



## **1.0 Purpose and Background.**

**Overview.** The 2005 passage of SAFETEA-LU amended the federal transit law to include a coordinated planning requirement for Section 5310 Elderly and Disabled, Section 5316, Job Access Reverse Commute, and Section 5317 New Freedom. Per SAFETEA-LU it was now a requirement to prepare a Locally Developed Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan).

The definition of a Locally Developed Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) by law, a plan that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low income, provides strategies for meeting those local needs, and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation. At minimum a Coordinated Plan requires an assessment of services, assessment of needs, strategies to meet needs, and a prioritization of these strategies.

Metro COG completed the first Coordinated Plan for the FM Area in 2007 as a component of the Transit Development Plan (TDP) Update. The development of the 2012-2016 TDP update provides an opportunity for Metro COG to also update and reaffirm a Coordinated Plan for the FM Metropolitan Area.

The development of the Coordinated Plan allowed Metro COG to assess the status of transportation services for elderly, low income, and disabled in the FM Metropolitan area. The Coordinated Plan provides an assessment of transportation barriers identified for elderly, low income and individuals with disabilities. The gaps identified in the Coordinated Plan were the result of public input, focus groups, and stakeholder outreach from both 2012-2016 TDP update and the development of the 2010 Metro Mobility Study. The Coordinated Plan culminates in the development of prioritized project concepts to address identified transportation barriers.

## **2.0 Development of the Coordinated Plan.**

Metro COG has a long history of planning for the specialized transportation needs of low income individuals/families, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. Since 1978 Metro COG has developed several plans which have served to inventory specialized transportation providers within the FM Metropolitan area and also move forward strategies at improving mobility options for individuals requiring specialized transportation.

### **1977 Special Transportation Needs Study**

- Follow up on the inaugural FM Metropolitan Transit Development Plan (1976)
- Asses & Document Need for Elderly/Handicapped individuals
- Inventory Providers
- Develop Options outside of public fixed route
- Coordinated Service Development Plan
- Recommended Directory Development

### **1985 Special Transportation Services Report**

- Survey existing providers and users to determine unmet need and services satisfaction
- Fargo Senior Services, Handi-Wheels, Moorhead DAR, and Fargo DAR (Taxi)
- ID Need for more specialized services
- Individuals with disabilities emerging a growing user group

#### 1990 Elderly & Handicapped Transit Needs Study

- Follows developments in the late 1980s that indicated more attention needed regarding Paratransit service (Coordination and Streamline)
- Identify growing needs regarding specialized user groups (no service in West Fargo/ Dilworth)
- Disabled needs double existing service levels
- Specialized providers increased since late 1970s; but not keeping pace or innovating to meet needs of FM Area.
- Stressed looming changes needed pending ADA Act
- Duplication occurring; resource sharing a priority

#### 1991/1993 Metro Mobility Study (Phase I and II)

- Follows recommendation from 1991 TDP to create uniform ADA Paratransit system
- Studies and recommends transition to single Paratransit provider; efficiency opportunities and to uniformly address 1991 ADA
- Joint Powers Agreement developed between Fargo & Moorhead to cover provision of ADA Paratransit under single operator

In 2003 Metro COG developed the Metropolitan Access to Jobs Plan at the request of several local human service stakeholders. The Access to Jobs Plan was written in compliance with TEA-21 regulations governing Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funds. The 2003 Jobs Plan ushered in the award of approximately \$300,000 in JARC funds for the FM Metropolitan area.

The 2003 JARC allocation to the FM Metropolitan Area was administrated by the Metro COG Policy Board and was advised by the Metropolitan Transportation Initiative (MTI). In the years since the award of the JARC funds 14 separate projects aimed at addressing transportation barriers were initiated by Metro COG in cooperation with local transportation providers.

**Figure 79 – Metro COG Funded JARC Projects**

JARC Funded Program	Target Barrier	Program Budget
Smart Commute	Land use/Perception	\$11,000
Giving + Learning	Cost of Transportation/Dependable Transportation	\$12,100
Handi-Wheels(1)	All	\$138,000
Clay County Commuter Route	Cost of Transportation	\$6,000
Heartland Industries	Cross-Agency	\$48,000
Industrial Park Shuttle	Industrial Park	\$840
Marketing Promotion	Information/Perception	\$5,000
MAT Card Printer	Information/Perception	\$3,500
Moorhead Summer Evening	3rd Shift	\$22,000
MAT Dispatch	Perception	\$35,000
Moorhead Adult Education	Childcare Transportation	\$13,700
TANF Pilot Program	Childcare Transportation	\$2,250
<b>Total for Fiscal Years 2004/2005 JARC Earmark</b>		<b>\$297,320</b>

Source: Metro COG (2011)

Since the passage of SAFETEA-LU in 2005, program changes to the JARC program allowed for the formulization of these program dollars to the states (and Metropolitan areas with populations over 200,000). SAFETEA-LU also created the New Freedom program to provide capital and operating assistance for persons with disabilities for services provided above the ADA requirements. New Freedom funds are allocated similar to JARC funds. The City of Fargo and the City of Moorhead (MAT) now competitively apply for JARC and New Freedom funds directly from either the State of Minnesota (Mn/DOT) or the State of North Dakota (NDDOT). Applications submitted from the FM Metropolitan area for JARC or New Freedom funds are evaluated and prioritized prior to submission to each DOT for project selection. MATBUS has been the recipient of JARC and New Freedom funds since the passage of SAFETEA-LU. Programs funded with JARC and New Freedom Awards made to MATBUS are summarized in Figure 80.

