.24.2 Approval of July 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

Approved motion made by Latham, supported by Weiss. Motion carried unanimously.

8.24.3 Marketing Committee

No marketing committee comments.

8.24.4 Executive Committee

8.24.4a Public Act 152 – Medical Health Benefit Contribution Change - Action

Higgs requests Board approval to formally elect the 80/20 option under Section 4 of Public Act 152 of 2011 (MCL 15.564) for MAX Transit's medical benefit plans, effective with the 2027 medical benefit enrollment. Higgs explained that Public Act 152 provides public employers with either a statutory hard-cap contribution method under Section 3 or an 80/20 contribution structure under Section 4. MAX currently contributes 85% of medical premiums, with employees contributing 15%. Staff recommended adoption of the Section 4 80/20 option to provide a more consistent and predictable contribution structure and to reduce the potential employee cost impact associated with the statutory hard-cap method. This would also include MAX Transit covering of 100% of employee dental and vision premiums for 2027.
A motion was made by Latham and supported by Weiss to approve Public Act 152. Motion carried unanimously.

8.24.4b Commute Week Event – Free Rides on Fixed Routes – Action
Higgs requested approval on free rides on all MAX Transit fixed routes from September 7 through September 11, 2026, in support of Green Commute Week. This is a regional initiative coordinated in partnership with the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC).

Higgs presented that the initiative promotes alternative transportation options, including public transit, walking, biking, carpooling, and other shared transportation modes. The free-ride promotion would provide an opportunity to increase awareness of MAX Transit services, introduce new riders to fixed-route service, and encourage greater use of public transportation as an alternative to single-occupancy vehicle travel.
Motion to approve made by Walters, supported by Weiss. Motion carried unanimously.

8.24.4c **FY2026 Year-End Budget Amendments - Information**

Novotny presented a working draft of the FY2026 Year End Budget Amendments. At the beginning of FY26, $400,000 of 5307 was applied to previous years (FY25) expenses, allowing to build MAX Transits cash balance. This allowed MAX to be financially secure as they waited for revenues to stream in. Without doing this, MAX would not
have sufficient funds to continue operations through this fiscal year. This resulted in fewer 5307 funds reported for FY26. This number also reflects investment income, private donations, property tax increases, and higher passenger ridership than originally projected. Routine expenses increased slightly, mainly due to an increase in part-time drivers and insurance premiums. Admin expense also increased due to the contract with VC3, our new I.T. company. Transit Maintenance expenses increased because of snow removal being double what we anticipated. The excess revenue has been
placed in Contingency, presenting a balanced budget for FY26. This will be an action in Septembers' board meeting.

8.24.4d **FY2027 Resolution of Intent - Information**

Novotny briefly went over FY2027 Resolution of Intent draft. Public Acts of 1951, as amended (Act 51), it is necessary for the Macatawa Area Express Transportation Authority to provide a local transportation program for the state fiscal year of 2027 and therefore, apply for state financial assistance. This will be an action in Septembers' board meeting.

8.24.4e **FY2027 Proposed Budget - Information**

Novotny went over the current draft of the FY2027 budget. This includes operating costs with thirty minute headways. MAX does predict to open more part time positions to be able to fulfill the demands of the public. Walters raised question on hiring for part time but not full time drivers. Novotny explained the flexibility of part time is able to fit MAXs driving schedules as MAX transitions to new routes.

8.24.4f **West Shore Mall Hub Contract - Information**

Novotny presented the West Shore Mall Hub Contract. This contract would allow MAX to utilize the parking lot at West Shore Mall as a hub. MAX would be allowed to apply and use capital grants to help fund this expense.

8.24.4g **Triennial Review 2026 - Information**

Higgs happily announced that MAX did very well in this year's Triennial Review. There were two findings under ADA, where MAX is not prompt enough in response due to business hours. Since Macatawa Area Express is closed on weekends they are currently not in compliance with responding within 24 hours of the weekend. Reviewers are currently looking into this finding as it is a common finding with many

agencies closed through the weekend. MAX will have until December to correct this and bring into compliance.

8.24.4i **Ridership Reports for June 2026 - Information**
There was no report.

8.24.4j **Financial Reports for June 2026 - Information**
Ryan and Wayne are closely monitoring as the end of the fiscal year approaches.

8.24.4k **Expenditure Reports for June 2026**
There was no report.

8.24.5 **Directors Report**
Novotny has been tuned into working on FY2027 budget as the fiscal year comes to an end. MAX is currently still waiting for installation of vehicle chargers.

In the meantime MAX reissued an RFP for vehicle contract and so far, have received eight back.

8.24.6 **Adjournment**
A motion was made by TeSlaa and supported by Latham to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.