



Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan  
Council of Governments

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## 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MATBUS Coordination Committee

March 19, 2025 | 9:00 – 10:00 am  
Location: Metro COG Conference Room/Zoom

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 890 6859 5689

Passcode: 669108

1. Call to Order and Introductions
  - a. Approve Order and Contents of the Overall Agenda
  - b. Review and Action on Minutes from February 19, 2025
2. Action Items
  - a. LinkFM Final Recommendation – **Cole Swingen**
  - b. MATBUS Driver Services and Transition Recommendation – **Julie Bommelman and Cole Swingen**
3. Informational Items
  - a. Safety and Security Update – **Cole Swingen**
4. Other Business

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# Agenda Item 1b

**4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
MATBUS Coordination Committee  
February 19, 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  
Brit Stevens, NDSU Transportation Manager  
Ben Griffith, Metro COG Executive Director

**Members Absent:**

Dustin Scott, West Fargo City Administrator  
Peyton Mastera, Dilworth City Administrator

**Others Present:**

Adam Altenburg, Metro COG  
Heidi Benke, MATBUS  
Dan Benson, Sanford Health  
Shaun Crowell, MATBUS  
Cindy Girdner, Valley Senior Services  
Josh Gordon, Transdev  
Luke Grittner, MATBUS  
Taaren Haak, MATBUS  
Aiden Jung, Metro COG  
Ian McLean, City of Fargo  
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 January 15, 2025**

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

**2a. City of Fargo Transit Department Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Drug and Alcohol Policy Manual**

Ms. Bommelman explained that in response to a recent FTA drug and alcohol audit, City of Fargo Transit and the City of Fargo Human Resources have updated the FTA Drug and

Alcohol Policy Manual that covers employees who work in safety-sensitive positions. She noted that positions included equipment technicians, inventory purchasing, maintenance technicians, fleet services attendees, fixed route dispatchers, and transit interns.

A motion to authorize staff to bring the FTA Drug and Alcohol Policy Manual to the Fargo City Commission was made by Mr. Rietz and seconded by Mr. Griffith. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

## **2b. LinkFM Update and Recommendation**

Mr. Swingen explained that, since 2020, LinkFM has provided episodic service for certain pre-approved community events in Downtown Fargo, the Hjemkomst Center, and Bluestem Amphitheater, with operating costs shared between Fargo and Moorhead. He stated that multiple parking ramps have been constructed in the Downtown Fargo area in recent years, which has eliminated much of the demand for the service. He also noted that the demolition of the Moorhead Center Mall has greatly reduced the site's parking capacity, and that LinkFM will no longer have the ability to service the Trollwood Mainstage Musical at Bluestem Amphitheater due to MATBUS operating hours ending at 10:15 PM. He explained that changes have led MATBUS staff to recommend the elimination of LinkFM and noted that the elimination of the route is expected to reduce MATBUS expenses by roughly \$9,372.

Chair White asked if there had been any coordination with organizers with the Downtown Street Fair, which historically accounts for the highest ridership for LinkFM. Mr. Swingen responded that they would be reaching out after discussion by the committee.

Ms. Kolpack stated that she felt the committee was missing some information that would help make an informed decision regarding suspension of episodic service to certain events. However, she noted that service cuts were going to be needed somewhere due to budgeting constraints.

Chair White asked that representatives from Fargo reach out to organizers of the Downtown Street Fair and Moorhead reach out to event organizers at the Hjemkomst Center and Bluestem Amphitheater.

Item 2b was tabled until further discussion at the next meeting.

## **2c. 90-Minute Transfer Policy**

Mr. Smith explained that the current transfer policy allows a rider to pay a fare and receive a transfer ticket valid for 90 minutes. He noted that transfer tickets can be utilized to board a different bus or route to get to their destination and that once the 90 minutes have expired, the rider is required to pay another fare.

Mr. Smith stated that MATBUS has three methods of paying fares: cash, mobile device, or a Genfare Link account. However, he explained that the methods of receiving a transfer by the three payment methods are not treated equally and have created issues for riders since paper transfer tickets and the connect card are currently set up to have limitations on what bus or route a rider can use a transfer.

Mr. Smith proposed eliminating restrictions on paper transfer tickets and the connect card so that the transfer ticket would be good for traveling on the system for 90 minutes, regardless of which route a rider took. He noted that a negative impact is the potential for riders to pay a fare, get to their destination, perform their task, and return home while only

paying a single fare. Although this instance may happen occasionally, he predicted this would not have a noticeable impact on fare revenues.

