

Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan Update

Fargo-Moorhead Metro Council of Governments (FM Metro COG) recognizes an increasing need to plan for and address the mobility needs of the region. While there are a number of transportation providers and human service agencies to support transit dependent and vulnerable populations, there are substantial service gaps due to constrained resources and limitations in fixed-route and demand response services. Given the scarcity of available funding, coordination can help reduce the strain on resources by more effectively applying the assets of multiple agencies to common problems. In the Fargo-Moorhead region, and similar Midwestern areas where there is a higher density metropolitan center surrounded by very low density areas, there is a limited practicality to how much actual service coordination outside the city limits can be accomplished. Rural density development with smaller communities located miles apart creates an environment where agencies can justify/support only a small number of vehicles and a limited number of drivers. Within rural areas limited capital and personnel resources are controlling factors to the extent that coordination can be promoted.

The FM Metro COG Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) fulfills the federal requirements enacted under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), as well as the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. This legislation builds upon three previous federal transportation bills: the

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy of Users (SAFETEA-LU).

The CHSTP is intended to identify needs and gaps in human service transportation services for seniors and individuals with disabilities in the Fargo-Moorhead region. The CHSTP can be used to guide the use of funds from the Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program.

Section 5310 Program Description

The Section 5310 Program provides funding to help improve the mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities, by removing barriers to transportation services and expanding the transportation mobility options available. MAP-21 required at least 55 percent of the Section 5310 Program to be spent on capital public transportation projects that are planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable. Current federal transportation authorization (FAST Act), maintains the 55 percent level. These projects are referred to as Section 5310 Traditional projects.

The other 45 percent may be used for capital and operating projects that:

1. Exceed the requirements of the ADA.
2. Improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance by individuals with disabilities on complementary paratransit.
3. Assist seniors and individuals with disabilities with transportation.

Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan Requirements

Federal regulations require metropolitan areas to update their coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans at least every five years. FTA has provided specific guidance for the preparation of the CHSTP. The required elements of the CHSTP include:

- An assessment of transportation needs for seniors and individuals with disabilities. This assessment includes data collection and analysis of gaps and barriers in existing transportation services.
- An inventory of known transportation services in the region. These services include public fixed-route, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) complementary paratransit, demand response, and other transportation services.
- Strategies, activities, and/or projects that address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery.
- Priorities for implementation of the strategies identified based on resources, time, and feasibility.

Who are the Transportation-Disadvantaged?

Transportation-disadvantaged people, also known as individuals with special transportation needs, are those who are unable to transport themselves due to their age, income, or health condition. Travel needs of transportation-disadvantaged people are as diverse of the travel accomplished by persons with adequate access to transportation. Needs may include an elderly person trying to get to a specialized health center or to the grocery store; or a homeless trying to get a job interview; or a single mom without a reliable car who works a second shift; or a visually impaired individual with a guide dog traveling to visit his parents after working all day. Essentially, local residents with the same daily need to get from one place to another for a broad range of necessity and social trips.

Information presently gathered to conduct Title VI assessments within the region and higher activity areas for paratransit use were the primary sources of defining locations in the region where there is potentially a disproportionate number of transportation-disadvantaged persons.

Information in the following maps in the Existing Conditions chapter detail the source information:

- Figure 34: Areas with Minority and/or Low Income Populations – Only low income Figure 30 population element of this map was used. What is observed from the map is that while most of the areas with higher percentages of lower income households are located in the core of Fargo (east of I-29, south of 19th Avenue, north of South 13th Avenue and west of Broadway, there are a number more suburban areas with higher percentages of low income households. From a transit standpoint, the distributed areas create a greater challenge to providing the level of mobility needed for the broad range of work, medical, shopping, education and recreation trips households need to make.
- Figure 13: Paratransit Origins and Destinations. While paratransit origins and destinations do not paint the entire picture of where persons with disabilities live and need to travel in the region, but qualifying requirements for the service are consistent with the definition of persons with disabilities. Thus, information gathered and mapped for paratransit use has been used as to characterize key locations of activity for persons with a disability.

