

**80th Meeting of the
Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board
October 2, 2019
Fargo Commission Chambers**

Members Present:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Paul Grindeland, Valley Senior Services
Brad Olson, West Fargo City Commission
Brit Stevens, NDSU
Sara Watson Curry, Moorhead City Council
Deb White, Moorhead City Council
Annie Wood, MSUM

Members Absent:

Brian Arett, Valley Senior Services
Tony Grindberg, Fargo City Commission
Kevin Hanson, Chair
Jackie Maahs, Concordia College
Teresa Stolfus, M|State
John Strand, Fargo City Commission

Others Present:

Lori Van Beek, City of Moorhead
Julie Bommelman, City of Fargo
Shaun Crowell, City of Fargo
Taaren Haak, City of Moorhead
Michael Maddox, FM Metro COG
Matthew Peterson, City of Fargo
Josef Rivera, First Transit
Cole Swingen, City of Fargo

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Ms. White called the meeting to order, introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

2. Action Items

a. July 17, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Van Beek explained that the July 17, 2019 meeting minutes were inadvertently left out, and the item was tabled until the next meeting.

b. Proposed Changes to LinkFM for 2020

Ms. Van Beek presented an update to the proposed changes to LinkFM. She said the Fargo mayor is proposing that the service be discontinued. Ms. Van Beek went through ridership numbers from 2015-2019 and said the numbers have not been the greatest, however the LinkFM provided over 7,000 rides between July 18-20, 2019 during the Downtown Street Fair. She also shared information about the ridership during different times of the day. She also shared the estimated operating costs for LinkFM. Ms. Van Beek said that it is staff's recommendation that if the Cities should decide to cut LinkFM service, they should consider

providing the service for special events, as that is when a large portion of LinkFM ridership occurs. Ms. Van Beek went on to list the special events including: Unglued, Celtic Festival, St. Patrick's Day Parade, Drone Focus Conference, Scandinavian Festival, Burgers Brews & BBQ, Street Fair, TedX, German Culture Fest, NDSU Homecoming, Holiday Lights Parade, Pangea, and a large Microsoft event. She did say that changing the service would require a public hearing, and opened up the conversation to get the Board's thoughts.

Ms. Watson Curry asked how the Link FM got started, what the goals of providing the service were, and if the goals were accomplished or not. Ms. Van Beek said the biggest issues were to address parking issues downtown and to spur economic development by providing a connection to the Moorhead Center Mall. Mr. Peterson added that it really became popular for the special events, and not necessarily for the intentions that LinkFM was started upon.

Ms. Watson Curry then asked how MATBUS would decide which events to provide the LinkFM service for, and if there would be flexibility for the LinkFM to operate for last minute events that could potentially utilize the service. Ms. Van Beek said there is a federal charter rule that states the service cannot be provided to some groups, and limited to some groups, and must be open to serve the community. Mr. Peterson said that there is some grey area there by opening up the service strictly for events. Ms. Bommelman added that they will need to receive authorization from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to do service for the special events. Mr. Peterson said it is not as accessible as they would probably like, because there are publishing requirements to inform people well in advance of the event. Ms. Watson Curry asked how much notice would be required to meet FTA regulations, and if the MAT Coordinating Board would be involved in approving different events for the LinkFM service. Ms. Van Beek said, not only does FTA have to be involved, the State of Minnesota will need to know a rough cost of providing the LinkFM service throughout the year for the events. Mr. Peterson added that they would need at least a two-month notice to add an event.

Mr. Olson asked if the 2020 City of Fargo budget was approved or not. Mr. Peterson said it has been approved, and the City of Fargo is providing no LinkFM funding. He said that, because of FTA regulation, a public engagement process has to occur for the service to be eliminated.

Mr. Grindeland asked if there were any groups downtown or otherwise that would be interested in filling the funding gap that the City of Fargo left. Mr. Peterson said yes, there is a lot of support for the LinkFM, and it is more important that interested groups get involved in the public process so City of Fargo leadership can hear why providing the LinkFM service is important.

A motion to hold a public hearing to limit LinkFM service to only special events was made by Mr. Aasness and seconded by Ms. Watson Curry. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

Mr. Olson asked where the public hearing would have to take place. Mr. Peterson said there would have to be a public hearing at City Commission in Fargo and the City Council in Moorhead, as the route operates in both cities.

c. Request Proposals for Security Services 2020-2025

Ms. Bommelman presented the request for proposal for security services from 2020-2025. She said the security service contract will also include the safe and secure transfer of money, as MATBUS collects and stores cash payment for transit fares.

Ms. Watson Curry asked if the five year contract was the same as what has been done in the past. Ms. Bommelman said that it was the same as last time. Ms. Watson Curry asked if there is a lot of dialogue between staff and the security firm in terms of what issues to look for and any other tips to ensure that all staff is aware of ongoing security issues. Ms. Bommelman said that there is a lot of conversation between the security firm, including the Police Department, and that helps drive the improvement of security at MATBUS facilities.

Ms. Wood asked if the new contract would request similar hours of security service. Ms. Bommelman said yes, it would be the same amount of hours budgeted.