A motion to approve the elimination of restrictions on the 90-minute transfer policy was made by Mr. McDougall and seconded by Mr. Rietz. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

#### **2d. Real Time Passenger Information Pilot Program**

Mr. Swingen explained that in the summer of 2024, MATBUS transitioned to a new fixed route bus software (GMV Synchronatics) to provide more accurate real-time information to passengers and streamline transit dispatching operations. He informed the committee that an optional module this software offers is the ability to provide passengers with a phone number that they can either call or text to get real-time information on when their next bus arrives. He proposed pursuing a pilot program with this real-time passenger information to gauge passenger interest and estimate the financial impact on the transit system. He stated that the initial setup cost was \$3,725 and that the annual service cost was estimated to be \$2,178. He noted that additional signage would need to be purchased for each pilot program bus stop, and the expected cost was \$20 per sign.

Chair White noted that MATBUS was looking to include only 20 out of approximately 823 bus stops in the pilot program, or two percent of all bus stops in the area. She asked if MATBUS knew the percentage of ridership those 20 stops would likely cover. Mr. Swingen answered that it would likely target stops that had between 10 to 25 passengers a day. He noted that MATBUS could potentially add additional bus stop locations or a ridership target per stop to get a better gauge of usage. Chair White said it would be ideal to look at adding additional stops to help get enough data on program usage.

A motion to implement the real-time passenger information pilot program targeting stops that make up 10 percent of total ridership was made by Mr. Rietz and seconded by Mr. Strand. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

#### **2e. Route 24 – Sanford Health Amber Valley Campus Request and Route Change**

Mr. Grittner explained that Sanford Health had requested Route 24 service their new Amber Valley Campus beginning April 2025. He noted that on-the-road testing had shown that servicing the Amber Valley Campus would add approximately three minutes to the overall trip length of Route 24. He stated that this change was discussed with drivers and driver supervisors, who saw no issues with this route change.

Mr. Grittner explained that another Route 24 change had been suggested due to frequent detours and event traffic in and around the Scheels Arena and the Sanford Family Wellness Center. He stated that this change would remove one bus stop at the Sanford Family Wellness Center, which had .2 boarding per day according to 2023 ridership data, and would reduce overall trip length by two minutes.

A motion to approve the proposed route change was made by Mr. Rietz and seconded by Ms. Thompson. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

#### **3a. 2026 Driver Services**

Mr. Smith stated that MATBUS had been working with the City of Fargo Human Resources to finalize job descriptions and pay classifications to potentially bring driver services in-house as City of Fargo employees. He explained that, through this process, an initial cost comparison between having drivers as contracted staff versus city employees was

developed. It showed that costs for contracted staff would be estimated at \$10,146,942 versus \$10,195,785 as city staff, about a \$50,000 difference. He noted that the estimated cost for drivers being city employees includes drivers being fully benefited while also offering higher wages. Mr. Smith and Mr. McLean stated that there is also concern about insurance costs for vehicles driven by contracted workers and that premiums would likely be lower if drivers were city employees.

Chair White explained to the committee that this item would need to be voted on at the next meeting and encouraged members to come forward with any questions.

Mr. Rietz asked if there would be additional staffing impacts to payroll or human resources should drivers become city employees and if those costs would be shared with other jurisdictions. Mr. Smith answered that those costs would be included in the indirect allocation plan and passed through that way. He said that it would likely include at least one additional staff member within the City of Fargo Human Resources to manage approximately 100 additional potential employees. Mr. Rietz asked for those indirect costs to be reflected in the final cost estimate.

Ms. Flanagan mentioned that it would be helpful to look at additional ways in-house driver services may show a reduction in overall costs. Ms. Thompson noted that this may need to be part of a larger discussion about future budget considerations for MATBUS.

Ms. Bommelman emphasized the timing criticality not only with city budget discussions but also because it takes approximately six months to bid out contracted driving services.

### **3b. Ridership Update**

Mr. Grittner provided a brief ridership update on paratransit ridership data from 2023 and 2024. He noted that there had been a five percent increase in ridership during that period, increasing from 57,545 in 2023 to 60,436 in 2024. He stated that previous quarter ridership updates will be given at committee meetings in April, July, and October, and that an annual update will be given in January. He mentioned that ridership data is also available upon request.

### **3c. Safety and Security Update**

Mr. Swingen provided a safety and security update noting improved relationship building with the Fargo Police Department and the implementation of a new security contract with Signal Security, with an additional four hours of coverage and body cameras for officers.

## **4. Other Business**

Ms. Bommelman concluded with an update from the North Dakota legislative session. She informed the committee that a senate bill had been introduced for an additional \$15 million in funding for fixed route and paratransit services to Fargo, Bismarck, Grand Forks, and Minot urban transit providers. She noted that the initial amount had been reduced to \$5 million and that the bill was currently being discussed in the appropriations committee, where the amount may have been reduced even further. She concluded by saying that the senate bill also included a legislative management study to better assist with the long-term transit funding needs.