**Figure 80 – MATBUS Funded JARC and New Freedom Projects**

Program	Target Barrier	Funding Source	Estimated Federal investment
Mobility Management 2008-Present	Multiple	New Freedom	\$211,800
MAT Paratransit Dispatch 2008-Present	Information	New Freedom	\$81,374
Handi-Wheels 2008-2009	Multiple	JARC	\$104,469
Moorhead Summer Mid-day 2008	Travel time	JARC	\$54,000
MAT Fixed Route Dispatch/GTC Hours 2008-Present	Perception	JARC	\$141,500
TANF Pilot Program 2008-Present	Childcare Transportation	JARC	\$17,000
Route 23 2010-Present	Multiple	JARC	\$241,000
Total			\$709,643

Source: Metro COG (2011)

The states of North Dakota & Minnesota have both directly funded New Freedom projects in the FM Metropolitan area. Figure 81 shows the state funded projects.

**Figure 81 – State DOT Funded Section 5317 Projects**

JARC Funded Program	Target Barrier	Project Budget
Mn/DOT Traffic Signal Hwy 75 7th Avenue South Moorhead	Land use/Perception	\$180,000
NDDOT Lift equipped van for Community Living Services Fargo	Travel Time	\$32,000
Total State Funded Projects		\$212,000

Source: Metro COG (2011)

Since the development of the first Coordinated Plan in 2007 Metro COG has developed two important plans which focus on the coordination of specialized transportation services within the FM Metropolitan area. Based on recommendations from the 2007-2011 TDP, Metro COG and MATBUS conducted the Paratransit Operations Analysis to address the rapid growth in Paratransit use. In 2009-2010 Metro COG and MATBUS developed the Metro Mobility Study to further define programmatic needs regarding mobility management initiatives within the FM Metropolitan area.

The 2007 Paratransit Options Analysis outlined an aggressive set of recommendations for MATBUS to reign in Paratransit operating costs. The recommendations were aimed at giving MATBUS a better handle on growth areas of Paratransit. The Paratransit Options Analysis recommendations provided MATBUS a roadmap to begin administrative and political changes that would keep the MATBUS Paratransit operation more efficient. Since adoption of the Paratransit Options Analysis in 2007, MATBUS has made substantial progress towards implementation of the primary recommendations. Implementation of critical recommendations from the Paratransit Operations Analysis has been aided greatly by the addition of Mobility Management staff by

MATBUS. Started initially by the City of Fargo, the Mobility Management position is now cooperatively shared between both cities.

The other important planning effort completed by Metro COG since the 2007 Coordinated Plan was development of the 2010 Metro Mobility Study. The completion of the Metro Mobility Study served to reinforce many of the recommendations made with the 2007 Paratransit Options Analysis. Metro Mobility provided strategies and initiatives which consider the larger spectrum of specialized transportation needs. Metro Mobility put a focus on programmatic initiatives aimed at managing the mobility options for specialized transportation users in the FM Metropolitan area.

The strategies developed to meet the needs and barriers outlined in the update of Coordinated Plan have evolved over time based on the successes experienced regarding improving mobility of residents in the FM Metropolitan area. The development of the updated Coordinated Plan builds upon the legacy of the 2003 Access to Jobs Plan and reaffirms initiatives outlined in the 2007 Paratransit Operations Analysis and 2010 Metro Mobility Study. The analysis and the recommendations of these former studies are still considered relevant and are valid by reference to them within in the updated Coordinated Plan.

### **3.0 Development of the Coordinated Plan.**

Section 7.0 of the TDP Existing Conditions Report contains a comprehensive demographic profile for the FM Metropolitan area. The following data sets are clearly displayed in the Existing Conditions Report of the TDP and are used as key metric to determine the potential demand for transit services within the FM Metropolitan Area.

- (a) Environmental Justice (Low Income/Minority);
- (b) Large Employers;
- (c) Transit Generators and Attractors (Commercial, Education, Social Services, Medical);
- (d) Specialized Transportation Generators (Paratransit, Senior Ride, Etc.).

**Existing Providers (specialized).** The FM Ridesource Directory provides the metropolitan area of Fargo and West Fargo, North Dakota and Moorhead and Dilworth, Minnesota with a list of transportation services primarily for people with disabilities and people over age 60. All of the transportation services, including private transportation providers and government supported transit, are available to the public. This information is also available at [www.fmrideresource.com](http://www.fmrideresource.com).

The FM metropolitan area is a regional medical center and a hub of human and social services. The population needing access to these services is growing and transportation is an important part of living independently. A partnership with FirstLink seeks to add specialized transportation information to the 211 phone service.

FM Ridesource was first printed in 2010 in place of the *Directory of Transportation Services* published annually by Fargo -Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments (Metro COG) since 1978. This is a joint mobility management project of Fargo–Moorhead Metro Area Transit (MATBUS) and Metro COG.

### **4.0 Stakeholder Involvement and Public Input.**

Development of the updated Coordinated Plan was completed in consultation with Metro COG’s Public Participation Plan. Accordingly, input received during the public participation process for the overall

development of 2012-2016 TDP was used to form the basis of the needs identification process. Further, given the limited amount of time which has passed since the completion of the Metro Mobility Study, information gathered as part of that process was also considered relevant to the needs identification process for the update of the Coordinated Plan.

