

**79th Meeting of the
Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board
July 17, 2019
Fargo Commission Chambers**

Members Present:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Brian Arett, Valley Senior Services
Jackie Maahs, Concordia College
Brad Olson, West Fargo City Commission
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Sara Watson Curry, Moorhead City Council
Deb White, Moorhead City Council

Members Absent:

Tony Grindberg, Fargo City Commission
Paul Grindeland, Metro Senior Ride
Kevin Hanson, Chair
Brit Stevens, NDSU
Teresa Stolfus, M|State
Annie Wood, MSUM

Others Present:

Lori Van Beek, City of Moorhead
Julie Bommelman, City of Fargo
Luke Champa, FM Metro COG
Shaun Crowell, City of Fargo
Taaren Haak, City of Moorhead
Michael Maddox, FM Metro COG
Josef Rivera, First Transit
Julie Sellner, First Transit
Forrest Steinhoff, City of Moorhead
Larry Weil, City of West Fargo

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Ms. White called the meeting to order, introductions were made, and a quorum was not present.
Ms. White moved to the informational items, while the board waited for a quorum to arrive.

3. Informational Items

a. Article “MN: Status update on electric buses in Duluth? It’s complicated.”

Ms. Van Beek shared an article from Mass Transit magazine and said that the City of Duluth is having some issues keeping the buses operational for more than eight hours and does not have any plans to purchase anymore.

Mr. Strand arrived, and a quorum was present, so Ms. White proceeded with the action items.

2. Action Items

a. May 15, 2019 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Strand and seconded by Mr. Aasness. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

Ms. Van Beek introduced the new General Manager of First Transit, Josef Rivera. Mr. Rivera introduced himself and gave a brief background to the Board.

b. First Transit Contract Amendment

Ms. Van Beek presented information about the First Transit Contract Amendment. She explained that they have amended the contract for 2019 to adjust driver and dispatch pay scale. Ms. Van Beek went on to share the driver wage scale with the board. She went on to explain the contract would expire after 2020, and service would have to be competitively bid again for 2021. Ms. Van Beek also discussed the dispatch pay scale and paratransit pay scale. She clarified some more detail of the First Transit contract including Fixed Route, Paratransit, and GTC Dispatch services. Ms. Van Beek explained that First Transit provides management services, drivers, and dispatchers for MATBUS.

Ms. Van Beek discussed the budget and where the money for the increase in cost of the First Transit Contract would be coming from, and that there was no concern about the increase. Mr. Strand asked if bids would still be competitive with this approach. Mr. Peterson said yes, they are competitive bids.

Ms. Watson Curry asked if all the drivers were part of the teamsters union. Ms. Van Beek said that there are some final negotiations that will need to occur between the union and First Transit.

Ms. Watson Curry also asked about opportunities for drivers to bring up safety concerns or other issues. Ms. Van Beek described a safety tool, drivecam, and how drivers can flag situations that may be deemed as unsafe. Ms. Sellner described the extensive safety training that all drivers must go through to drive in revenue service. She went on to say that it takes about six weeks of training for someone without a commercial driver's license (CDL) to get in the bus and drive for revenue service. Ms. Sellner added that even with a CDL and no transit driving background, the safety training is the same six week program.

Ms. White asked how the increase in cost would be covered for the City of Moorhead's portion of the associated contract. Ms. Van Beek said that there would be a small increase of the local match for the additional federal funds that would be reflected in the upcoming agenda item regarding Moorhead's budget.

A motion to recommend approval of the First Transit contract amendment to Moorhead City Council was made by Mr. Aasness and seconded by Ms. Watson Curry. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

c. Moorhead New Service Expansion Pilot Program Analysis

Ms. Van Beek introduced Forrest Steinhoff, City of Moorhead Intern, and explained the analysis that Mr. Steinhoff prepared for the New Service Expansion Pilot Program. Mr. Steinhoff presented the pilot program analysis. He said the program expanded evening service, increased Saturday frequency, and expanded MAT paratransit by adding Sunday service for Moorhead and

Dilworth. Mr. Steinhoff explained that ridership grew by 19% in year one, and is still above the 2017 numbers in year 2019, but showing a 12% growth in ridership.

