



SUNSET EMPIRE TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT
Board of Commissioners
March 26, 2026 | 8:30 a.m.
Board Meeting Minutes
Approved

Link to meeting video: <https://bit.ly/4dDAgpE>

1. Call to Order

Chair Kathy Kleczek called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance (0:00:15)

3. Roll Call (0:00:35)

Commissioners present in person: Pamela Alegria, Tita Montero, Guillermo Romero, Matthew Stolberg, Kathleen Teeple, Penny York, Kathy Kleczek.

Staff/visitors present: David Carr, Jennifer Geisler, Jason Jones, Sam Bedair, Sara Schilling, Johnathan Niebuhr, Craig Holt, Matt Malmsheimer.

Staff/visitors present virtually: Nicholle Searle, Stephanie Rodriquez, Victoria Davis, Samantha Halverson, Lauren Hedrick, Cindy Lesmeister.

4. Changes to Agenda (0:00:55)

None

5. Public Comment (0:01:18)

None

6. Approval of Minutes (0:01:42)

a. Strategic Planning Workshop on Feb. 16, 2026

Commissioner York moved to accept the Feb. 16, 2026, strategic plan workshop minutes.

Commissioner Alegria seconded the motion.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nay							
Excused							

Motion passed unanimously

b. Regular board meeting on Feb. 26, 2026

Commissioner Montero moved to accept the Feb. 26, 2026, board meeting minutes.
Commissioner Teeple seconded the motion.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nay							
Excused							

Motion passed unanimously

7. Reports from Chair and Commissioners (0:03:25)

Commissioner Stolberg: Nothing to report

Commissioner Teeple: Nothing to report.

Commissioner Romero: Thanked the board for the work done during his absence.

Commissioner York: Would like the board to consider a consent agenda.

Commissioner Alegria: Nothing to report.

Commissioner Montero: Reported that Sarah Lu Heath from the Columbia Pacific Economic Development District made a presentation to the Seaside City Council that included information on the Northwest Oregon Transit Alliance. Commissioner Montero asked that information about the alliance be presented to the board. She also said that she'd like a report on the Community Health Improvement Plan, which touches on transit, from the area rural health coalition that includes several local health organizations.

Chair Kleczek: Noted that it's been a busy month and she's grateful for the committee work being taken on by commissioners.

8. Committee Reports (0:11:05)

a. Board Policy Committee

Commissioner Montero noted that the committee has met several times, and the board can expect meeting minutes in the board packet from now on. She also reported that the committee has adopted a mission for the committee and noted that members are working on policy B-312 (dealing with committees) and a legislative advocacy policy.

b. Executive Director Evaluation Committee

Commissioner York noted that the committee met earlier in the week for the first time. Ms. Schilling passed out materials from the committee, including a letter from HR Answers and a draft evaluation timeline. Commissioner York explained how the committee would like to proceed, including working with a consultant to develop an evaluation tool.

9. Executive Session (0:26:57)

Chair Kleczek announced that the board was moving into executive session pursuant to ORS 192.660 (2)(h), which allows the board to meet in executive session to consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed. Chair Kleczek noted that representatives of the news

media are specifically directed not to report on or otherwise disclose any of the deliberations or anything said about these subjects during the executive session, except to state the general subject of the session as previously announced. No decision may be made in executive session. At the end of the executive session, the board will return to open session and welcome the audience back into the room.

Chair Kleczek asked the board whether the executive assistant should remain in the room to take notes. Commissioner Alegria asked whether a record was needed. Chair Kleczek said a record is needed, but the board has a way to record without the executive assistant. Commissioner York said she feels it should be standard to have the executive assistant in executive sessions to take notes. Commissioner York moved to request that the executive assistant remain with the board during the executive session.

Commissioner Romero seconded the motion.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nay							
Excused							

Motion passed unanimously

Chair Kleczek recessed the meeting into executive session at 9 a.m.

Chair Kleczek called the regular meeting back to order at 9:54 a.m.

8. Committee Reports (continued) (0:30:03)

b. Executive Director Evaluation Committee (continued)

Commissioner York moved that the board approve a not-to-exceed amount of \$6,000 for assistance with the executive director’s evaluation from HR Answers, a neutral consulting firm recommended by SDAO.