**Metro Mobility Study Public Involvement.** In 2009 Metro COG and MATBUS completed an extensive stakeholder consultation process as part of the development of the Metro Mobility Study. Consultation efforts included numerous meetings with the Transportation Coordination Network (TCN) to gather specific input and feedback on existing operational issues related to specialized transportation providers. A series of four focus group meetings were held to gather feedback directly from a number of significant stakeholders representing the interests of specialized transportation user groups. The focus groups allowed for feedback on the relevance of existing transportation barriers currently outlined in the 2007 Coordinated Plan. The focus groups provided stakeholders the opportunity to assist in the identification of emerging issues and also gather direction in regards to the overall mobility management initiatives being pursued through the MATBUS Mobility Manager. Information gleaned through the development of Metro Mobility Study is still considered valid and is used as a basis for the formation of recommendations regarding implementation of the Coordinated Plan.

A Metro Mobility survey was distributed online and in paper copy. Notification and outreach regarding the survey was conducted at the Metro Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities Meeting, the Metropolitan Transportation Initiative, and distributed to a comprehensive email list of interested agencies and stakeholders. The survey was available from May 14 until June 15, 2009. A total of 298 survey responses were received.

There were two target groups the survey attempted to reach. The first group was people who rely on public or specialized transportation, the second group was people that worked for agencies that assist people who rely on public or specialized transportation. The majority of respondents were employees of agencies that represented clients who rely on public or specialized transportation (see Figure 82).

**Figure 82 – Respondent Type**

Respondent Type	Response Percent	Response Count
Transportation User	16.1%	48
Agency Liaison	83.9%	250

Source: Metro COG (2011)

Figure 83 represents the type of clientele agency respondents serve. The results represent a broad spectrum of clientele. Nearly fifty percent (46.9%) of respondents indicated they served all categories. Only 1% (.89%) exclusively served elderly clients, thirty percent (29.20%) served the disabled, and 19% (18.58%) served low income. These responses show connections between multiple client populations and agency representatives.

**Figure 83 – Agency Liaison Service Population**

Population Served	Elderly	Low Income	Disabled	All	Other
%	0.88%	18.58%	29.20%	46.90%	4.42%

Source: Metro COG (2011)

Figure 84 represents transportation barriers that agencies report their clients face based on their level of importance. Hours of operation was ranked the highest, closely followed by cost of transportation, medical transportation, and travel time. Childcare transportation ranked the lowest, followed by access to the industrial park.

Figure 85 displays agency knowledge of transportation services. Medical and Private providers rank the highest followed by Metro Senior Ride and Clay County Rural Transit. Knowledge of the MATBUS Fixed Route system ranked the highest. In general the responses indicate that the degree of knowledge agencies have about all transportation services could be increased.

**Figure 84 – Agency Ranking of Identified Barriers**

Barrier	Low	Medium	High
Land Use	23.9%	19.3%	56.9%
Hours of operation	5.4%	10.8%	83.8%
Travel Time	9.2%	18.3%	72.5%
Information	24.3%	35.5%	40.2%
Childcare Transportation	38.8%	23.3%	37.9%
Access to the Industrial Park	35.8%	13.8%	50.5%
Cross Agency Coordination	13.5%	24.0%	62.5%
Attitude and Perceptions of Transit	25.7%	29.5%	44.8%
Cost of Transportation and Transit	7.4%	13.9%	78.7%
Medical Transportation (Medicaid)	11.4%	13.3%	75.2%

Source: Metro COG (2011)

Figure 86 displays the follow-up to the responses in Figure 84 and attempts to identify what information agencies need regarding transportation services. The largest individual need is how to ride. The answers reflect that agencies generally are seeking information that provides an overview of the service by the overwhelming response in the all category.

**Figure 85 – Agency Understanding of Service / Providers**

Transportation Service	Low	Medium	High
<b>MAT Fixed Route</b>	27.6%	23.8%	48.6%
<b>MAT Paratransit</b>	34.9%	26.4%	38.7%
<b>Discounted Fixed Route (Elderly/Disabled)</b>	34.0%	23.3%	42.7%
<b>Metro Senior Ride Service</b>	65.0%	20.4%	14.6%
<b>Clay County Rural Transit (Transit Alternatives)</b>	64.1%	20.4%	15.5%
<b>Handi-Wheels</b>	50.0%	28.8%	21.2%
<b>Other Medical and Private Providers</b>	69.6%	15.7%	14.7%

Source: Metro COG (2011)

Figure 87 (see Pg. 131) displays transportation services that agency representatives feel do not meet agency needs. The answers received are similar and may represent a lack of information identified in earlier survey questions. The high responses in the not applicable section may represent agencies thinking a service will not benefit their client therefore dismissing it without proper information. Respondents were asked to comment on why certain services were not meeting the needs of their clients.

**Figure 86 – Agency Understanding of Service / Providers**

Transportation Service	How to Ride	Cost	Service Levels	Rule/Regs	All
<b>MAT Fixed Route</b>	9.4%	0.0%	9.4%	4.7%	76.6%
<b>MAT Paratransit</b>	13.8%	3.4%	1.7%	5.2%	75.9%
<b>Discounted Fixed Route (Elderly/Disabled)</b>	6.8%	6.8%	1.7%	5.1%	79.7%
<b>Metro Senior Ride Service</b>	18.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	80.0%
<b>Clay County Rural Transit</b>	17.0%	2.1%	2.1%	4.3%	74.5%
<b>Handi-Wheels</b>	14.3%	4.1%	2.0%	4.1%	75.5%
<b>Other Medical and Private Providers</b>	12.2%	2.0%	0.0%	2.0%	83.7%

Source: Metro COG (2011)

