

Agenda Item 1b

**8th Meeting of the
MATBUS Coordination Committee
July 16, 2025 – 9:00 AM
Metro COG Conference Room/Zoom**

Members Present:

Deb White, Moorhead City Council, Chair
Julie Bommelman, Fargo Transit 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:

Denise Kolpack, Fargo City Commission
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Susan Thompson, Fargo Finance Director
Dustin Scott, West Fargo City Administrator
Brit Stevens, NDSU Transportation Manager

Others Present:

Adam Altenburg, Metro COG
Shaun Crowell, MATBUS
Cindy Girdner, Valley Senior Services
Josh Gorden, Transdev
Luke Grittner, MATBUS
Tarren Haak, MATBUS
Aiden Jung, Metro COG
Linda Onstad, Citizen
Matt Pinotti, Transdev
Jordan Smith, MATBUS
Cole Swingen, MATBUS

1a. Approve Order and Contents of the Overall Agenda

A motion to approve the order and contents of the overall agenda 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 May 21, 2025

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

2a. Triennial Update: Fargo and Moorhead

Ms. Bommelman provided an update on the June 2025 Triennial Review by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in partnership with Milligan Consulting LLC. She explained that the review covered 23 categories and included a desk review of MATBUS's documentation. She stated that one minor finding was noted on the North Dakota side in the Safety Plan category, which has been addressed. There were no findings on the Minnesota side. Chair White congratulated MATBUS staff on their successful review.

2b. Transit Development Plan Update

Ms. Bommelman updated the group on the 2026–2030 Transit Development Plan (TDP), noting that consultant Bolton & Menk had submitted a draft to MATBUS and Metro COG for review. She stated that a Study Review Committee meeting was anticipated in August, along with a future opportunity for public comment. She noted that the draft report currently includes two service scenarios, but that additional information will be added to reflect the financial constraints expressed by the City of Fargo. She expressed hope for implementing TDP recommendations over time but emphasized that budget constraints will determine the scope of service improvements.

Chair White emphasized that the preferred service scenario in the TDP would be cost-neutral. She noted that if near-term service cuts are necessary, decisions should be made collectively by all transit partners, stating that service cuts in Fargo could affect service levels in Moorhead or other jurisdictions.

Ms. Bommelman added that MATBUS staff had the opportunity to meet with all Fargo City Commissioners, the mayor, administrative staff, and the finance team to discuss budget considerations. She noted that every department, including MATBUS, presented potential budget reductions. During those conversations, MATBUS staff stressed the importance of involving all stakeholders in any decisions regarding service cut recommendations.

2c. North Dakota Legislative Study Update

Ms. Bommelman provided an update on the North Dakota Legislative Study that was awarded during the 2025 North Dakota Legislative Session. She reported that she worked collaboratively with the three other urban transit executive directors across the state, as well as local legislators and elected officials from Fargo, to advocate for increased public transit funding.

Ms. Bommelman stated that the primary objective of their efforts was to secure funding for the 2025–2026 biennium. As a result of these efforts, MATBUS was awarded \$1 million for each year of the biennium. In addition to the funding, a legislative study was awarded to examine the funding needs of the four urban fixed-route city transportation networks across the state. The study will also evaluate how fixed-route systems can support population growth, economic development, workforce demands, and healthcare access.

Ms. Bommelman expressed her appreciation for the funding received and conveyed her hope that the outcomes of the legislative study will help identify a sustainable, long-term funding source for MATBUS.

2d. Driver Transition Update

Mr. Smith provided an update on the transition of contracted driver staff to City of Fargo employees. He stated that MATBUS is working to extend the current contract with Transdev by four days to align with the City of Fargo's payroll schedule. He noted that with this extension, the official start date for Transdev employees, along with any new hires, is January 5, 2026.