Chair White stated that the next MATBUS Coordination Committee meeting will be held Wednesday, March 19 at 9:00 AM.

Chair White adjourned the meeting at 10:14 AM.

# Memorandum



**To:** MATBUS Coordination Committee  
**From:** Cole Swingen, Assistant Transit Director - Operations  
**Date:** March 19, 2025  
**RE:** *LinkFM Final Recommendation*

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Previously at the February 19, 2025 MATBUS Coordination Committee meeting, it was recommended that LinkFM be eliminated for the remainder of 2025 and all subsequent years. After discussion with the Committee, it was decided to postpone the motion to address the following questions/concerns:

- Will the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) allow LinkFM to be operated outside of service hours for the Trollwood Mainstage Musical?
- How does Moorhead receive funding for LinkFM events? Will cancelling LinkFM events affect funding in any way?
- Event partners should be informed about the possible cancellation of LinkFM. They could be asked if they would participate in funding the service.
- Consider operating LinkFM for Pride in the Park until the State of Minnesota funded bus is retired in 2027, allowing Bluestem time to develop alternatives.
- LinkFM should be continued as normal for the Celtic Festival, due to the short amount of time before the event.

MATBUS staff have contacted the appropriate parties and this is what was determined:

- MNDOT will not allow LinkFM to be operated outside of service hours (Attachment 1).
- LinkFM events are included in the annual Fixed Route contract with MNDOT. MNDOT will need to be made aware of the change in service levels, but no funds will need to be returned to the state, due to an anticipated overspend on the MNDOT contract.
- All event partners have been contacted. Upon further study and discussion, MATBUS staff determined that any potential financial contribution from event organizers would not enable MATBUS to deliver LinkFM service, due to physical barriers beyond each party's control. Event organizers will look for alternative transportation options if needed (Attachment 2).
- The Pride in the Park event can still be operated as is for the duration of the state funded bus's life.
- LinkFM will operate as normal for the Celtic Festival.
- Due to construction around the former Moorhead Center Mall, LinkFM will not be able to service any downtown events during the summer of 2025.

**Requested Motion:** Approve the elimination of all LinkFM events, besides Pride in the Park for the remainder of 2025 and all subsequent years. LinkFM will continue to service the Pride in the Park Event each year until 2027 when the State of Minnesota funded bus is retired.

**From:** [Gurney, Matti \(DOT\)](#)  
**To:** [Cole Swingen](#)  
**Cc:** [Julie Bommelman](#); [Jordan Smith](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Question on LinkFM Route Service after 10:15 p.m.  
**Date:** Thursday, March 6, 2025 12:14:41 PM

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Hi Cole,  
Sorry for the delay. Yes, that is the case, as proposed this is outside of the scheduled public transit operating time and would not be considered public transit operations.

Matti

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**From:** Cole Swingen <[cswingen@matbus.com](mailto:cswingen@matbus.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 6, 2025 11:09 AM  
**To:** Gurney, Matti (DOT) <[matti.gurney@state.mn.us](mailto:matti.gurney@state.mn.us)>  
**Cc:** Julie Bommelman <[JBommelman@FargoND.gov](mailto:JBommelman@FargoND.gov)>; Jordan Smith <[jmsmith@matbus.com](mailto:jmsmith@matbus.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Question on LinkFM Route Service after 10:15 p.m.

You don't often get email from [cswingen@matbus.com](mailto:cswingen@matbus.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Good morning Matti,

Just wanted to circle back and see if you had any thoughts on this.

Thank you,

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Cole T. Swingen | Assistant Transit Director – Operations | City of Fargo, North Dakota | 502 NP Ave  
o: (701) 476-5989 | f: (701) 241-8558 | e: [cswingen@fargond.gov](mailto:cswingen@fargond.gov)

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**From:** Cole Swingen  
**Sent:** Monday, February 24, 2025 8:21 AM  
**To:** 'matti.gurney@state.mn.us' <[matti.gurney@state.mn.us](mailto:matti.gurney@state.mn.us)>  
**Cc:** Julie Bommelman <[JBommelman@FargoND.gov](mailto:JBommelman@FargoND.gov)>; Jordan Smith <[jmsmith@matbus.com](mailto:jmsmith@matbus.com)>  
**Subject:** FW: Question on LinkFM Route Service after 10:15 p.m.

Good morning Matti,

My name is Cole Swingen and I work for MATBUS, the transit agency that provides service to the Fargo, ND – Moorhead, MN area. Last summer the Moorhead Transit Manager, Lori Van Beek, had reached out to you on operating an episodic route outside of our scheduled service hours (see email chain below) due to us adjusting our service end time mid-year. A member of our oversight committee has asked us if that is a possibility again this year.