Commissioner Teeple seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner Alegria asked how Commissioner York came up with the not-to-exceed amount and discussion followed.

Commissioner Montero offered a friendly amendment of a not-to-exceed of \$4,500, and Commissioners York and Teeple both accepted.

Commissioner Montero added a friendly amendment that Commissioner York be the contact person and contract signer with HR Answers, and Commissioners York and Teeple accepted.

Chair Kleczek asked if Commissioner York had an area of the budget she intended for the cost to come from, and she said no. Chair Kleczek asked Executive Director David Carr if he had any budget concerns. He said he did have concerns, namely with rising fuel costs, but he said the district could find the money.

Chair Kleczek noted that budgetary adjustments could be needed.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye		X	X	X	X	X	X
Nay	X						
Excused							

Motion passed 6-1.

Commissioner York moved that the board provide some deviation from board policies B-312 and B-701-704 about the evaluation process as discussed.

Commissioner Montero seconded the motion.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nay							
Excused							

Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner York moved that the board authorize the committee to develop the questionnaire with the consultant and approve it before sending it out.

Commissioner Teeple seconded the motion.

Commissioner York clarified that this would mean the committee doesn't have to wait for another board meeting to authorize the questionnaire, and instead the board is giving the decision-making right to the committee.

Chair Kleczek asked for clarification on who decides the recipients of the survey.

Commissioner York said the committee has discussed the types of people it should go to, including staff, the executive director and community partners.

Chair Kleczek also asked how the survey will be delivered, specifically asking if there would be a way for people without email to take part.

Commissioner Alegria said she feels this should have been done in a board work session.

Chair Kleczek noted that the whole board will participate in the evaluation.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nay							
Excused							

Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Montero said the evaluation is separate from contract renewal. She said the executive director's contract auto-renews unless the board issues a notice of non-renewal 90 days before it expires. At this point, if the board is looking to change anything in the

contract – and there have been requests for changes in the contract – then there must be a notice of non-renewal no later than April 1.

Commissioner Montero moved to issue a notice of non-renewal for the contract that's in place now.

Commissioner Stolberg seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner York said she's concerned about what a notification of non-renewal means. Her expectation is that the board will renew an amended agreement, and she doesn't want to not renew a contract with the executive director.

Commissioner Montero said the intent of the motion isn't about not renewing but about being able to make changes to the contract.

Commissioner York proposed notifying of the board's intent to amend the contract.

Commissioner Montero said she was thinking of different wording – to not renew in this form.

Commissioner Teeple said she'd like to say the board intends to renew an amended contract.

Commissioner Stolberg said he feels the board doesn't need to explain its intent.

Commissioner Alegria said it gives uncertainty to the employee to issue a non-renewal.

Commissioner Montero said she would withdraw the motion and replace it with a motion to provide notice by April 1 of the board's intent to renegotiate the employment agreement.

Commissioner York seconded the motion.

Commissioner York said she would like to say in the motion that the board would like to continue the executive director's employment but also wants to make changes to the employment agreement. Commissioner Montero said it's an intent to renegotiate, not an intent to fire, terminate or continue employment.

Commissioner York said it's her intent to continue the executive director's employment under a renegotiated contract.

Executive Director Carr read from Section 2 of the agreement and said that, in his view, it's clear the agreement allows for renegotiation in good faith.

Commissioner York said she now doesn't see a reason for action.

Commissioner Montero withdrew the motion and said the board needs to appoint some representatives to enter into negotiations with the executive director.

Chair Kleczek noted that the agreement has been sent to the attorney, since the executive director asked for changes. The attorney is looking at the agreement through the lens of those changes, but that could be expanded if the board desires, she said.

Chair Kleczek said the board not taking action on non-renewal acknowledges the human factor, that the board's intent isn't to terminate employment, and that there are some things in the agreement that need to be fixed.

Commissioner Stolberg moved to direct the board chair to contact the attorney to get an answer within 72 hours on whether the board must give notice by April 1 to accomplish renegotiation and that the result of the conversation be emailed to the board.