Figure 87 – Agency Liaison Rating of Service Meeting Client Needs

Transportation Service	Low	Medium	High	Not Applicable
Metro Senior Ride	9.3%	15.1%	24.4%	51.2%
MAT Paratransit	7.4%	33.0%	36.2%	14.9%
MAT Fixed Route	8.5%	30.9%	30.9%	7.4%
Clay County Rural Transit	10.3%	24.1%	11.5%	42.5%
Handi-Wheels	10.2%	22.7%	21.6%	31.8%
Other medical/private providers	13.3%	16.9%	15.7%	43.4%

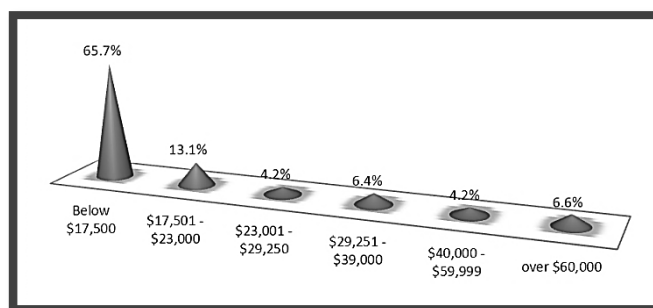
Source: Metro COG (2011)

**TDP Public Involvement.** Development of the 2012-2016 TDP involved a robust public involvement process. The overall summary of the public involvement process for the TDP update is outlined in Chapter X. Metro COG consulted directly with interested persons and stakeholder's who depend upon specialized transportation services within the FM Metropolitan area. Metro COG also involved agencies and individuals' representative of specialized transportation users in focus groups aimed at identifying mobility needs within the FM Metropolitan area. The TDP update process also included the deployment of a survey completed by transit users (specifically MATBUS fixed route) within the FM Metropolitan area.

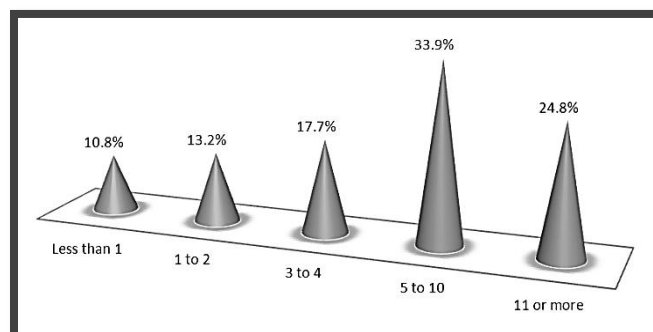
The following TDP Survey questions are related to the coordinated plan. The following questions address specific transportation barriers. These questions are part of the overall TDP Survey. The complete survey summary can be found in Chapter 11 (Phase I).

- (a) Of 509 responses 334 (or 65.7%) were classified within the household income range below \$17,500. Fifty-five (55) responses were from respondents with a household income over the estimated median household income for Fargo (at approximately \$38,500 in 2009).
- (b) Survey results indicate that very few respondents use MATBUS less than one (1) time per week and approximately 41% of respondents utilize MATBUS less than four (4) times per week. In contrast, of 509 responses 295 (or 58%) individuals represented that they utilize MATBUS for more than five (5) one-way trips per week.
- (c) Survey results indicate the largest percentage of respondents (at 36% or 186 responses) complete at least one (1) transfer per one-way trip. Approximately 32% of respondents (or 162 survey responses) transfer two (2) or more times per one-way trip and approximately 31% (or 157 survey responses) do not complete a transfer between trip origin and destination.

**(a) What was your total HH income last year?**



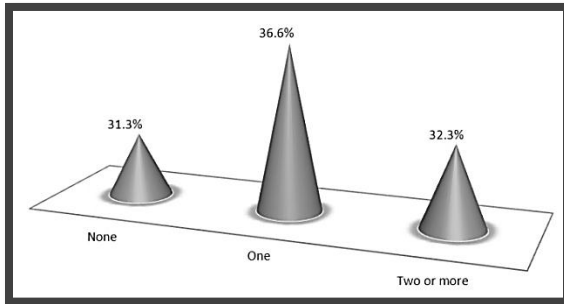
**(b) How many on-way trips do you make on MATBUS each week?**



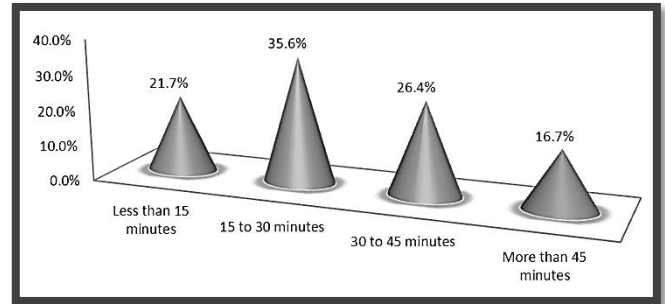


(d) Of 509 survey responses 400 (or 79%) participants indicated a one-way trip length of more than fifteen (15) minutes. Sixty-two (63) percent of responses were classified within the '15 to 30 minute or 30 to 45 minute' timeframe. Only 16.7% (or 85 responses) identified a one-way trip length greater than 45 minutes.

