

**TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 27, 2026, 9:30 A.M.
HAWAII COUNTY BUILDING
PUNA CONFERENCE ROOM (SUITE 1501)
25 AUPUNI STREET, HILO, HI 96720, AND ZOOM**

A video recording of this meeting is available which can be viewed on the Hele-On
YouTube channel at: <https://youtu.be/e1V-tac6D1k?si=pLVepTF2UnG9OQRP>

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Terlep called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Matthew Terlep, Chair
John McBride, Commissioner
Roselyn Molina, Commissioner
Chelsea Ahern, Commissioner
Lloyd Matsubara, Commissioner

Absent: Kristy Cruz, Commissioner

A quorum was present.

Also present: Zachary Bergum, Mass Transit Administrator
Jennifer Martin, Transit Fleet & Facilities Manager
William Jarrett, Deputy Corporation Counsel
Thaysha Genegabuas, Secretary

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC/PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Chair Terlep at 9:31 a.m. introduced this item with one public member present in the Puna Conference Room and one public member present on Zoom. Testifiers were given the option to speak at this time or during the agenda item. There were no statements made from the public. Chair Terlep moved onto the next agenda item.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1.) Election of Chair

Chair Terlep at 9:32 a.m., introduced this item. Commissioner Matsubara made a motion to re-elect Chair Terlep as Chair for the Transportation Commission, as to which Commissioner Molina seconded. No further discussion and a voice vote was taken. At 9:33 a.m., the motion was carried unanimously.

1.) Election of Vice-Chair

Chair Terlep at 9:33 a.m., introduced this item. Commissioner Molina made a motion to elect Commissioner Matsubara as the new Vice-Chair for the Transportation Commission, as to which Chair Terlep seconded. No further discussion and a voice vote was taken. At 9:34 a.m., the motion was carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 24, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

Chair Terlep at 9:34 a.m., introduced this item. No corrections were proposed and a voice vote was taken. At 9:35 a.m., the minutes were approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 12, 2026, MEETING MINUTES

Chair Terlep at 9:36 a.m., introduced this item. No corrections were proposed and a voice vote was taken. At 9:37 a.m., the minutes were approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Review taxicab applications for NEW Certificate of Public Convenience & Necessity to operate in the County of Hawai'i.

1. Branden Henson on behalf of **BH Taxi** (1)

Chair Terlep at 9:37 a.m., introduced this item. Branden Henson was present on behalf of BH Taxi. No discussion and a voice vote was taken. At 9:38 a.m., the application was approved unanimously.

2. Elmer Varron on behalf of **Islander Taxi** (1)

Chair Terlep at 9:38 a.m., introduced this item. Elmer Varron on behalf of Islander Taxi was not present. No discussion and a voice vote was taken. At 9:39 a.m., the application was approved unanimously.

3. McChris Agcaoili on behalf of **MCA** (1)

Chair Terlep at 9:39 a.m., introduced this item. McChris Agcaoili was present on behalf of MCA. No discussion and a voice vote was taken. At 9:41 a.m., the application was approved unanimously.

2. Discussion on the shared ride taxi program. Mass Transit Agency is encouraging taxi companies to participate in the program. This program is open to all registered taxicab and transportation network companies.

Chair Terlep at 9:41 a.m., introduced this item and asked Administrator Bergum to share details about the program. Administrator Bergum reported that there are currently three taxicab companies in Hilo that participate in the program including Daniel's Taxi, Marhysa's Taxi, and Kwiki Taxi. Companies that are interested in participating in the program, are seeking additional information, or would like a meeting to discuss the process may contact the Mass Transit Agency. Mass Transit budgets for the shared ride taxi program every year and more

participation would be great for the community.

Chair Terlep asked why Mass Transit hasn't seen more participation from taxicab companies as it seems like a great program. Administrator Bergum stated that tourism on the Kona side of the island where cruise ships are may play a factor. It depends on what the need is in the specific area island wide. 10-plus years ago there were a lot more taxicab companies participating in the program than there is now. Commissioner McBride stated that it is currently cruise ship time which starts from September through May where the benefits are currently better.

Commissioner McBride asked what the purpose of the program was and why it was initiated and expressed that this program is great for rural areas. Administrator Bergum stated that the program will get a customer to their first 4 miles for free in a taxicab. After the 4 miles the customer or rider would then pay for the rest of the duration of their ride. This is a subsidy of \$15.80 which equates to about 4 miles total which is covered by the County. Administrator Bergum stated that Mass Transit sees a lot of participation with the program on the Hilo side from people that need door-to-door service. The shared ride taxi program helps riders who have a hard time traveling from a fixed-route bus stop to their front door. Chair Terlep asked what if travel is within the 4 miles as to which Administrator Bergum replied it would then be free.

Chair Terlep asked what the process is to sign up for the program. Secretary Genegabuas stated the applicant would need to fill out the shared ride program participation form and submit a copy of their driver's license. Mass Transit then processes the form and will mail a program ID card with a participant number to the applicant. Applications are available online or can be mailed if an applicant requests.

Commissioner Ahern asked what the process was for taxicab companies to receive the subsidy money to get reimbursements for the riders. Administrator Bergum stated companies invoice the Mass Transit Agency monthly. Commissioner McBride asked about the verification process of what the taxicab companies have logged onto their statements and how Mass Transit verifies them to be true and accurate. Administrator Bergum stated that Mass Transit audits the invoices every month. Mass Transit looks at how many people these companies are reporting as riders and maps out the ride to see if it is accurate for what they are reporting. Mass Transit adjusts invoices weekly due to discrepancies. Commissioner McBride compared the process to that of Uber or Lyft who uses GPS verification. Commissioner McBride stated that GPS will tell you how far the rider went, who they picked up, and from what point to what point they went on that day. Commissioner McBride expressed concerns about audits happening a month later and questioned what the outcome would be when there is more participation from companies. Commissioner McBride suggested that Mass Transit use some kind of verification system to verify if the statements are correct. Commissioner Ahern asked how long after companies submit the invoice do they get a reimbursement. Administrator Bergum stated that invoices will be paid within 30 days.