A motion to approve proceeding with releasing the RFP for Security Services was made by Ms. Wood and seconded by Mr. Aasness. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

d. Price Proposals from Genfare for Upgrade to Farebox System

Mr. Peterson presented some background information on the current farebox system, which was purchased in 2009 and had a ten-year life expectancy. The farebox system is on every vehicle and is what helps track ridership that MATBUS uses for reports that are sent to FTA. He explained that the approach they wanted to take was not a complete overhaul, and would upgrade the current fareboxes to the newer version of the Genfare farebox system. Mr. Peterson said they had to get prior approval from FTA to do a sole source procurement process, which MATBUS did. He said the proposals to upgrade the system came in about where they expected the price to be, however there were a couple of items they would need to cut to get to the price point they budgeted for. Mr. Peterson explained a couple of the updates that would make the fare purchasing experience easier for riders with this farebox upgrade. He went on to explain the process for collecting fares for paratransit riders, and how drivers are responsible for taking cash and making change, or collecting tickets from paratransit riders. With the Genfare upgraded system, there would be the ability to collect fare similarly to how fares are collected on fixed route where people can use many means to pay. Mr. Peterson outlined the items that could be cut from the proposal to reduce costs. Ms. Van Beek said the money for Moorhead's portion of the fareboxes is coming from state and federal funds.

Ms. Watson Curry asked if there would be any training costs, as the line item for such training is shown blank. Mr. Peterson explained that because MATBUS is purchasing so many fareboxes, they will do that for free, but they do pay a training fee every year for additional training.

Ms. White asked if the ticket vending machine, which will be cut due to cost, could be added later. Mr. Peterson said the ticket vending machine would be something they would love to add in the future. Ms. Van Beek added that with the mobile ticketing option, the need for the ticket vending machine may go down.

A motion to approve staff to move forward with GFI Farebox upgrade and bring to Moorhead City Council and Fargo City Commission was made by Mr. Olson and seconded by Ms. Watson Curry. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

3. Informational Items

a. Driver Recruitment

Mr. Rivera gave an update on driver recruitment. He said that they have 10 or 11 open positions, and currently have nine new hires going through the initial training process. He said they are tremendously busy receiving applications for employment and can hopefully get to a point where they have a reserve of operators in the near future.

Ms. White agreed and said it was exciting to see better recruitment. She asked if he thought the higher pay has improved retention of employees also. Mr. Rivera said certainly, it has made an impact on retention.

b. Update on TapRide Industrial Park Service

Mr. Peterson gave an update on TapRide industrial park service. He said that as of 9/26/2019 they have completed 515 rides on the TapRide service to and from the industrial park. He explained the spreadsheet showing ridership numbers, and explained how the bus actually had to be retrofitted to accommodate bicycles on the front.

Ms. Watson Curry commented that she was excited for this service and think it is a move in the right direction for transit in our community.

c. Update on Transit Authority Study

Mr. Maddox gave an update on the transit authority study. He said that the study is looking at changing the organizational structure of MATBUS, however the study is slowing down for some end-of-year budgeting reasons. Mr. Maddox said that they would use this opportunity to collect more feedback from local jurisdictions and leadership in the community.

Ms. White asked if there was a timeline on the stakeholder meetings with local jurisdictions. Mr. Maddox said they are still working on the stakeholder meetings and scheduling them.

d. Update on Ground Transportation Center Renovation

Ms. Bommelman gave an update on the GTC renovation. She said that they will be breaking the project up into three separate projects that will be bid together. The first distinct part of the project will be the above ground portion of the GTC and deck where buses pick-up and drop-off. The second distinct part of the project will be the Jefferson line portion of the GTC. The third distinct part of the project will be the underground parking facility, which will be funded with 100% local funds. KLJ, the engineering consultant is has 60% plans for the GTC portion, and 30% plans for the underground parking. The new project timeline is to bid the project as one in the middle of September. Ms. Bommelman said they hope the renovation project is completed by September 2020.

Ms. Watson Curry asked who uses the underground parking. Ms. Bommelman said that the parking spots are rented by people who live or work downtown.

e. Distinguished Service Award from Freedom RCIL to Shaun Crowell

The MAT Coordinating Board congratulated Shaun Crowell on his award from the resource center for work he continues to do with the travel trainer workshop and other outreach he does with the Freedom Resource Center.

f. July – August 2019 Operations Reports and College Ridership

Ms. Van Beek and Mr. Peterson updated the Board on the July – August operations and college ridership reports. Ms. Van Beek explained that college started one week later in 2019 than in 2018 and may be part of the reason why college ridership is slowing. She added that they want to do a college survey to better understand why students are or are not taking transit.

Ms. White said that some outreach on college campuses would be good to hopefully boost the student ridership. Ms. Wood added that they do try to provide information to students, but sometimes when it is nice out, students prefer biking or walking. She added that they do a push before winter to let students know about a warmer option to biking and walking. Ms. Van Beek said that the construction has had an impact too on ridership by making routes less reliable.

g. Distribution of New Schedule and Map August 2019

Mr. Swingen gave an update on the distribution of the new schedule and map that was distributed in the beginning of August 2019. He said that there were no major system changes. Mr. Swingen said they printed 20,000 maps this year which is much less than the 35,000 maps they printed in 2018. He attributes this to increased use of the mobile app and website. He said they included new information on new bus stops, bus schedules, bus routes, TapRide information, and other changes in the system.

h. Update on Marketing Activities

Mr. Swingen updated the Board about the iGoEco challenge which encourages the public to take alternative modes of transportation during the week including walking, biking, and taking transit. Participants log how they travelled in an alternative mode and are entered to win multiple prizes. He explained how MATBUS continues to market within the community and some of the upcoming promotions they are doing to encourage ridership.

4. Other Business

Hearing no other business, Ms. Watson Curry made a motion and Mr. Aasness seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 AM.