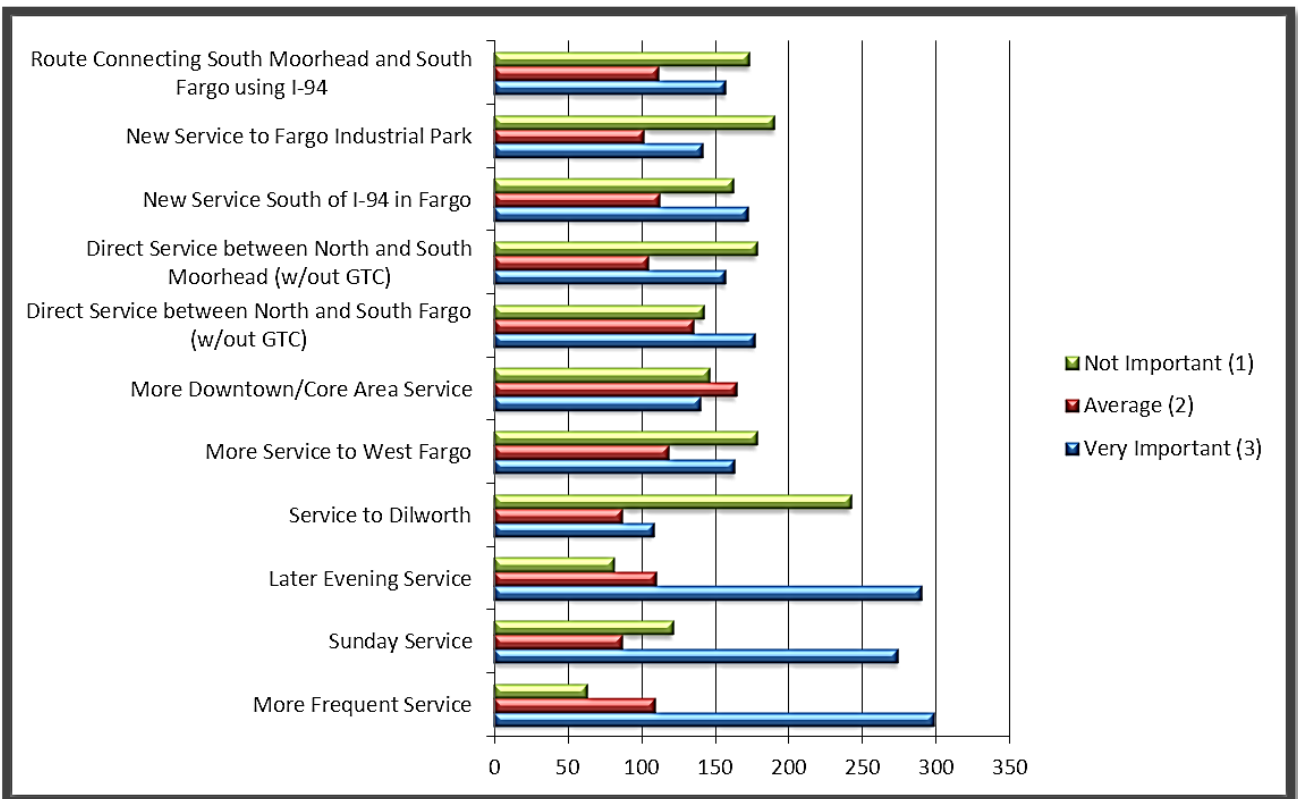
(c) How many transfers do you usually make on a one-way trip when you ride MATBUS?



(d) How long does your total MATBUS trip usually last?



**Service Priorities.** On a scale of 1 (Not Important) to 3 (Very Important), please rank the following improvements, in terms of importance to you.



Results from this service priority question suggest a large percentage (and definitely a majority) of respondents believe the following services are important, in order of relevance: (a) more frequent service; (b) later evening service; and (c) Sunday service.

Other results for suggested service improvements, many of which have been discussed in previous TDP's or sub-area transit plans, indicate a much more balanced response between levels of importance. A few worth noting:

- (a) Service to Dilworth;
- (b) New Service to Fargo Industrial Park;
- (c) More Service to West Fargo;
- (d) More Downtown / Core Area Service.

Information gathered as part of the TDP public input process is summarized in detail in Chapter 11. However, an analysis of the input received points to the following issues having an impact on specialized transportation users:

- (a) On time performance
- (b) Capacity
- (c) Transfers
- (d) Need for Service Expansion
- (e) Third Shift Transportation
- (f) Extended Hours Fixed Route

### **5.0 Day training and Habilitation Programs – Ensuring Service Coordination.**

The largest subset of social services that generates demand for specialized transportation is Day Training and Habilitation Programs (DT&H). The purpose of DT&H programs is to provide people with mental and/or physical disabilities training and skills to allow them to be productive in the community. DT&H programs have expanded considerably in the past twenty years coinciding with efforts to de-institutionalize people with mental and physical disabilities. The majority of those who attend DT&H programs live in public, tax credit, or agency owned housing. The DT&H program takes place at a sheltered work shop or at businesses throughout the community with the assistance of a job coach. DT&H programs require significant transportation to achieve community integration goals. The Minnesota portion of the FM Metropolitan Area has two major DT&H providers: Connections Inc. and Heartland Industries. The North Dakota portion of the FM Metropolitan Area has three main providers of in-home services: Friendship Inc. Community Living Services and Fraser LTD, and three main DT & H providers DWAC, ETC, & VTC. All providers are 501 C (3) non-profit corporations.

There is a fundamental difference in the way the North Dakota DHS and Minnesota DHS operate and fund DT&H programs. Minnesota DT&H providers receive a per diem transportation allocation to support the transportation of clients and are required to transport the client from their home setting to and from the program location. Mn/DOT uses FTA section 5310 grant funds to subsidize DT&H transportation by purchasing buses. There are approximately 285 Section 5310 vehicles statewide in Minnesota. Approximately 70% of those vehicles support DT&H transportation.

