

Agenda Item 1b

**9th Meeting of the
MATBUS Coordination Committee
August 20, 2025 – 9:00 AM
Metro COG Conference Room/Zoom**

Members Present:

Deb White, Moorhead City Council, Chair
Denise Kolpack, Fargo City Commission
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Julie Bommelman, Fargo Transit Director
Susan Thompson, Fargo Finance Director
Sebastian McDougall, Moorhead City Council
Jenica Flanagan, Moorhead Finance Director
Mike Rietz, Moorhead Assistant City Manager
Peyton Mastera, Dilworth City Administrator
Ben Griffith, Metro COG Executive Director

Members Absent:

Dustin Scott, West Fargo City Administrator
Brit Stevens, NDSU Transportation Manager

Others Present:

Adam Altenburg, Metro COG
Shaun Crowell, MATBUS
Luke Grittner, MATBUS
Taaren Haak, MATBUS
Jean Henning, City of Fargo
Aiden Jung, Metro COG
Matt Pinotti, Transdev
Jordan Smith, MATBUS
Cole Swingen, MATBUS
Megan Zahradka, Moorhead Finance Manager

1a. Approve Order and Contents of the Overall Agenda

Chair White noted that one of the items listed under "Informational Only" was not appropriate for that section. She referenced the Interim Joint Powers Agreement, which states that any budget-related items must be recommended for approval by the Board before being forwarded to a partner city. She suggested moving Item 2a and incorporating it into Item 3b under the "Action Items" section.

A motion to approve the order and contents of the agenda as amended was made by Mr. Mastera and seconded by Mr. Griffith. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from July 16, 2025

A motion to approve the minutes for July 2025 was made by Mr. Griffith and seconded by Mr. McDougall. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

2b. Safety and Security Update

Mr. Swingen provided an update on safety and security, noting that many of the same concerns previously identified continue to persist.

Chair White inquired whether MATBUS has experienced an uptick in crime following the closure of the Downtown Engagement Center. Mr. Swingen responded that it is difficult to draw a direct correlation between the two and noted that some of the ongoing issues appear to stem from a few recurring individuals.

3a. City of Fargo Transit Title VI Civil Rights Program

Mr. Crowell presented an update on the Title VI Plan, noting that the plan is required to be updated every three years. He explained that, following board review, the plan will proceed to the Fargo City Commission, and ultimately to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for final approval.

Mr. Crowell clarified that the materials included in the meeting packets are only a summary of the Title VI Plan. The full document, which is approximately 500 to 600 pages, will be submitted to the Fargo City Commission as part of the approval process.

A motion to authorize staff to bring the proposed City of Fargo Transit Title VI Civil Rights Program to the Fargo City Commission for approval and submit to the Federal Transit Administration was made by Mr. Griffith and seconded by Ms. Bommelman. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

2a & 3b. 2026 Proposed City of Fargo and City of Moorhead Transit Budgets & Proposed Route and Service Changes in Fargo and West Fargo

Ms. Bommelman began by noting that, due to the ongoing rise in operational costs and the stagnation of revenue streams, MATBUS was proposing route changes in Fargo and West Fargo. She stated that MATBUS had done extensive research to ensure the proposed changes affected the smallest number of riders. She noted that a public hearing on route changes would be held during the Fargo City Commission meeting on September 2 and that an open house would be held at the GTC on August 25 from 4:00 to 6:00 PM.

A description of some of the proposed changes included:

- **Route 13:** The proposed change would reduce the frequency of Route 13. Route 13 would only depart the Ground Transportation Center at :15 after the hour. Currently Route 13 departs at :15 and :45 after the hour from 6:15 AM to 5:45 PM Monday through Friday.
- **Route 14:** The proposed change would reduce the frequency of Route 14. Route 14 would only depart the Ground Transportation Center at :45 after the hour. Currently Route 14 departs at :15 and :45 after the hour from 6:15 AM to 5:45 PM.
- **Route 15:** The proposed change would increase Route 15 from a 60-minute route to a 90-minute route to improve on-time performance. A pilot program of this change was introduced in May of 2025 to determine the effectiveness of this change.
- **Route 16:** The proposed change would eliminate Route 16 (Transit staff discussed this proposed change with the Fargo Housing Authority; with Route 14 servicing 4th Street going past the old High Rise, there were no concerns about serving the new public housing at the same location.)
- **Route 18:** The proposed change would reduce Route 18 from a 90-minute route to a 60-minute route. Route 18 would end at the Essentia Health clinic on 32nd Avenue

S, and would no longer service any areas south of 32nd Avenue S. The northern portion of the route would also be adjusted to service the Cass County Jail and surrounding areas.

- **Route 20:** The proposed change would reduce Route 20 from a 60-minute route to a 30-minute route. Route 20 would only travel as far east as 42nd Street S. This would eliminate service to the Cass County Jail and surrounding areas.
- **West Acres Transit Hub:** The proposed change is to no longer utilize the West Acres Transit Hub as a transfer point for MATBUS routes. Instead, transfers would be made at the Walmart bus shelter, located at the intersection of 47th Street S and 11th Avenue S. This change would affect Route 14, Route 15, Route 20, and Route 24 (as well as Route 16 if it is not eliminated).
- **Industrial Park On-Demand Service:** The proposed change would eliminate the Industrial Park On-Demand Service.
- **Paratransit Service:** The proposed change would eliminate Sunday Paratransit services. Currently, MAT Paratransit operates from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Sundays.