Chair Terlep suggested the shared ride taxi program discussion be added to the next agenda.

Chair Terlep at 9:53 a.m. closed the discussion and moved onto the next agenda item.

MASS TRANSIT ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Chair Terlep at 9:53 a.m., introduced this item. Administrator Bergum reported on the following:

Follow up:

- Update regarding the improvement of bus stops and bus shelters. Mass Transit Agency is currently working with DPW and the State to get 5 bus shelters installed around the island. In Papaikou, there will be two shelters, northbound and southbound; in Ainaloa, two shelters, northbound and southbound, and one in Volcano. The five shelters have already been constructed in the carpenter shop and Mass Transit is currently waiting on the State permits. Once permits are approved Mass Transit can start placing bus shelters on the roadways in these areas.
- Update on the Micro transit program. Mass Transit is currently in the process of procuring 6 vehicles, as well as working with DHR to complete the request to fill a program manager position for when the program is brought on this year. The Micro transit program will have a total of 6 vehicles which will service different areas of the island, alternating days of the week to serve different parts of the island.
- Update on Mass Transit Agency's Battery Electric Bus charging station. Mass Transit has been running the battery electric buses within Hilo on Route 101 and Route 40 going to Pahoa as well as over Saddle and on the west side of the island. Overall, the buses have been doing very well. Going over Saddle Road with a 100% charge on it and reaching the destination with about 75% to 80% left on the battery capacity. Currently charging buses using a mobile charger in Hilo, as well as a charger in Kona. It is important to keep these vehicles on the road, exercising the batteries, and not letting them go stagnant.

New report:

- New bus route schedules effective February 1, 2026. Mass Transit is working on improving bus schedules by reviewing ridership and looking to see where ridership is low. This may result in combining routes or rechanneling some routes to be more effective. One example was an early morning Route 2 on Saddle Road which was rechanneled to go up Hamakua Coast as an express route. An express route makes fewer stops before reaching its destination, so it is quicker, more efficient, and cost-effective.
- Purchase of Kamigaki Park and Ride. Mass Transit purchased the Kamigaki Park and Ride in Kealakekua where there is very limited parking in the area. Mass Transit worked with the Finance department to procure the park & ride which is now owned by the County.
- Purchase of 7 refurbished MCI buses. The 7 MCI buses will be arriving from California starting in late June and trickle in over the rest of the year. The buses will be used for commuter routes that take riders from Hilo to the South Kohala Resorts and back. The refurbished buses are not as expensive and are already built. They will include new engines that have been replaced and will include warranty.

Vice-Chair Matsubara asked about the colors of the buses which Administrator Bergum stated would be the same, which is red and white. Mass Transit's Fleet and Facilities Manager Martin stated that the color scheme for the new motor coaches will remain the same, though Mass Transit is moving away from the flowers back to the red stripes. It is a little cheaper to do it that way than using the decals that are currently on the vehicles now. Administrator Bergum stated that the buses appear to be painted though they are vinyl wraps. The vinyl wraps make it difficult when replacing parts of the vehicle. The change is to simplify the process and be cost-effective. This will streamline bus maintenance repairs on vehicles.

Chair Terlep shared that he visited the Mass Transit facility for a walkthrough after the last meeting and was impressed with the facility. Chair Terlep shared that the agency has come a long way. Expressing that the new electric buses are huge steps in the right direction and thanked Administrator Bergum for the work that he's doing for our community.

Loss of Quorum. Commission Molina at 10:02 a.m. departed the meeting.

Commissioner McBride stated that he received feedback from constituents who are always waiting for the buses on routes such as Keaukaha. These riders shared that they don't know when the bus is showing up, if the bus is down, or if it's coming. Commissioner McBride stated that because Hawaii Island is so rural riders travel far to get to the main area, only to go that far and find out the bus is not coming. Commissioner McBride suggested putting GPS on the buses or having an app so that people who want to use the bus can see where the bus is. Administrator Bergum stated that Mass Transit's Fleet and Facilities Manager Martin has been coordinating with GMV Syncromatics to install GPS on 20 of the buses. The costs is approximately upwards of \$250,000 to equip 20 buses with GPS but he agrees that is what our community needs; something that is on the phone where riders can pull it up in real time and see where the bus is. Administrator Bergum stated that the system in place right now is Twitter (X) where rider alerts are populated on X whether it's maintenance issues, storm issues, cancellations, or route modifications. Chair Terlep asked what the timeline was for the implementation. Administrator Bergum stated within the next couple of months; GMV will come to the island and would equip Roberts Hawaii buses, as well as County buses with the GMV Syncromatics.

Chair Terlep asked the commissioners if there were any questions. No further questions.

Chair Terlep asked that in the future commissioners be mindful of the meetings and schedule at least half an hour before and after the scheduled meetings to take care of Transportation Commission business to avoid delays.

Chair Terlep at 10:06 a.m., closed the discussion and moved onto the next agenda item.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Chair Terlep at 10:06 a.m., introduced this item. Chair Terlep announced that the commission could add agenda items at that time or suggested commissioners send agenda items one week prior to the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING

Chair Terlep at 10:07 a.m. announced that the next meeting is scheduled for June 2026. Chair Terlep asked for suggestions for the next meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday June 26, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Terlep adjourned the meeting at 10:08 a.m.

Minutes prepared by:
Thaysha Genegabuas, Secretary