What is Special Needs Transportation?

It is a given that the primary mode of transportation for the majority of people in the region is a private vehicle. However, for those with special transportation needs, driving a car is not always an available or viable option. Special needs transportation is any mode of transportation used by those defined as transportation-disadvantaged or with a special transportation need. This includes buses that have regular stops (i.e., fixed-route transit for the general public, and schools), specialized services such as agency vans; demand response (dial-a-ride) and taxis that pick up people at the curb or door; or rideshare programs; or volunteer driver services.

The different agencies providing these special transportation services largely fit into two categories:

- Human service transportation
- Public transit

These designations, however, do not adequately describe the variety of providers or the diversity of people they serve. Thus, opportunities provided by qualified non-profit and for profit providers should be considered.

Advances since 2012 – 2016 TDP

Addressing the needs of transportation-disadvantaged persons in the region has been a constantly evolving and changing process since the first TDP in 1976 and recommendations from the 1977 Special Needs Study. While the period from 1985 through 1993 was a period of taking large steps in advancing options for mobility to transportation-disadvantaged

populations, advances continue in areas of making more information accessible to more people in need and in coordinating services.

As the 2012 - 2016 TDP was being prepared, the 2-1-1 partnership with FirstLink was being implemented to enhance access to FM Ride Source information. Access to information through their website or by call 2-1-1 provides people throughout the metro area with access to a range of services from programs providing financial assistance for rent and utilities to food pantries to mental health support. Many of the clients accessing the FirstLink programs are low income or in a particular crisis where gaining access to transportation is critical.

FM Ride Source provides access to over 60 public and private transportation services throughout the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan region. While the printed service directory has been available for more than 35 years, providing internet access to the information and making the connection to services with FirstLink programs is a significant step forward for coordinating regional transportation opportunities, both public and private.

Service Provider Survey

Each of the local providers listed in the FM Ride Source Directory were asked to complete a survey of questions designed to gather information about:

- Customers/clients the organization supports or serves.
- Equipment/fleet used to transport clients/customers.
- Key trip origins and destinations in the metro area.
- Trip purposes supported by the organization.
- Opportunities for coordinating trips.
- Barriers to enhanced coordination between providers in the region.

Responses were received from nine of the 17 local and regional service providers listed in the FM Ride Source directory. Surveys were distributed to each of the 17 organizations through an introductory email. Follow up calls were placed to each agency that did not provide a response within approximately two weeks of the initial distribution and again at three weeks after the initial distribution. Table 15 documents the information gathered from each of the organizations responding to the survey inquiry. Of the 10 respondents, four are from lower population counties traveling 130 or more one-way miles to get to the Fargo-Moorhead metro area.

