



## Mountain Line

3773 N. Kaspar Drive · Flagstaff, AZ 86004 · 928-679-8900 · FAX 928-779-6868 · [www.mountainline.az.gov](http://www.mountainline.az.gov)

### NOTICE AND AGENDA OF PUBLIC MEETING AND POSSIBLE EXECUTIVE SESSION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BOD) OF THE NORTHERN ARIZONA INTERGOVERNMENTAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.02, notice is hereby given to the members of the Board of Directors (BOD) of the Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority ("Mountain Line") and to the general public that the Board will hold a special meeting on:

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

8:30am

Mountain Line Training Room

3773 N. Kaspar Dr.

Flagstaff, AZ 86004

Due to the current public health emergency related to the Coronavirus, this meeting held in the Training Room will not be open to the public. This is a WEB BASED meeting. Members of the Board of Directors and staff may attend by telephone or internet conferencing. Members of the public may submit comments related to agenda items before 8am on the day of the meeting to [transportation@naipta.az.gov](mailto:transportation@naipta.az.gov) and observe the meeting by following the instructions at <https://mountainline.az.gov/about-us/board-of-directors/>.

**The Board of Directors may vote to hold an executive session for the purpose of obtaining legal advice from Mountain Line's attorney on any matter listed on the agenda pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3). The executive session may be held at any time during the meeting. Executive sessions are not open to the public, pursuant to Arizona Open Meeting Law.**

**Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation, such as a sign language interpreter, by contacting the Clerk of the Board of Directors at 928-679-8922 (TTY Service 800.367.8939). Requests should be made as early as possible to allow time to arrange the accommodation.**

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

-pages 1-2

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

#### DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS:

3. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

-pages 3-6

-Heather Dalmolin, CEO and General Manager

Staff recommends the Board of Directors authorize the CEO and General Manager of Mountain

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Line to implement a reoccurring pay plan increase not to exceed \$570,960 as part of a renewed strategy to recruit and retain employees. While this increase is off-budget, the FY2022 impact will be paid for by the American Rescue Plan funding from the Federal Transit Administration and have no impact on City of Flagstaff or other partners.

### **ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE AND STAFF:**

#### **NEXT MEETING DATES**

The Board and TAC Strategic Advance will be held on Wednesday, October 20, 2021. It will be a Zoom meeting based in Flagstaff in the Mountain Line Training Room, 3773 N. Kaspar Dr., Flagstaff, AZ 86004 at 9am. The public is invited to attend. October agenda items may include but not be limited to The FY2021 Annual Report, Financial Update, and Flagstaff in Motion. The October agenda will be available for review on Mountain Line's website and at Mountain Line's public posting places (listed on the Mountain Line website) at least 24 hours prior to the meeting and should be consulted for a list of items that will come before the Board and TAC.

A special Board meeting has been called for Wednesday, October 27, 2021. It will be a Zoom meeting based in Flagstaff in the Mountain Line Training Room, 3773 N. Kaspar Dr., Flagstaff, AZ 86004 at 9am for the purpose of conducting the CEO and General Manager Evaluation in executive session.

The next Board meeting will be Monday, November 22, 2021, and will be a Zoom meeting based in Flagstaff in the Mountain Line Training Room, 3773 N. Kaspar Dr., Flagstaff, AZ 86004 at 10am. The public is invited to attend. November agenda items will include but not be limited to Flagstaff in Motion, Safety Plan Implementation, Fares Update, Budget Process Kickoff, Strategic Plan Review, Milton Corridor Master Plan (CMP), Grant Award Notification, Workforce Utilization Report, and Delegation of Authority Updates. The November agenda will be available for review on Mountain Line's website and at Mountain Line's public posting places (listed on the Mountain Line website) at least 24 hours prior to the meeting and should be consulted for a list of items that will come before the Board.