Mr. Smith outlined pre-employment requirements, including physical examinations for drivers conducted by Fargo Cass Public Health, and stated that MATBUS aimed to issue conditional employment offers to drivers by November 1, 2025. He also noted that drug screenings must be completed within 30 days of the start date. In addition, MATBUS plans to host a pre-employment orientation session to address questions related to pay, benefits, leave time, and other employment matters.

The overall transition timeline includes the following key dates:

- Conditional offers for management staff are targeted for October 1, 2025
- Conditional offers for driver staff are expected by November 1, 2025
- Physical examinations will take place throughout November
- Drug screenings will begin in early December
- All transitioned staff are expected to begin as City of Fargo employees on January 5, 2026

Chair White inquired about the level of control other jurisdictions have over driver staffing now that all drivers will be City of Fargo employees. Specifically, she asked whether staffing decisions would be made solely by the City of Fargo or if they would involve input from partner jurisdictions. Mr. Smith clarified that the number of drivers would be determined by the level of service being provided at any one time. Any increase or reduction in service, whether initiated by Fargo or other jurisdictions, would directly impact the number of drivers the City of Fargo employs.

Ms. Flannagan asked whether the proposed cuts MATBUS presented to the Fargo City Commission included additional reductions to the overall transit budget. Ms. Bommelman clarified that MATBUS presented information focused on the potential impacts of service reductions. She noted that the presentation included detailed analysis for each route, including ridership levels, economic impact, demographic considerations, and the potential effects on other entities. Mr. Smith added that some budget reductions were identified that would not affect service levels. One example included the possible relocation of the transfer station from West Acres to the Walmart on 13th Avenue, which could produce cost savings without disrupting service.

Chair White inquired whether the elimination of Sunday paratransit service was part of the near-term budget cut proposals. Ms. Bommelman confirmed that those figures were included in the information presented to the City of Fargo during the initial 2026 budget discussions.

2e. Safety and Security Update

Mr. Swingen provided the monthly update on safety and security at the Ground Transportation Center (GTC). He reported that the newly contracted security staff have begun documenting minor incidents to develop a more comprehensive understanding of ongoing issues at the facility. He noted that the security provider, Signal Security, has been a strong partner and that their staff are well-trained in de-escalation techniques, which has contributed to a reduction in calls to law enforcement.

Mr. Swingen also shared that the Fargo Police Department has recently begun patrolling the area using their new Trikkies, a type of three-wheeled electric scooter, which has further helped decrease the number of incidents near the GTC.

Ms. Bommelman added that in recent discussions with the Chair, the idea of installing a secure sharps and syringe disposal unit at the GTC was raised as a potentially beneficial addition. Chair White suggested reaching out to Robyn Litke Sall with the City of Fargo as a possible resource on this topic.

2f. Quarterly Ridership Update

Mr. Grittner provided an update on quarterly ridership, including a route-by-route overview. Chair White noted that system-wide ridership is down by 2.3 percent, and pointed out that some routes had been cut. She asked whether the decline in ridership is primarily due to the route eliminations or if it reflects a general decrease in transit usage. Mr. Grittner responded that the drop is most likely tied to the cancellation of Route 32, which accounted for approximately 40,000 rides annually. He noted that not all of those riders appear to have shifted to other routes, which is likely the main reason for the overall decline.

3. Other Business

Linda Onstad, a citizen, was present to address the MATBUS Coordination Committee. She expressed support for the proposed elimination of Sunday paratransit service, noting that across multiple transit development plans, the top public request has consistently been for Sunday fixed-route service. Ms. Onstad also requested a clearer definition of the term “temporary” as it relates to temporary service changes. Additionally, she voiced concern about the possible elimination of Route 16, pointing out that a new affordable housing complex with over 100 units is nearing completion and that Route 16 directly serves that location.

Chair White stated that the next MATBUS Coordination Committee meeting will be held Wednesday, August 20 at 9:00 AM. She also reminded the committee that all future meetings will be held from 9:00 to 10:30 AM.

Chair White adjourned the meeting at 9:37 AM.