Table 15. Responses to Regional and Special Services Providers

Question No.	Questions	Doyle Cabe Co.	Walsh County Meals and Transportation	Benson County Transportation	Pembina County Meals and Trans	CarAVan	Nelson County	Community of Care Cass County	Jefferson Lines	Lakes Medi-Van	Valley Senior Services
#1	What are destinations in the FM area that you regularly provide service?	Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Dilworth	Fargo	VA Clinic and Hospital Sanford Clinic (Broadway Loc)	VA Hospital, medical clinics No regular schedule but will schedule for medical appointment	Provides rides to discharged patients and customers looking for service out of the FM area	Medical Facilities, Nursing Homes, Hospital, Shopping Centers, Veterans Hospital, Clinic	Sanford, Essential, local dentists, optometrists, P.I. and dialysis	In & out state services, NDSU, Concordia, MSUM are offered a service (College Connections)	Hospitals & clinics	Senior Ride: Medical Facilities Dialysis Volunteer & Job opportunities Public Transit in rural for shopping & medical purposes
#2	Are your trips to Fargo-Moorhead on a regular schedule or based on when there is a specific request?	Demand Response System	regular scheduled trips	Veteran transportation on demand Schedule trip every 2nd & 4th Friday each month		SAA	3rd Friday of every month	specific requests	Buses arrive to /depart from Fargo 7 days a week from East, West, South and North		Everything senior rides-demand response M-F 7:30-4:00 Varies-certain day of the week has certain routes
#3	If trips are on a schedule, what is the schedule?	Time Call System	2nd Monday each month	Arrive in Fargo - 10:30 am Depart Fargo - 3:00 pm		SAA	3rd Friday of every month	NA	Departs north-7 am east-10 pm, west-12:15 pm, east-12:40 pm, south-1 pm Arrives east-11:35 am, west-11:55 am, east-6 pm, north-9 pm and south-12:05 am		
#4	How many riders typically travel to Fargo-Moorhead?	1,000/day	4 - 8 riders	1 or 2	one	SAA	3-5, varies	8-10 trips/week	Estimate 15-30 riders per day	2 per day	Daily average of 100-120
#5	How long are you usually in Fargo-Moorhead?	NA	10:30 am - 3:30 pm	4.5 hours	1.3 hours	SAA	10:30 am - 3:00 pm	3-4 hours	NA	1 hour	5 hours - rural services
#6	What are the purposes of the trip to Fargo-Moorhead your organization provides?	NA	Medical Shopping Social	Medical	Medical	SAA	Medical Shopping Visits	Medical Appointments Shopping Nursing Home/VA	Domestic travel from city to city Various reason-family, work, medical, school	medical appointments and discharges	Medical Jobs, Volunteering & Shopping
#7	Please tell us about the type/size of the vehicles you use for trips to Fargo-Moorhead?	Mini Vans	15 passenger 19 passenger	Handicapped Accessible mini-vans 7 passenger minivan 10+1 cutaway bus	Can	SAA	7 Passenger Van 10 Passenger Van	Volunteers use private vehicles	Bus, 42 person capacity	van-transport 2 wheelchair clients at a time or 2 ambulatory	Senior Ride Dodge Caravan (6 passenger) County-14 passenger cut away bus
#8	Are there restrictions on who you can carry as a passenger?	Wheel Chairs, B.R.	No	No	No	SAA	No, offer a wheelchair/ramp or lift	Unable to provide transportation for clients in wheelchairs or who can't transfer to a vehicle	Yes, strong restrictions for juvenile travel. No one under the influence of drugs or alcohol	No medical insurance may have restrictions	No restrictions Alcohol & drug discretion of the driver Medical restrictions dependent on condition (escort/senior ride must be ambulatory or age 60+)

Fargo-Moorhead Transit Development Plan

SRF Consulting Group, Inc.