Following the presentation of proposed route changes, Mr. Swingen provided the committee information on MATBUS's full 2026 budget with and without proposed reductions. Mr. Swingen and Ms. Bommelman noted that full 2026 expenses prior to revenue being applied for MATBUS were \$15,979,075.33. Mr. Swingen shared that, after revenues are applied, expenses were \$5,001,789.20 for the City of Fargo, \$4,262,210.87 for the City of Moorhead, \$444,960.28 for the City of West Fargo, and \$805,263.54 for NDSU. Total expenses after revenues are applied were \$10,514,223.89.

Mr. Swingen compared the prior information with a 2026 budget that included proposed reductions to Fargo and West Fargo service. Total expenses prior to revenue being applied were \$14,606,703.42. After revenues are applied, expenses were \$3,310,575.12 for the City of Fargo, \$4,319,901.79 for the City of Moorhead, \$461,292.26 for the City of West Fargo, and \$756,230.06 for NDSU. With this scenario, total expenses after revenues are applied were \$8,847,999.23

Chair White noted that, under the 2026 budget with proposed route and service changes in North Dakota, the City of Moorhead's expenses were actually more, without any additional benefits to its residents. Mr. Swingen explained that this had to do with the redistributions through the cost allocation formula and noting that Moorhead would have a higher percentage of service. Chair White asked whether MATBUS was looking at riders and where they originated, or where the routes were. Mr. Swingen responded that the cost allocation formula, as currently modeled, only looks at the cities where routes are located, regardless of which metro area city's residents utilize it the most. He iterated that MATBUS is trying to impact the overall transit system as minimally as possible by looking at low ridership routes and ways that MATBUS can adjust existing routes.

Chair White voiced her concerns that, because of financial difficulties with the City of Fargo, all of the MATBUS partners will be impacted, and the City of Moorhead would be paying a higher share of expenses for lower overall quality service. Mr. Smith confirmed Chair White's concerns but noted that the cost allocation formula was working as it was intended to.

Chair White asked what involvement the other partners (Moorhead, West Fargo, Dilworth, and NDSU) had in any of the budgetary discussions between MATBUS and the City of Fargo. Ms. Bommelman responded that there had been discussions with the City of Moorhead at times throughout the process. Ms. Flanagan and Ms. Zahradka expressed concerns that

they did not have a clear picture of the proposed route and system changes and their implications.

Ms. Kolpack left at 9:39 AM.

Chair White said that, speaking as a Moorhead resident, it was disturbing to see that expenses for the City of Fargo were unilaterally reduced by approximately \$1.7 million while being increased for the City of Moorhead, and that the detriments would be felt system wide. She reiterated that the City of Moorhead and others were not being treated as equal partners in the budgetary discussions between City of Fargo staff and MATBUS. She also expressed concern that the transit budget agenda item was initially listed as an informational item when the MATBUS Coordination Committee is required to hold a vote prior to sending budgets to the Fargo City Commission and Moorhead City Council.

Mr. Strand stated that the views of the committee needed to be communicated clearly to the City of Fargo, both staff and elected officials. He also recommended that the partners convene immediately and discuss budgetary and system changes jointly. Chair White responded that she had expressed her concerns repeatedly at prior committee meetings and that joint meetings between the partners should have occurred months ago. She stated that she and other committee members did not have to support a budget that they had no part in.

Ms. Thompson asked what the next steps should be regarding a discussion between MATBUS and its partners, and whether the committee should meet prior to its scheduled meeting on September 17. Ms. Flanagan iterated that it was important for the partners to begin discussions as soon as possible. With regard to the City of Fargo's upcoming public hearings and budgetary discussions, Mr. Rietz asked that no action be taken on MATBUS' budget until the partners have had a chance to discuss issues further. Chair White suggested a special meeting of the MATBUS Coordination Committee on September 10.

A motion to oppose the 2026 proposed City of Fargo and City of Moorhead transit budgets and proposed route and service changes in Fargo and West Fargo until further evaluation and discussion was made by Mr. Rietz and seconded by Mr. Strand. Mr. Mastera offered a friendly amendment to include the creation of a working group comprised of partner agencies to continue budgetary discussions, which was accepted by the maker and seconder. The amended motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

3. Other Business

Ms. Bommelman and Mr. Altenburg gave a brief update on the MATBUS Transit Development Plan. They noted that the draft final plan was released on July 30 and that a public comment period was open until September 10. They also informed the committee that a virtual public open house was scheduled for August 27 from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

Chair White reminded the committee that a special meeting of the MATBUS Coordination Committee would be held on Wednesday, September 10 at 9:00 AM.

Chair White adjourned the meeting at 10:10 AM.