ND DT&H providers do not receive a direct allocation of transportation funding. They are also not responsible for transporting the client to and from the program location. Some transportation funding is included in the overall monthly fee the client's in-home service provider is paid; however, no cost allocation exists to identify this amount. Unlike Mn/DOT, NDDOT does not use any of their yearly 5310 allocation in urban areas, however NDDOT did fund a lift equipped van for Community Living Services in 2010.

Policy differences between ND and MN DHS and DOT's have noticeable impacts in the FM Metropolitan area. MAT Paratransit does not transport DT&H clients in Moorhead and Dilworth. The service is there to assist if

needed, but the providers rarely use it because of their high internal capacity. DT&H ridership on MAT Paratransit in Fargo and West Fargo is nearly 30% of total system rides.

In 2007 an analysis was conducted by Metro COG to quantify the amount of DT&H transportation in Fargo and West Fargo. The analysis concluded that DT&H programs demand 98,000 riders per year. To put that number in perspective the DT&H demand is nearly twice the MAT Paratransit demand. Strategies are needed to ensure coordination among DT& H providers to ensure they are able to maintain a commitment to their clients.

## **6.0 Transportation Barriers.**

The Transportation Barriers identified in the Coordinated Plan are based on three (3) primary inputs:

1. The review and analysis or progress made towards the implementation of recent specialized transportation plans and programs. MATBUS and Metro COG have developed a number of recent plans that deal specifically with specialized transportation. Tracking the implementation of these plans identifies areas where continued program emphasis is needed in the areas of mobility management and human service coordination.
2. The second input into the development of the Transportation Barriers is the public input elements of Metro Mobility. Through the public input element of Metro Mobility, MATBUS and Metro COG were able to gather direct feedback from a number of local stakeholders on issues and opportunities for increasing the efficiency and capacity of the specialized transportation network in the FM Metropolitan Area.
3. The final input into the development of the Transportation Barriers of the Coordinated Plan was the overall development of the 2012-2016 TDP update.

Based on the Issues and Needs identification process outlined above, the following three (3) transportation barriers have been identified for purposes of developing the Coordinated Plan. Under each broad barrier, smaller barriers have been developed which highlight more specific needs facing the specialized transportation system within the FM Metropolitan area.

**Coordination.** Additional coordination is needed in several aspects of the specialized transportation community within the FM Metropolitan area. Improved coordination would serve to address transportation barriers and improve efficiency and effectiveness of existing transportation providers, with the overall goal of improving individual mobility options. Implementation of the strategies to address the Coordination barriers relates to the following aspects of the specialized transportation community:

- (a) In general, foster coordination among social and human services agencies and organizations with in the FM Metropolitan area to deliver transportation with fewer resources.
- (b) Improve cross agency coordination for agencies who are involved in Day Training and Habilitation (DT&H) programs.
- (c) Continue to Implement and Follow up on primary recommendations from the MAT Paratransit Options Analysis.
- (d) Continue to monitor implementation of Metro Senior Program for consistency metro-wide.

**Travel Time/Convenience.** Enhancements to existing programs/services offered within the FM Metropolitan area will improve the mobility of specialized transportation users. Improving travel time and convenience of services/program offered increases the access of specialized transportation users to work, educational, medical, and quality of life activities. Implementation of the strategies to address the Travel Time/Convenience barrier relates to the following aspects of the specialized transportation community:

- (a) Improve travel time of existing transportation service providers.
- (b) Improve Information available about existing transportation services/programs and providers.
- (c) Reduce the stigma associated with using public transit and specialized transportation services/program within the FM Metropolitan area.
- (d) Continue to seek solutions to address barriers related to child care transportation and the cost of transport in general.

**Service Coverage.** Expansion of public transit service in general will improve the mobility of specialized transportation users within the FM Metropolitan area. Expanded service needs involve additional services/programs offered earlier in the morning and later in the evening. Expanded service needs involve increasing the geographic reach of services and programs. Expanded services needs involve offering additional days of week (E.g. Sunday fixed route service). Implementation of the strategies to address the Service Coverage barrier relates to the following aspects of the specialized transportation community:

- (a) Finding solutions to ensure land development is done in consultation with available and projected surface transportation program assets, including public transportation.
- (b) Finding solutions to providing services/programs for individuals working evenings and 3<sup>rd</sup> shifts, primarily in the industrial areas of the FM Metropolitan area.
- (c) Strategically analyzing new services/programs to expand the geographic coverage of public transit services.

These barriers are intended to form the foundation for the development of programs and services which seek the use of FTA Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 funds. These barriers assist for the purposes of the Coordinated Plan with developing project/program priorities.

## **7.0 Recommendations for Coordinated Metropolitan Mobility.**

This section of the Coordinated Plan serves as the implementation plan and provides guidance regarding the development of projects, programs, or services which may seek funding through FTA Section 5310, 5316, and 5317. The Recommendations are broken down into seven areas, with each serving to more specifically address Barriers identified within the Coordinated Plan.

**Mobility Management Programs and Initiatives.** The Development of the Mobility Manager position by MATBUS is one of the most significant elements of MATBUS operations available for addressing Barriers identified in the Coordinated Plan. Based on recent applications for Federal aid to extend the program, the generally accepted goals of the mobility management program of MATBUS are as follows:

- (a) Develop and maintain the Transportation Coordinating Network (TCN) to address transportation issues of individuals with disabilities. Network outcomes include increased communication among transportation providers, creative solutions to gaps in service, and cooperation in service delivery.