Question No.	Questions	Doyle Cabe Co.	Walsh County Meals and Transportation	Benson County Transportation	Pembina County Meals and Trans	CarAVan	Nelson County	Community of Care Cass County	Jefferson Lines	Lakes Medi-Van	Valley Senior Services
#9	Is there capacity to carry more passengers on trips to Fargo-Moorhead?	Yes, as many as you want to give us	Yes, 8	Yes.	Yes, 2	SAA	Yes, 3 - 5	Yes, reply on volunteers and don't have available volunteers for all areas of rural Cass or to meet all requests	Yes, 120 per day	Y, One	Yes - 10/20 more passengers
#10	Do you collect a fare from your passengers? (Y / N) If yes, what is the fare to Fargo-Moorhead?	Yes, rider specific	Yes, \$12.00 from Grand Forks	Yes, \$25 for rider Veteran - free	Yes, \$65 for one person	SAA	\$17.00 Raising fee to \$20.00	No.	Yes, From Minneapolis, MN to Fargo, ND #37.50 - \$52.50	Yes, \$25.00 base and \$2.10 per loaded mile	Yes, Senior Ride - \$3.00 per one way ride County - \$7.00 round trip
#11	Does your agency/organization coordinate trips to Fargo-Moorhead with other organizations? (Y / N) If yes, which organizations?	Yes, Demand and response of the client	Yes, Trail County GF Senior Center Pembina Co Meals & Trans V.A.	Yes Transit agencies in NE part of ND	No	SAA	Yes, Nursing homes	Yes, promote services thru Valley Senior Services for the rural bus and express van	No	Yes	Yes at time with other transit providers (limited)
#12	If No to #11, have you coordinated trips in the past or considered coordinating trips with other organizations?	NA	NA	NA	Sometimes coordinate with Walsh County Transportation or Cavalier County Transportation	SAA		NA	No	No	
#13	Would you consider coordinating any of the following efforts with other providers in the area? * Grant Administration * Grant Administration * Maintenance * Training * Marketing * Operations * Other	Unknown	Training Marketing	NA		SAA	Training Opportunities Marketing	Training Marketing	No	Yes, trips	Training and Marketing Other-Dispatch Maintenance with city of Fargo
#14	What do you consider as the three most significant barriers to more providers coordinating trips to Fargo-Moorhead?	Unknown	Distance Time Weather	Time variables	Distance Pick Up Times in rural areas Distance between passengers	SAA	1. Distance between projects 2. Extra time for passengers 3. Pick up from farm homes and small towns It takes 2 hrs to drive to Fargo. Passengers don't want to ride any longer.	Availability of transportation for all groups (handicap, low income, elderly), lack of transportation on evenings & weekends to certain areas, lack of transportation for rural residents requiring Chemo, Radiation or Dialysis or daily schedule	Weather/Marketing/Lack of major events	NA	Communication of schedules (sharing) Common dispatch Lack of funding Unwillingness to work with other agencies (lack of time to coordinate with others)

In general, the key findings from the survey are:

- With the exception of Jefferson Lines, the primary destinations in the Fargo-Moorhead region are medical facilities, including hospitals and clinics.
- Regional providers, such as Benson County Transportation or Nelson County Transit, have scheduled trips to the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area. Trips are scheduled one to two times per month.
- Most of the agencies responding to the questionnaire coordinate trips with other agencies in their origin service area/travel area to/from the Fargo-Moorhead metro. A key limiting factor in coordinating trips is the distance between potential passengers. A number of the providers travel more than 150 miles one-way to get to/from Fargo-Moorhead and the population density in the originating counties is very low. Thus, the cost effectiveness of out of-direction travel to pick-up/drop-off passengers (or a passenger) is poor.
- Most of the agencies/providers have the vehicle capacity to accommodate additional passengers during trips to/from Fargo-Moorhead, however, the current level of reserve capacity is generally low (one to three passengers).
- Few of the agencies/providers have known operating or vehicle restrictions (such as wheelchair accommodation or no lifts) that would physically limit coordination.
- Providers with origins outside the Fargo-Moorhead metro area generally spend four to five hours per trip in Fargo-Moorhead, on top of over-the-road travel each way of two to three hours. Pembina County Meals and Transportation typical spend from one to three hours in Fargo-Moorhead and almost three hours enroute each direction.
- Approximately half of the agencies would consider enhanced coordination with others. The primary tasks/elements to consider for coordination are training (staff and users) and marketing efforts. While respondents were not specifically asked why they identified some functions and not others (such as providing trips), the large geographic area covered by the providers was considered a limiting factor.
- The primary barriers to enhanced coordination are:
 - Distance between origin-destination of travelers. The time required to pick-up and drop-off clients from other agency coverage areas is substantial and would have significant impacts on performance.
 - Many agencies carry passengers that cannot sit for long periods of time. Adding time to pick-up/drop-off clients in other service areas becomes problematic for some passengers.
 - Coordination takes added time that is simply not available as many staff have responsibilities outside the area of organizing transportation service.
 - There is no common communication platform to share schedules.

- Vehicle capacity. Many of the rural services traveling a similar route to/from Fargo-Moorhead use 6 - 7 passenger mini-vans, which have a limited capacity for more riders.
- Weather was identified by several respondents as a barrier, demonstrating that minimizing winter travel exposure is likely a primary consideration.