Commissioner Romero seconded the motion.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye			X	X			
Nay	X	X			X	X	X
Excused							

Motion failed 2-5.

c. NWACT

Commissioner Romero noted that he hasn't received meeting notices yet. Chair Kleczek said she would check on that.

d. TAC

Commissioner Alegria reported that the TAC recently had its first meeting. The committee recommended several projects for inclusion in grant applications. The committee will discuss its bylaws at a future meeting.

10. Financial Report (1:52:04)

Executive Director Carr reported that staff made their best effort to provide a financial report, and he expects that next month's report will be closer to what the board is used to. He also reported that a new financial officer, Jennifer Stangland, has been hired and starts on Monday. She has experience in government finance.

The board agreed by consensus to accept the report as general information but not as the official financial report.

Commissioner Montero noted that she submitted printouts from the district's account to supplement the information staff provided. The printouts were distributed.

Commissioner Montero said that when the new financial officer meets with the Maps banker, she'd like to attend so she can understand more about how the district's relationship with the bank works and the accounts the district has at the bank.

Commissioner Montero moved to authorize her as the treasurer to work with the financial officer and bank to have a sit-down at the bank to understand the bank accounts.

Commissioner Romero seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner Alegria said it should include the executive director.

Commissioner Montero said she wouldn't exclude the executive director.

Executive Director Carr said he'd prefer the financial officer be allowed more time to become familiar with the district.

Commissioner York said the treasurer should be able to talk to the banks, and if the executive director wants the financial officer to attend as well, that should be up to the executive director. He should also be able to attend if he desires. She doesn't feel it needs approval from the board.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye		X	X	X	X		X

Nay	X					X	
Excused							

Motion passed 5-2.

11. Continued Business

a. Budget Committee Appointment (2:01:05)

Chair Kleczek asked if there were any other nominations for the Budget Committee, and none were offered up. She said there continues to be an opening on the committee. The slot will remain open until the board can find another person or the committee convenes.

b. RVHT Grant Application Update (2:01:52)

Executive Director Carr reported that clarification on whether the proposed program would be legally discriminatory was sought, and he reached out to Arla Miller from ODOT. He noted that her response was included in the board packet.

Commissioner Montero said she feels that the answer from Ms. Miller didn't fully line up with Mr. Carr's question, and she feels further clarification is needed. She also said she'd prefer to hear from a representative of the grant administrator.

Commissioner Stolberg asked whether Mr. Carr reached out to the veterans services office in Clatsop County. Jason Jones, mobility manager, said staff did reach out.

Commissioner Stolberg said he was disappointed the staff didn't provide information about whether the proposed program would duplicate already-existing services.

Chair Kleczek said a first attempt at clarification of the discrimination question was made and further clarification is needed. Perhaps reaching out to other transit districts would be beneficial as part of that clarification.

Mr. Carr said he'll gather more information and provide an update at the board's meeting in April. Commissioner Montero emphasized that Mr. Carr should check with the grant administrator.

c. Strategic Planning Workshop Summary Report (2:14:20)

Commissioners accepted the draft strategic planning workshop summary report by consensus.

d. SDAO Agreement Update (2:19:03)

Executive Director Carr said the agreement with SDAO has now been signed. Chair Kleczek clarified that it's the agreement in the packet but with signatures.

Mr. Carr reported that he's provided SDAO with some preliminary materials, including the forensic audit and RLS reports. The new financial officer will be part of the process.

e. Budget Officer Contractor RFP Update (2:21:02)

Executive Director Carr said the agreement has been published, and he sent it to the list of governmental financial advisers provided by SDAO. Some have declined because of the

requirement to attend Budget Committee meetings in person, while others are too busy at this time of year. The RFP is set to close on April 2.

Commissioner York noted that she was the board’s representative throughout the financial officer hiring process, and she feels the timing has worked out in such a way that a contract budget officer may no longer be needed.

Commissioner Montero said the new financial officer will have SDAO and a strong team behind her, so perhaps it’s a moot point.

Executive Director Carr said his recommendation is to let the RFP run its course and see what interest is received.

