

**81st Meeting of the
Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board
November 20, 2019
Fargo City Commission Chambers – 225 4th Street N, Fargo, ND**

Members Present:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Tony Grindberg, Fargo City Commission
Paul Grindeland, Valley Senior Services
Jackie Maahs, Concordia College
Brit Stevens, NDSU
Sara Watson Curry, Moorhead City Council
Deb White, Moorhead City Council
Larry Weil, City of West Fargo (Alternate for Brad Olson)

Members Absent:

Brian Arett, Valley Senior Services
Kevin Hanson, Chair
Brad Olson, West Fargo City Commission
Teresa Stolfus, M|State
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Annie Wood, MSUM

Others Present:

Lori Van Beek, City of Moorhead
Lisa Bode, City of Moorhead
Taaren Haak, City of Moorhead
Michael Maddox, FM Metro COG
Josef Rivera, First Transit
Jordan Smith, City of Moorhead

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Ms. White called the meeting to order and introductions were made. A quorum was not present so Ms. White proceeded with the informational items.

3. Informational Items

a. Update on LinkFM Fargo Public Hearing and Public Comments

Ms. Van Beek gave an update about the public meeting that was recently held at the GTC regarding the changes to the LinkFM service. She said there were six (6) comments received and all of those comments were in favor of continuing LinkFM service. She went on to explain that some of the comments were particularly interesting, including inquiries about if some of the other routes would be able to pick up part of the the LinkFM route. Ms. Van Beek said that several people also brought up Sunday service in place of the revenue that was used for LinkFM. She said that there was also discussion about using LinkFM for events or a weekend type schedule running on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Ms. Van Beek said that the City of Fargo made no decision and wants MATBUS to prepare cost options for alternative LinkFM service scenarios. She added that City of Fargo and City of Moorhead would likely act upon LinkFM within the first two weeks of December.

Ms. White asked if they could see the public comments received thus far, even on the City of Fargo side. Ms. Van Beek said they will provide all public comments with a summary at the City of Moorhead City Council meeting in December.

b. Update on Driver Recruitment

Mr. Rivera gave an update on driver recruitment. He said that in July of 2019 they had eleven (11) open jobs, and now they have four (4). Mr. Rivera thanked the Board for increasing the pay for drivers, saying that it has helped them provide the high quality transit service that the community needs. He said with an upcoming training, they anticipate to have all positions filled around the December 1, 2019 timeframe.

Ms. White asked what the timeline was for going from a “cadet” to being on your own. Mr. Rivera said the timeline is about three (3) weeks. Ms. White asked what the situation was like a year ago, and Ms. Van Beek said it is much improved compared to a year ago as far as job vacancy goes.

Mr. Weil arrived at 8:10 AM and a quorum was present.

c. Update on the Transit Authority Study

Mr. Maddox gave an update on the Transit Authority Study. He said that Metro COG will be incorporating some aspects of the Transit Authority Study into the Transit Development Plan (TDP) for implementation, especially as it relates to the governing structure of transit. Mr. Maddox added that they are formulating an approach of how to move forward with the organizational structure of transit after the most recent stakeholder interviews and work sessions. He said there are some concerns from the consultant about addressing all of the issues but he assured the project team that some of those issues are being caused by the organizational and governing structure and having two (2) entities operating the transit system as opposed to one cohesive organizational structure.

Ms. Watson Curry arrived at 8:12 AM

Mr. Weil asked how moving into a TMA (Transportation Management Area), presumably after the 2020 census would impact the study. Mr. Maddox said that there were two (2) tiers of the study, one of which looks at the organizational structure of transit and one that looks at finance. He said that TMA designation would have an impact on the finance, however it would impact each side of the river differently. He added that the consultant is estimating less federal funding through the TMA designation of the region, however the team is going through the financial study to see what options are available to transit in the future, as the system expands.

Mr. Maddox said that Metro COG expects to be done with the study in the Spring of 2020.

2. Action Items

c. Draft RFP for Five-year Transit Development Plan

Mr. Maddox introduced the RFP for the Transit Development Plan (TDP) which Metro COG is updating in 2020. He explained the funding breakdown and components within the scope for the TDP. Mr. Maddox added that new to this update to the TDP there will be more integration with performance measures, and there will also be a visioning exercise to unify the goals and

objectives of MATBUS (City of Fargo Transit and City of Moorhead Transit). He said that the findings of the Transit Authority Study will be integrated into the TDP.

Ms. White said she really appreciated the strong emphasis on community engagement in the RFP. She said that one of things the City of Moorhead really appreciated from a proposal on a recent RFP they released was, having a 'child friendly' station where kids could be involved in the process and stay occupied while parents could then be more engaged also. Mr. Maddox concurred and said that Metro COG was trying to take a more engaging approach for all ages.