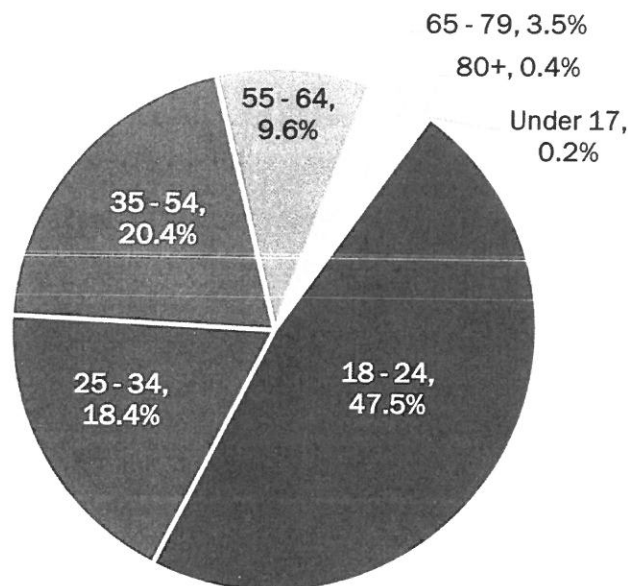
Coordinated Plan Related Transit User Survey Questions

User surveys were conducted with the 2012 - 2016 and the 2016 - 2020 Transit Development Plan updates. Included in the range of questions were several that provide some who is the user insight that is interesting to look at over the time period. The following bullet points outline a comparison of the question results from the 2012 - 2016 and the 2016 - 2020 update survey efforts by FM Metro COG and MATBUS:

- User Age: Age information for transit users was not gathered as part of the 2012 - 2016 TDP survey effort. Figure 38 displays the information from the 2016 - 2020 TDP data gathering effort and from the Census information for the region.

Figure 38. Fargo-Moorhead and MATBUS Rider Age

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT AGE (YEARS)?

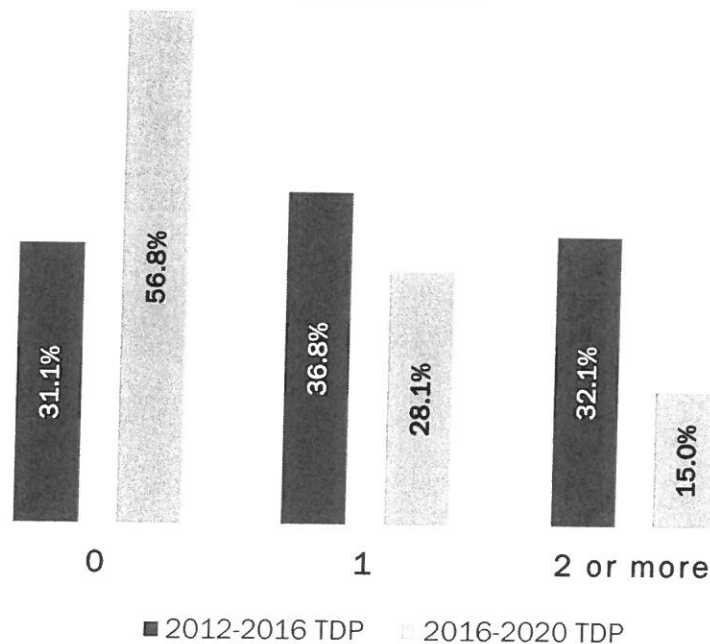


- Trips per week: The latest survey information reflects a reduction in the high use categories (five to ten and 11+ times per week) and increases in the causal/irregular user (less than one time per week and one to two times per week). The latest survey also showed an increase in the number of people that use the service three to four times per week.

- Transfers made per trip: The most recent survey shows positive changes in convenience of using fixed route service as the percentage of trips made without a transfer increase dramatically and represents over half of the trips. In the 2012 - 2016 TDP survey, 31.3 percent of trips were able to be completed without a transfer. The percentage observed in the 2016 - 2020 TDP survey was 56.8 percent. On the other end of the spectrum, trips requiring two or more transfers dropped by more than 50 percent from 32.3 percent in the 2012 - 2016 TDP survey to 15.0 percent in the current effort. A comparison of the two surveys is provided in Figure 39.