Chair Kleczek said she’d like the board to consider asking for the RFP to be withdrawn and for the board to appoint a budget officer who’s already in-house, knowing that person will have SDAO support. Chair Kleczek suggested Chief Operations Officer Jennifer Geisler as a candidate for budget officer.

Mr. Carr said district staff members have a lot on their plates, and he’d prefer to go with a CPA-level contractor.

Commissioner Alegria asked Mr. Carr what his reservations are about being the budget officer. Mr. Carr said he would be comfortable serving as the budget officer.

Commissioner York moved to appoint Mr. Carr as the budget officer.

Commissioner Alegria seconded the motion.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nay							
Excused							

Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Kleczek noted that she didn’t initially suggest Mr. Carr because he’d previously said he wasn’t comfortable being the budget officer. She’s glad there’s now a resolution.

Commissioner Montero moved to withdraw the RFP.

Commissioner Stolberg seconded the motion.

Mr. Carr said withdrawing the RFP would put out a mixed message on how the district does procurement. Commissioner Montero said she's concerned about wasting the time of people who put together proposals.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nay							

Excused							
---------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Motion passed unanimously.

f. Forensic Audit/RLS Reports Update (2:45:42)

Executive Director Carr reported that staff was asked to review the ODOT forensic audit and RLS reports from the last few years and make a report to the board on the progress toward resolving any identified issues, but more time is needed. He said staff would work on having a report to the board at a meeting in the near future.

12. New Business

a. Ticket Bank Program (2:46:30)

Executive Assistant Schilling reported that she was asked to provide information about the ticket bank program. She explained that the current application form and policy that governs the program are in the board packet, along with a completed application from Helping Hands Reentry Outreach. Ms. Schilling also noted that Goodwill Industries of the Columbia Willamette also submitted an inquiry about vouchers.

Chair Kleczek explained that the ticket bank program has a long history, and it's been administered and tracked in different ways. It's not reflected in the budget.

Commissioner Montero said it's a good program, but it needs better tracking and other improvements. She recommended suspending it for now, putting it into the upcoming budget, and fleshing it out for readoption as a new, stronger program effective July 1.

Commissioner Alegria said she'd like to see oversight and perhaps a ticket limit.

Chair Kleczek summarized that it appears the board is requesting that staff put together a proposal for how to improve the program, including a better system to track the tickets and the budget impact, plus a more transparent and robust application process.

Executive Director Carr said it's a good time to review and enhance the program. He recommended against suspending it because there's too much need in the community.

Chair Kleczek moved that the board grant 100 tickets each to Goodwill of Columbia Willamette and Helping Hands Reentry Outreach to use during this time when the board has asked staff to look at revamping the ticket bank program.

Commissioner Montero seconded the motion.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nay							
Excused							

Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner York was excused from the meeting.

b. 5339 Grant Application (3:02:50)

Executive Director Carr explained that he would like to apply for a two-phase competitive grant through ODOT. The application is due April 3. He would like to apply for funding for eight buses and two non-revenue vehicles. The money would be spent in FY27 and FY28. Mr. Carr said that, under ODOT’s new process, the application is rolled into subsequent phases if it’s not awarded, and if the district doesn’t apply by April 3, it misses out.

Chair Kleczek said several items jumped out to her as not included, such as seatbelts, lifts, securement systems, internal cameras, internal communications and fat tire bike racks. She also noted there were inconsistencies between the two applications, including that one application lists the financial reporting system as automated while the other one lists it as a combination. One has a match source listed. Chair Kleczek is listed as the authorizer on one application, and she shouldn't be. One application is listed as a vehicle application, and the other is listed as non-vehicle when it’s also for vehicles.

Chair Kleczek also said some questions about impacts and who would be impacted could have been answered with affirmatives and more information. The district needs to ensure that any time it’s assisting with facilitating better use of public transit, it’s also creating multimodal connections and providing more service and availability to more of the public. She noted that the second application lists impacted groups properly, while the first doesn’t. Chair Kleczek said she wants to ensure that when the district is submitting the applications, there’s consistent information across the board.