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

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**DATE PREPARED:** October 8, 2021

**DATE:** October 13, 2021

**TO:** Honorable Chair and Members of the Board

**FROM:** Heather Dalmolin, CEO and General Manager

**SUBJECT:** Recruitment and Retention Strategies

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends the Board of Directors authorize the CEO and General Manager of Mountain Line to implement a reoccurring pay plan increase not to exceed \$570,960 as part of a renewed strategy to recruit and retain employees. While this increase is off-budget, the FY2022 impact will be paid for by the American Rescue Plan funding from the Federal Transit Administration and have no impact on City of Flagstaff or other partners.

### **RELATED STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE**

- ❖ Goal: Fiscal Responsibility
- ❖ Objective: Expand Mountain Line revenue resources to allow for the full implementation of the 5-Year plan, capital plan, and projected increases in costs of providing service.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Mountain Line is experiencing the same staffing shortages as many businesses in our community and in our public transit industry across the nation. We have been striving to maintain our service schedule while working to recruit and train new staff. This effort has resulted in reoccurring overtime demands from staff that is reaching the point of burning team members out. Additionally, we are seeing wage offerings around the community that far exceed the wages we pay our team members. As a result, we have developed the following plan to attract the employees we need, retain the staff we have, and prepare for reduction of service that may be necessary to avoid safety concerns and burnout for our team members.

#### **Recruitment –**

- Present our jobs and potentially recruit students directly from the CCC CDL Course being offered. The course is graduating about eight students every three weeks and the instructor has agreed to allow us to present on our jobs and deliver applications.
- Offer second jobs to CDL staff at our partner agencies - NAU, FUSD, City of Flagstaff, and Coconino County. Make accessing the job easy and offer flexible schedules that do not interfere with the primary schedule and need of our partners.
- Call river companies to discuss sharing Mountain Line job information with their CDL drivers.
- Reach out to Snowbowl to discuss ski pass incentives for Mountain Express drivers.

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- Create or improve our marketing campaign that highlights Mountain Line as an employer. The campaign will highlight:
  - Flexible schedules for stay-at-home parents, retirees, and second job seekers
  - Include testimonials from our staff
  - Conduct a job fair at Mountain Line that welcomes job seekers into our shop to see the equipment and talk to staff.
  - Create material that showcases the benefits we offer employees, including ASRS, insurance, paid time off, and so much more. Make information available in both paper and electronic format

### Retain and Recruit –

- Update our wages for current conditions:
  - City Snowplow \$25.50
  - City Trash \$17.34-\$20.04
  - Trimet (Portland, OR) Driver \$21.63
  - FUSD Driver \$17.55-\$19.33
  - County CDL Operator \$17.84
  - River Companies \$23.00
  - Mountain Line \$18.04
- **Increase the hourly wage for all hourly positions by \$3 per hour for all non-exempt (hourly) staff. We would continue to honor anniversary/evaluation increases.**
- Develop a bonus program, in one-time payouts for actual hours worked, to be implemented in the future that recognizes staff who go above and beyond by volunteering for open shifts, who worked during the pandemic, that exceed standards of work performance, etc.

### Staffing Strategies -

- Reassign operations support duties to free up resources available for actual driving duties.
  - Set up a rotation of office staff and leaders to work the connection center platforms to support operators and customers. This would free up Operations Supervisors to act as drivers, reducing overtime demands on staff.
  - Train additional staff to act as the 'Responder in Charge' to support staff during accidents and incidents. This would free up Operations Supervisors.
  - Reduce dispatch staff to one staff member and reassign other staff to complete extra board duties. Potentially, train administrative staff at front desk to serve as dispatcher.
- Don't wait for staff to provide notice of termination. If we hear someone is talking about leaving, make talking with them a priority. Do what we can to prevent a self-termination, including time off as needed if burnout is contributing.
- Consider use of a second chance policy to rehire both self-terminated and for cause terminated employees that are currently ineligible for rehire.
- Implement a culture change. Modify expectation of staff regarding seniority as related to schedules, leave, and overtime. Potentially replace the seniority system with a rotation or random system that gives all staff equal access to their choice of schedule, leave dates, and overtime.