Figure 39. Transfers Made per Trip: 2012 - 2016 TDP and 2016 - 2020 TDP Surveys

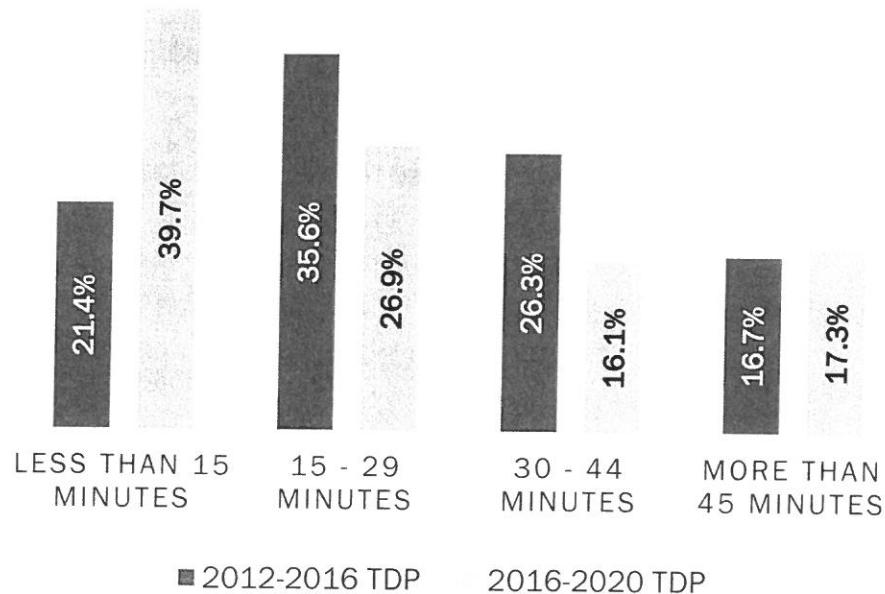
HOW MANY TRANSFERS DO YOU USUALLY MAKE ON A ONE-WAY TRIP WHEN YOU RIDE MATBUS?



- Trip length: Figure 40 displays survey responses from the two periods. Comparison of the two surveys shows some interesting changes. The percentage of people able to complete their trip in less than 15 minutes increased by more than 80 percent, while percentages in categories of 15 to 30 minutes and 30 to 45 minutes both declined as a percent of all trips. The percentage of longer trips (more than 45 minutes) increase slight form 16.7 percent in the 2012 - 2016 TDP survey to 17.3 percent in the 2016 - 2020 TDP survey.

Figure 40. Trip Length: 2012 - 2016 TDP and 2016 - 2020 TDP Surveys

HOW LONG DOES YOUR TRIP USUALLY LAST?



Stakeholder Involvement – Defining Needs

At the beginning of the plan update public meetings were held at the GTC in downtown Fargo and at the West Acres Transit Center. The purpose of holding meetings at these locations was to emphasize outreach to current service users, including persons addressed through the coordinated plan. Input relative to needs of the identified populations received through these meetings include:

- Sunday service is needed. Presently, fixed route and paratransit service runs Monday through Saturday in the region. A consistent request/suggestion at the outreach meetings was adding Sunday service for some part of the day. The intent would be to support social travel needs, work trips to retail/service jobs, and shopping.
- Extended hours during the current service day. A complementary element to adding more days of service, to include Sundays, extending hours later into the evening and/or starting service earlier in the morning have been reported as needs. Included in the discussion of need to extend service hours was the suggestion to also provide coverage closer to the daytime coverage. In particular, operating coverage consistent with Route 4 to provide evening service to Clay County Social Service would be a benefit to families in need of services/activities provided after 6:00 PM.