Mr. Carr said staff would review the applications and do their best to ensure they align. Commissioner Teeple moved to authorize the executive director to continue and apply for the grants and sign the competitive discretionary phase 1 grants.

Commissioner Alegria seconded the motion.

	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye	X	X	X	X	X		X
Nay							
Excused						X	

Motion passed unanimously.

c. Proclamation Regarding Ridership Appreciation Day (3:19:52)

Chair Kleczek explained that in the past, the district celebrated Ridership Appreciation Day in conjunction with Project Homeless Connect. But the board in 2025 opted to split the events and celebrate ridership appreciation on the district’s anniversary on March 24. Staff prepared a proclamation for the board to consider that would proclaim March 24 as Ridership Appreciation Day in the district going forward.

Commissioner Montero said March 24 has already passed this year, and she only saw news of Ridership Appreciation Day on Facebook, and she didn’t notice that the anniversary was mentioned. She feels a better path forward would be a board policy.

Commissioner Montero said she’d also want to see a more robust proclamation that other agencies are also asked to consider.

Chair Kleczek said a proclamation seemed to her like an appropriate option.

The board ended the discussion without taking action.

d. Date for April Board Meeting (3:24:20)

Chair Kleczek explained that multiple commissioners have a conflict on the original April board meeting date, so it's been proposed to change the regular meeting to Thursday, April 30. However, a Budget Committee meeting is planned that afternoon at 1 p.m. Commissioner Alegria said she feels it's too much. Commissioners discussed other options, including April 27, 28, 29 and May 1. Commissioners decided by consensus to stick with April 30 for the board meeting.

13. Correspondence

None

14. Executive Director Report (3:28:28)

Executive Director Carr reported on several topics, including rising fuel prices, staff appreciation day, training, the driver shortage and the possibility of advertising on buses, and potential collaboration with the City of Astoria on passenger infrastructure.

15. Team Reports (3:31:17)

Jennifer Geisler, Jason Jones, Sam Bedair and Sara Schilling reported on their work activities in February and March.

16. Adjournment (3:42:18)

Commissioner Stolberg moved to adjourn. Commissioner Alegria seconded the motion.

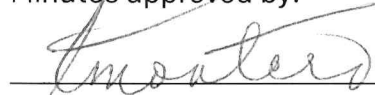
	Alegria	Montero	Romero	Stolberg	Teeple	York	Kleczek
Aye	X	X	X	X	X		X
Nay							
Excused						X	

Motion passed unanimously

The meeting was adjourned at 1:06 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Sara Schilling, executive assistant

Minutes approved by:



Tita Montero, board secretary-treasurer

Action items from the meeting:

- The board approved a not-to-exceed amount of \$4,500 for assistance with the executive director's evaluation from HR Answers and authorized Commissioner York as the contact person and contract signer. The board also approved some deviation from board policies B-312 and B-701-704 and authorized the Executive Director Evaluation Committee to work with the consultant to develop the evaluation questionnaire and send it out.
- Mr. Carr will gather more information on the RVHT discrimination question, specifically reaching out to the agency administering the grant, and report to the board at the April meeting. He'll also reach out to the veterans services office in Clatsop County to learn whether the proposed program is duplicative.
- Mr. Carr and staff will prepare a report on the status of issues identified in the ODOT forensic audit and RLS reports for a board meeting in the near future.
- Mr. Carr will serve as the budget officer.
- Staff will withdraw the budget officer RFP.
- Mr. Carr and staff will review the grant applications for buses and non-revenue vehicles and ensure they align.
- Staff will put together a proposal on improving the ticket bank program, including a better system to track the tickets and the budget impact, plus a more transparent and robust application process. Goodwill of Columbia Willamette and Helping Hands Reentry Outreach will be granted 100 tickets each to use in the meantime.
- Actual workforce numbers and not percentages will be included in the HR board report, along with workforce demographic information.
- High-level analytical information from the employee survey conducted by Mr. Bedair will be shared with the board.

Items in progress:

- Clatsop Community College MOU
- Budget Committee appointments
- RVHT grant application
- Legislative advocacy policy
- Report on audit/RLS progress