Ms. White asked if the consultant would come to MAT Coordinating Board to present updates on the TDP. Mr. Maddox said that there were two (2) presentations to the MAT Coordinating Board included in the scope of work for the project; one toward the middle of the process, and one at the end of the process. He added that all MAT Coordinating Board members would be updated and invited to provide public input at other meetings throughout the process as well.

A motion to approve the draft RFP for five-year Transit Development Plan was made by Mr. Grindburg and seconded by Mr. Aasness. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

a. July 17, 2019, and October 2, 2019 Meeting Minutes

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

b. 2020 Meeting Dates and Topics

Ms. Van Beek presented the 2020 meeting dates and topics for each meeting, as are typical at different times of the year.

Ms. Watson Curry asked about the location of MAT Coordinating Board meetings and if they would still be held in the City of Fargo Commission chambers. Ms. Van Beek said yes, the meetings would be held in the same location.

A motion to approve the 2020 meeting dates and topics was made by Mr. Grindeland and seconded by Ms. Watson Curry. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

d. Draft Survey to Colleges

Ms. Haak gave an update to the decrease in college ridership and how the survey came from that to get the perception of transit from riders and non-riders, where people were seeing advertising and marketing efforts for MATBUS, and how the partnership with the schools is going. She explained how the survey will be created and distributed to college students and that there will be an incentive to participate in the survey with gift card drawings. She said they hope to gather some information about trends in the ridership, and be able to better work with each individual campus that participates in the U-Pass program.

Ms. Watson Curry said that she thought giving an incentive to take the is a great idea. She went on to say they could potentially ask about mode preferences such as biking, carpooling, walking, etc. Ms. Watson Curry also suggested a survey question regarding inclement weather, and if that plays a factor in ridership as an encouragement or detriment. Ms. Haak said that they would look into including those suggestions within the survey.

Ms. Maahs asked about the timeline for getting the survey out to students, and if there was a reason for getting it done during this semester or if it could be pushed to the following year as students may be bogged down with the upcoming holiday as well as finals toward the end of the year. Ms. Haak said there is no timeline, but the sooner they get the results, the better. She added that they are leaving it up to each school also to determine when the right time is to send the survey out to students. Ms. White added that she thinks having it completed by the end of the year would be extremely difficult and after the holidays may be the best choice, or even over winter breaks. Ms. White also suggested continual contact such as weekly, with different incentives each week, to help remind people about the survey and drive more students to take it. She explained that even sending the survey to student's personal email address may be better, as they have found most do not check their official student email as often. Ms. Haak added that they would also be doing a social media push as well as rider alerts to contact as many students as possible.

A motion to move forward with the release of the college survey was made by Mr. Aasness and seconded by Mr. Stevens. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

3. Informational Items

d. Approved State of Minnesota Grants

Ms. Van Beek gave an update on operating grants that the City of Moorhead submitted for stating that they received full funding for the operations and received all the capital projects they had submitted. She explained that the State was flexing some State money instead of federal money for a couple of the transit capital improvement projects, which will help the City of Moorhead save that federal money for larger upcoming projects such as the GTC renovation or future MTG renovation. Ms. Van Beek explained that the State made a priority to fund capital vehicle purchases for rural transit providers and offered a 90/10 percent federal/local split.

e. September and October 2019 Operations Reports and College Ridership

Ms. Van Beek gave an update on the September and October 2019 operations report and college ridership. She explained that there is a big change to the ridership data that Matthew Peterson has been working on. She said that there is a lot of information they include in the report, and they would like to get some feedback as to what is useful information to have as well as how the presentation of that information should be formatted (i.e. graph vs. table).

Ms. Van Beek asked if the MAT Coordinating Board like the graphs, Ms. White shook her head yes. Ms. Watson Curry added that it was easier to understand. Ms. Van Beek went on to explain the graphs, charts, and tables included in the information packet.

Ms. White said that she appreciated the missed trip report as part of this information including why that is.

Ms. Watson Curry said that it is a lot of data, but she appreciates seeing the information. She suggested looking at a longer time frame when looking at when ridership is "down", to see if it is comparable to other years not within the two or three year snap shot. Ms. Watson Curry added that she likes to see the feedback, both bad and good as it can only make the system better. Ms. Watson Curry also asked about how the fines of drivers works. Ms. Van Beek explained safety bonuses and how those are used to pay the fines.

Mr. Stevens asked if they could segregate the Tap Ride data, he concurred that having the most information was beneficial to decision makers. Ms. Van Beek said yes, they could indeed separate the Tap Ride service data.

4. Other Business

Hearing no other business, Mr. Grindeland made a motion and Ms. Watson Curry seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 AM.