Ms. Watson Curry asked what was attributed to the lower ridership for 2019 as compared to 2018. Ms. Van Beek said it is not clear, but it was most likely a combination of major road construction and winter weather. She added that MATBUS will continue to market and reach out to the public to keep the consistency of routes in Moorhead and Dilworth.

Ms. White said she was excited to see the increase in ridership as part of the pilot program analysis and went on to ask if MATBUS has approached Moorhead High School to participate in the U-Pass program. Ms. Van Beek said they have not approached the high school, and discontinued the U-Pass program for the junior high school within the last couple years.

A motion to continue expansion operations as outlined within the Pilot Program Analysis was made by Mr. Olson and seconded by Mr. Strand. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

Mr. Aasness left the meeting at 8:30 and there was no longer a quorum. Ms. White decided to go through the rest of the items for informational purposes.

d. City of Moorhead 2020-2021 Budget and MnDOT Grant Presentation

Ms. Van Beek presented information regarding a change in the MnDOT grant program. She explained that it is switching to a two-year grant cycle and that there are separate grant applications for operating, capital, and new service expansion. Ms. Van Beek walked through operating grants by service type for years 2019-2021, administration and operating expenditures, revenues, and noted any changes between 2020 and 2021.

Ms. Watson Curry asked about if there was a policy or practice that limits the amount of funds that can be used from the reserve budget. Ms. Van Beek said she is not sure what the practice is, although it used to be 40% in the past. She went on to explain that she is very comfortable with the balance in reserve funds especially given the balance of the reserve. Ms. Van Beek added that they also have earned interest on some MN grant money from 2016-2018. She said that when they do get audited from the State of MN, the excess money from 2016-2018 will go back to the State, however the City keeps the earned interest.

e. 2019-2020 U-Pass Agreement, North Dakota State University

Ms. Bommelman gave a presentation on the U-Pass Agreement with NDSU. She reminded the board that it covers the academic year spans between MATBUS fiscal years, which can make things a little more complicated. Ms. Bommelman said the agreement has included a cost increase, however MATBUS will give NDSU credit for any snow days or cancellations of service. The agreement includes 10 buses that are wrapped with NDSU insignia and branding.

Ms. White asked if the the U-Pass Agreement and associated changes would be similar for the other universities in Moorhead. Ms. Bommelman said because that is the Minnesota side, the agreements are quite different. Ms. Van Beek agreed and said the changes would not necessarily be reflected for colleges and universities located in Moorhead because their State grants are much different than in North Dakota.

3. Informational Items

b. Update on Transit Authority Study

Mr. Maddox gave an update on the transit authority study and where Metro COG is with the process. He said that the consultant for the study is looking at peer cities to compare to, especially if they are bi-state in nature, and see how they have decided to operate transit.

c. Ground Transportation Center (GTC) Renovation Update

Ms. Bommelman gave an update regarding the GTC. She said there was a bit of setback when it was discovered that a post-tension band had snapped within the underground parking deck below the GTC. Ms. Bommelman said that on a positive note, only the one post-tension band had been compromised and the structural issues had not spread beyond that. She said they are still on schedule and will bid in the fall of 2019 with construction hopefully beginning by summer of 2020.

d. May – June 2019 Operations Reports and College Ridership

Ms. Van Beek presented the May and June 2019 operations reports and college ridership.

e. Updated Schedules and Maps

Ms. Van Beek gave an update on schedules and maps, saying that the newly designed documents would be ready for the public on August 1st.

4. Other Business

Hearing no other business, Ms. Maahs made a motion and Mr. Strand seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 AM.