- More shelters – A primary concern of seniors and persons with disabilities is the amount of time spent waiting for a fixed route bus out in the elements, whether it is a cold winter day, rainy day or hot summer afternoon. While a wait outdoors in rain is an inconvenience for anyone using the system, there is an enhanced concern for seniors and persons with disabilities that many times experience more fragile health. A shelter will provide some level of protection from the elements in many adverse conditions, reducing the burden for users and especially seniors and persons with a disability who have mobility limitations.
- Increased frequency – No matter whether the concept is fixed route service or demand response, frequency of service reflects convenience and enhanced availability. A number of the demand response services require two to three days of notice for a reservation, which reduces the utility of the service.
- Fare cost – In each of the outreach efforts comments pertaining to the cost of service and the burden even the nominal cost is to some portions of the local population. As such, suggestions for an even greater reduction in fare, or elimination of the fare, for low income users would be a substantial benefit.

Coordination Opportunities

Rather than repeating the process employed to prepare a list of potential coordination opportunities, those developed for the 2012 - 2016 plan update were reviewed relative to what has and has not been implemented in the region. The list of identified ideas that have not been implemented were then reviewed to identify an action plan.

Additional Coordination

The 2012 - 2016 Transit Development Plan included statements that additional coordination between providers and users of specialized transportation services is needed. Ideas presented in the previous plan include:

- Build a coalition for coordination (foster coordination) among the social and human services agencies with the goal of being able to provide more service with fewer resources.
- Improve cross agency coordination.
- Continue to implement actions identified in the MAT Paratransit Options Analysis.
- Monitor implementation of the Metro Senior Ride Program for consistency metro-wide.

In order for substantial advancement of these coordination concepts there needs to be a forum that brings agencies supporting clients in need of transportation with the providers. The 2-1-1 program implemented to a greater degree following completion of the 2012 - 2016 Plan aids some in this coordination effort, however, it remains as a more passive program. Information regarding various services is available, however, potential users and their support network has to know the services are there. Once in to system by calling 2-1-1 or through the

website there is access to the information, however, creating a forum for providers to come together and discuss what more they can do with the resources that are available would likely be a benefit. Thus, it is suggested that a quarterly forum of providers and agency staff be organized to promote the following:

- Discuss need and continued gaps in the network of supporting mobility.
- Identify opportunities to balance high demand and low demand times for the range of providers. Are there opportunities for those with short-term reserve capacity to supplement demand for others with short-term demand that exceeds capacity?
- Interaction with the MATBUS mobility manager. While FM Ride Source representatives are co-located with the mobility manager, the actual service providers have little to no direct interaction. Through this enhanced connectivity with the mobility manager, a more active balancing of high and low demand may be provided, relative to the capabilities/charge of FM Ride Source.

Continue to Define and Enhance the Mobility Manager Position

The Mobility Management position at MATBUS has been a difficult one relative to staff retention, which would allow the manager to implement desirable programs. Other opportunities outside MATBUS have resulted in managers leaving within a relatively short time after getting integrated into the community they would serve. The purpose of the position within the MATBUS organization is consistent with the current guidelines connecting the ability to use federal funds to support 80 percent of the position costs. In Fargo-Moorhead the Mobility Manager would work closely with other planning staff, customers, and human services agencies in the following areas:

- Travel training for current and potential customers in both paratransit and fixed route use, with the goal of migrating as many paratransit users to fixed route as is feasible.
- Information and marketing – Coordinated with planning and marketing staff for all programs.
- 2-1-1 coordination. Since the 2012 - 2016 Plan was implemented, the partnership with FirstLink has been expanded. Through the 2-1-1 program the mobility manager would assist customers with activities of information by phone and assisting customers in accessing information on the modes available to support their trip needs, both items identified in the 2012 - 2016 Plan.
- Trip planning – The mobility manager would coordinate with the on-line planning tools and continue to advance the concept of more real time trip planning.
- Pass programs – Through outreach efforts conducted in travel training and other activities, the mobility manager would inform people regarding cost saving pass opportunities relative to daily fares.