- (b) Develop and maintain a clearinghouse of information.
- (c) Communicate with program providers who work with individuals with disabilities to identify needs and determine ways to creatively address those needs.
- (d) Promote transportation options to individuals with disabilities and program providers.
- (e) Manage MAT Paratransit growth to ensure service continuation outside of the ¾ mile corridor.

MATBUS will need to make a concerted effort to regularly update the foundations driving its mobility management program. Work done as part of the Metro Mobility Study and the Coordinated Plan justify the need for a long range program of mobility management initiatives on the part of MATBUS. What follows are several smaller initiatives which fall under an overall Mobility Management program and which should be considered candidate projects for future mobility management program activities:

- Travel Training - programs when properly implemented demonstrates a return investment that is many times greater than the cost of the training. Establishing a travel training program and policy that clearly defines what will be done and puts measurable goals in place is needed.
- Information & Marketing - Advertising and outreach aimed at users and possible users of the public transit system.
- Website Information – Using the web to provide information to existing and potential users of the public and specialized transportation system.
- Information by Phone (one call center) - Establishing phone systems that enable a user to schedule a ride on multiple services from one phone number.
- Pass Programs- Could assist MAT at guiding users of the specialized systems in the FM Metropolitan Area to the most appropriate type of service and in the process trying to maximize cost effectiveness for the provider.
- Fare Incentives – Programs that create savings for users to use one form of transportation versus another. An example is allowing Paratransit riders free access to fixed route service if they choose.
- Trip planning- initiatives on the part of MATBUS would also assist in boosting the understanding of available transportation resources in the community so that users are able to make choices appropriate for themselves, and that also is in line with service of the chosen provider.
- Travel Navigation- programs assist those who need help choosing a method of transportation. There are a variety of strategies to be explored for travel navigation. Including a hotline, software, or instructional resources.
- Voucher Programs - MATBUS has an opportunity to offload some demand on MAT Paratransit through the development of a voucher program that provide resources to other agencies who may be able to meet excess demand on the MAT Paratransit system. A voucher program should be considered a relevant part of future program initiatives aimed as dampening demand on MAT Paratransit.

**Metropolitan Planning Program.** Metro COG has a long history of assisting MATBUS in the areas of transit planning and programming as part of its Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). While Metro COG has recently included *human service coordination* within its UPWP, Metro COG has struggled to give these efforts program

definition and relevance. There is tremendous opportunity to coordinate the transit planning and programming elements of Metro COG's UPWP and the Mobility Management efforts of MATBUS. Metro COG and MATBUS need to work closely to develop a system that coordinates the efforts of Metro COG's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and its mobility management program that would specifically direct the actions of Metro COG staff in support of the MATBUS Mobility Manager.

**MAT Paratransit.** Mobility management efforts on the part of MATBUS have been successful in reducing demand on MAT Paratransit since completion of the 2007 Paratransit Options Analysis. After several years of rapid growth MAT Paratransit ridership has flattened since 2009. Many of the primary recommendations of the 2007 Paratransit Options Analysis are reaffirmed with the updated Coordinated Plan, as follows:

- (a) Affirm and Implement the Core Mission of MAT Paratransit – Although an official mission statement has not been developed, efforts of the Mobility Manager have created a new level of community understanding for MAT Paratransit service.
- (b) Negotiate medical (Medicaid) transportation rate – This effort has been stalled based on the position that Medicaid transportation is entitled to the usual and customary public transit fare. However this is still an important issue facing MAT Paratransit.
- (c) Negotiate Facility Rate – Facility rates have successfully been implemented with Fargo and West Fargo nursing homes. There needs to be a commitment to maintain these rates.
- (d) Negotiate non-emergency medical facility/agency rate – These rates have been difficult to accomplish due to state Medicaid agencies insisting that they only have to pay the rate charged to the general public. This effort is important and should remain a part of the program to ensure efficiency of the Paratransit system.
- (e) Paratransit Certification – The Paratransit certification process has improved in recent years. The certification process is an essential tool for MATBUS to screen the eligibility of applicants. Future certification efforts should consider involvement of an external or 3<sup>rd</sup> party screener.
- (f) Alternate Provider for Sunday Paratransit – The city of Fargo has tried to procure a provider for Sunday Paratransit service on two occasions. However it has been difficult to find a provider with the capacity to successfully deliver the service. While some of initial benefits of an alternate provider of Sunday Paratransit likely remain, such a transition may impact a possible expansion of Paratransit on Sundays within the City of Moorhead or Dilworth. Implementation of an alternate provider of Sunday Paratransit should be done so in consultation with the MAT Board.

**System Coordination.** There are opportunities to increase coordination with and among the providers of and users of specialized transportation in the FM Metropolitan area. Efforts are needed to bring about information and resource sharing among a host of local service agencies who work with individual users of specialized transportation. There are two primary ways to increase system coordination within the FM Metropolitan area. One is through development of a Community Capital Assistance Program, and the second is through a Coordinated Service Development Initiative. The need for these programs, as more clearly substantiated in the Metro Mobility Study is to ensure area agencies and services providers are able to meet the demand of their clients.

- (a) Community Capital Assistance Program (CCAP) - A critical need is the development of ongoing program to assist local agencies fund capital, or a Community Capital Assistance Program (CCAP). The CCAP

could be used to meet the capital needs of agencies whose operations can currently (or with additional capital input) assist in reducing demand on MAT Paratransit. The CCAP could be used to bring somewhat congruent agencies together into service partnerships that would increase coordination within the specialized transportation network and also possibility expand service options for users groups by providing capital facilities to leverage coordination among agencies.