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The goal of this change is to continue rewarding our most senior staff, while also making the job attractive to newer employees.

- Continue to prioritize the reoccurring Pay Plan and include a Bonus Program in the FY2023 budget.
- Evaluate if sending trainees to CCC for the CDL class reduces demand on our team and potentially time in training; allowing our training to focus on Mountain Line-specific training needs.

### Service -

- Review and Update the Service Reduction Plan developed at height of the Pandemic, consider what service cuts can be implemented with least impact on riders.
  - Route 10: already running four buses instead of five as per schedule. This reduced service from 8-minute frequency to 12-minute frequency.
  - Route 10: reduce Friday service. This will provide a small but still important reduction in staff hours needed on Fridays when ridership is typically 35% lower than other weekdays.
  - Route 10: reduce the span of peak hours. This would limit the hours both a fourth and third bus in lower demand times.
  - Route 10: reduce peak Route 10 service from four buses to three buses providing approximately 20-minute service.
  - Route 4: move to weekend service seven days a week. This reduction would only require one bus on Route 4, however preserves service on Route 14 which serves same area with two buses.
  - Other steps are defined in the Service Reduction Plan to be shared at the meeting
- Route 10 demand is high in part due to reduced Campus Shuttle service. Reach out to NAU to see if we can train their staff to drive our vehicles to increase capacity. This would lessen impact to passengers in this corridor.

Staff recommend that as a combined effort, these steps can slow the exit of employees and improve recruitment efforts. Our goal is to continue with reliable and dependable service while providing employees with competitive wages, support, and valuable work-life balance.

In order to develop this recommendation, staff evaluated our current Compensation Plan as well as the overtime costs we are currently experiencing. In the last 12 months, staff have worked 13,500 hours of overtime to operate our regular schedule. Those hours have a financial cost of \$520,000 that exceed our budget. Other impacts include turnover, burnout, declining job satisfaction, increased accidents and incidents, and reduced ability to take time off as needed.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The financial impact is due to the proposed wage change. This will result in an off-budget FY2022 cost of \$570,960, including employment-related expenses like taxes and state retirement. Mountain Line is fortunate to have available roughly \$3 million in federal funding to cover this off-budget increase in FY2022 and help offset the reoccurring increase over the next nine years. With this change to our annual operating budget, the 5-year financial plan does maintain a fund balance of \$6.5 million at the end of FY2027 and looking further out, \$5.4 million at the end of FY2030. This fund balance is

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adequate to support the future Route 8 expansion and the planned transition to battery electric buses.

### **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve the off-budget increase to wages for all non-exempt (hourly) staff (**recommended**): Staff recommends that the Board of Directors consider the recruitment and retention strategies as developed by staff and approve the off-budget wage increase to keep Mountain Line wages competitive in the local market. If the wage change is not approved, Mountain Line may be faced with a continuing decline in employment and service cuts.
2. Do not approve the outlined wage increase (not recommended): Mountain Line is currently averaging a 20 percent vacancy in the Transit Operator position due to lack of response to open recruitments. Additionally, three other positions remain vacant after several recruitment attempts, we have lost two candidates over concerns with wage offerings, and we are hearing from employed staff that they are actively looking for different opportunities due to wage offerings that are higher in less complex jobs. If wages are not increased, we will be faced with service cuts on multiple routes as we cannot continue asking staff to work an average of 10 plus hours a week of overtime.
3. Approve an off-budget increase that is a portion of the recommendation (not recommended): The Board could modify the recommended increase to anything from \$0.25 an hour to the developed plan of \$3 per hour. This could lower the impact of the increase; however, staff feel strongly that the \$3 per hour is necessary to compete in today's job market where other employers with less complex jobs are offering as much as \$4.00 over minimum wage, \$19 per hour.

### **TAC DISCUSSION:**

This item was not presented to the TAC due to timing and urgency of the matter.

### **SUBMITTED BY:**

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Heather Dalmolin  
CEO and General Manager

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

None.

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