Coordination between MATBUS and F-M Metro COG Planning Efforts

Implementation of the Transit Coordinating Board has provided a forum for integrating transit mode plans and actions with highway and non-motorized planning efforts managed through Metro COG. The board is scheduled to meet monthly to discuss between the cities, the colleges/universities and Valley Senior Services the range of administrative, operations and planning activities required to effectively manage the range of services. This committee also creates the forum where opportunities for coordinating with private non-profit, for profit and regional providers that all operate in the Fargo-Moorhead region. Technology allows video, or at a minimum audio, connections with all of the providers. While the bylaws of the Coordinating Board establish roles, responsibilities and representation, inviting non-voting members to participate and giving them standing as an affiliate (non-voting) could result in the organizations participating on a regular basis.

Senior Transportation Coordination

The 2012 - 2016 Plan highlighted the potential for enhanced efficiency with merging the fleet between the jurisdictions involved and broader cost sharing agreements with all of the parties involved. The 2012 - 2016 Plan also encourages development of a joint powers agreement that would allow each jurisdiction to allocate and assign use based on use. The current set of agreements assigns costs to each participating jurisdiction based on an estimated annual ridership originating in the specific jurisdiction. Thus, each can control/manage the program to a level they are comfortable. With individual agreements, each also has the ability to alter eligibility based on age, to provide a cost control measure.

Recommended Priorities for Implementation

Coordination/Communication between Special Needs Providers and Client Management. The effectiveness of service will be limited without an avenue of more continuous communication between providers in the region. Thus, a high priority should be development of an on-going forum focused on bringing providers and customer care professionals together to promote improving service delivery. The present more passive concept provided through FM Ride Source providing on-line and over the phone information has been continually advanced over the last 10 or so years, however, there is only so much farther the concept can go without more interaction between the participants needing service and those providing service.

Expand Role of Mobility Manager. While the responsibilities of the position have been better defined over time, turnover in the position has reduced the level of positive results from the position. There is very little MATBUS and the jurisdictions can do relative to turnover (as the position is not likely underpaying for the responsibilities) and there is much encouragement from management of the work the position can complete. Thus, with the right fit person in the position, there will be much positive that can come from it.

Travel Training. Continue to expand the opportunities for outreach to groups and individuals regarding use of the available resources, especially fixed route service. The more paratransit, Metro Senior Ride and special needs service users that can be transitioned to fixed route service, the more resources can be focused on those persons with the greatest mobility limitations and/or extending transportation service to more people.

Service Recommendations

The recommended plan developed through the 2016 - 2020 update of the Fargo-Moorhead Metro COG transit plan takes into account:

- Analysis of current conditions through which the strengths and weaknesses of the current system were identified. The plan emphasizes building on the strengths and eliminating/reducing the weaknesses.
- Input provided by system users and non-users that has been collected through a community survey, a user survey, and the public outreach program that included three routes of multiple public meetings throughout the metro area.
- Review of the location of known development ideas that are in early and almost complete stages, plus working with planning staff from each community to identify where transit supportive growth is anticipated.
- Expectations of potential funding availability into the future.
- Input received from state DOTs regarding expectations for future growth opportunities.

A two track strategy represents the full range of recommended improvements to the fixed route and paratransit services provided in the metro area. The tracks reflect:

- Improve the effectiveness of the system within the current budget of revenue hours of service. The focus of this portion of the recommended plan was to critically assess the strong and weak portions of the current system with the purpose of improving both. Through this approach the result in not only advances associated with pulling up the poor performing routes/segments (Reworking Route 18 and Route 23), but pushing forward highly productive elements (Route 15).
- Identify changes to and/or expansion of the system that require increasing the annual operating funding and additional capital investment and assign the increased dollars to concepts that fills gaps, is supported by residents, and looks to future regional growth.

Recommended changes to the system that document the two tracks are outlined in Table 16. Cost neutral changes that are expected to reduce some key identified gaps and improve the effectiveness of local, state and federal funds are included as the +0 percent elements.