CACP would be limited to non-profit 501 C (3) and government transportation providers that serve elderly and disabled populations. The program could solicit applications through the Metro COG project prioritization process used for the purposes of developing the transportation Improvement Program (TIP) within the FM Metropolitan area.

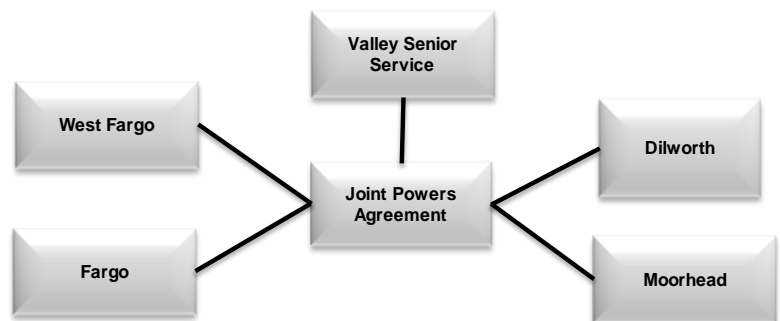
The logic behind a CACP is to allow agencies to access funding for capital so they can better serve their clients, thus reducing client shedding onto MAT Paratransit. The size of the program is based on the agencies in the community. There are FTA grant programs designated for this purpose, must significant is the Section 5310 program. Monitoring MAT Paratransit ridership and communicating with the major agencies requiring transportation for their clients will demonstrate if the program is effective.

- (b) Coordinated Service Development Initiative (CSDI) - Closely related to the CCAP would be the development of the Coordinated Service Development Initiative (CSDI) that would (through the allocation of Federal, state, or local operational resources) facilitate system coordination. The CSDI would work to bring greater coordination and program delivery between agencies who deal with somewhat similar users of specialized transportation.

**Senior Transportation.** A review of the current operations of the Metro Senior Ride program exposes opportunities to transition the service to a more uniform operation, akin to MAT Paratransit. Metro Senior Ride will operate more efficiently if agreements can be reached to merge fleets between Fargo/West Fargo and Moorhead/Dilworth operations. Broader cost sharing agreements may be needed to reflect the service area of Metro Senior Ride, and ensure that the system operations remain solvent in the face of political and financial evolution of its benefit partners. The system planning and programming for Metro Senior Ride needs to be considered under the large Mobility Management efforts of MATBUS and Metro COG.

Transitioning to a joint powers system as shown above will allow each participant an avenue to allocate and assign cost based on usage. A jointly funded system based on ridership may allow communities to alter eligibility of senior ride specifically the age requirement. This transition will allow for the sharing of vehicles, and in the future begin to look at joint dispatch and other efficiencies. The current agreement does not allow the Moorhead/Dilworth vehicles to mingle with the rest of the VSS fleet.

**Figure 88 – Metro Senior Ride Joint Powers Agreement**



Source: Metro COG (2011)

Beyond the recommendations for a more coordinated Metro Senior Ride program, two additional recommendations are suggested regarding Metro Senior Ride. Each aim at maximizing coordination among available transportation programs and services within the FM Metropolitan area:

- (a) A fare incentive program should be evaluated that keeps Metro Senior Ride fares lower than MAT Paratransit. This would be a cost saving measure that seeks to increase capacity on lift equipped MAT Paratransit.
- (b) Consideration should be given to removing the age requirement for eligible individuals on Metro Senior Ride. Such an initiative would expand public transportation options to individuals (i.e. low income) and to geographic locations where no fixed route exists (i.e. Dilworth).

**Handi-Wheels.** Handi-Wheels is a unique provider of transportation services in the FM Metropolitan Area. Handi-Wheels is the only third party non-public provider of specialized lift equipped transportation. Handi-Wheels is given in-kind donations of office space and monetary support from the Fargo Housing Authority. For the past several years the city of Fargo has supported Handi-Wheels by leasing vehicles purchased with FTA Section 5309 funds. The city of Fargo also provides Handi-Wheels assistance with fleet maintenance and fuel, and via the City of Fargo social services grant program. The City of Fargo and the Fargo House Authority maintain financially committed to Hand-Wheels in an effort to support mobility needs of individuals with disabilities within the city of Fargo, and more specifically those living at New Horizons Manor.

Handi-Wheels should be considered a meaningful partner in developing and implementing niche services aimed at addressing barriers identified within the Coordinated Plan. Handi-Wheels has historically shown success in meeting certain transportation needs, however is limited by the overall scale and nature of its operation. It is recommended that Handi-Wheels continue to implement its 2008 Strategic Operations Plan.

**Service Coverage Expansion.** It is recognized that addressing the barriers related to expanded service coverage are likely the most costly and in some cases the most complicated to implement. None the less the following initiatives should be considered priorities regarding the development of programs/services to address the service coverage barrier:

- (a) Fixed Transit Expansion – Expand hours of operations of MATBUS fixed route to ensure earlier morning and later evening service. Expand the geographic coverage of MATBUS fixed route to areas not currently served as indicated in the Existing Conditions Report. Expand MATBUS fixed route service to Sunday.
- (b) General Public Demand Response – Develop a general public demand response service. The intent of the service would be to meet needs in areas and at times of day where there is currently no fixed route transit. Implementation of a general public demand response system would be most appropriate through coordinating the services of existing services (i.e. Metro Senior Ride, Paratransit, Handi-Wheels, etc.).
- (c) Voucher Programs – Develop voucher based programs with smaller providers or taxi companies to provide transportation options for difficult to reach locations (E.g. Fargo Industrial park) or for service during times of day when there is limited demand (3<sup>rd</sup> shift/late evening/early AM).