It's my understanding that Lori had a phone call with you about it and it was decided that we wouldn't be able to operate outside of our scheduled hours in future years, but I wanted to reach out to confirm that's the case.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if there's any additional information I can provide.

Thank you,

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Cole T. Swingen | Assistant Transit Director – Operations | City of Fargo, North Dakota | 502 NP Ave  
o: (701) 476-5989 | f: (701) 241-8558 | e: [cswingen@fargond.gov](mailto:cswingen@fargond.gov)

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**From:** Lori Van Beek <[LVanBeek@matbus.com](mailto:LVanBeek@matbus.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 7, 2024 2:03 PM  
**To:** Gurney, Matti (DOT) <[matti.gurney@state.mn.us](mailto:matti.gurney@state.mn.us)>  
**Cc:** Taaren Haak <[THaak@matbus.com](mailto:THaak@matbus.com)>; Cole Swingen <[cswingen@matbus.com](mailto:cswingen@matbus.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Question on LinkFM Route Service after 10:15 p.m.

Thanks Matti, we appreciate the support. I'm back in my office and got your voice mail message to call you. Do you still want to discuss?

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**LORI VAN BEEK** | Moorhead Transit Manager | **MATBUS** | 650 23<sup>rd</sup> Street N, Fargo, ND, 58102  
o: 701-476-6686 | c: (701) 367-0817 | f: 701-241-8558 | e: [Lvanbeek@matbus.com](mailto:Lvanbeek@matbus.com)

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**From:** Gurney, Matti (DOT) <[matti.gurney@state.mn.us](mailto:matti.gurney@state.mn.us)>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 7, 2024 1:55 PM  
**To:** Lori Van Beek <[LVanBeek@matbus.com](mailto:LVanBeek@matbus.com)>  
**Cc:** Taaren Haak <[THaak@matbus.com](mailto:THaak@matbus.com)>; Cole Swingen <[cswingen@matbus.com](mailto:cswingen@matbus.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Question on LinkFM Route Service after 10:15 p.m.

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Hello,

This seems to be an unintended impact because of the reduction in hours and if this has historically been completed and needs to be completed this year, I am fine with this.

Matti

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**From:** Lori Van Beek <[LVanBeek@matbus.com](mailto:LVanBeek@matbus.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 7, 2024 10:59 AM  
**To:** Gurney, Matti (DOT) <[matti.gurney@state.mn.us](mailto:matti.gurney@state.mn.us)>  
**Cc:** Taaren Haak <[THaak@matbus.com](mailto:THaak@matbus.com)>; Cole Swingen <[cswingen@matbus.com](mailto:cswingen@matbus.com)>  
**Subject:** FW: Question on LinkFM Route Service after 10:15 p.m.  
**Importance:** High

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Hi Matti,

I haven't heard back from you on this yet. The play is scheduled for July. Please advise.

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**LORI VAN BEEK** | Moorhead Transit Manager | **MATBUS** | 650 23<sup>rd</sup> Street N, Fargo, ND, 58102  
o: 701-476-6686 | c: (701) 367-0817 | f: 701-241-8558 | e: [lvanbeek@matbus.com](mailto:lvanbeek@matbus.com)

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**From:** Lori Van Beek  
**Sent:** Monday, May 20, 2024 10:39 AM  
**To:** Matti Gurney (DOT) <[matti.gurney@state.mn.us](mailto:matti.gurney@state.mn.us)>

**Cc:** Taaren Haak <[THaak@matbus.com](mailto:THaak@matbus.com)>; Cole Swingen <[cswingen@matbus.com](mailto:cswingen@matbus.com)>

**Subject:** Question on LinkFM Route Service after 10:15 p.m.

**Importance:** High

Hi Matti,

Effective July 1, we decreased service hours from 11:15 to 10:15 p.m. However, we have a LinkFM Episodic Route that operates to a regional park during the Trollwood Play and the play doesn't get done until after 10:00 p.m. We are using a State-funded bus #2151 for this service. The route connects to a parking lot of a grocery store, which has overflow parking for play attendees and a bus shelter to connect to the fixed route. However, the fixed routes aren't operating past 10:15 p.m. system-wide.

Can we operate LinkFM until we get people back to their vehicles? Also, can we operate MAT Paratransit later to get people home? Anyone needing the fixed routes would have to leave early or take a taxi or Uber to get back home.

Please advise. Thanks!

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**LORI VAN BEEK** | Moorhead Transit Manager | **MATBUS** | 650 23<sup>rd</sup> Street N, Fargo, ND, 58102  
o: 701-476-6686 | c: (701) 367-0817 | f: 701-241-8558 | e: [Lvanbeek@matbus.com](mailto:Lvanbeek@matbus.com)

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<b>Event</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Response</b>
Celtic Festival	2026 (March)	City of Moorhead - Jatoi Harrison, Recreation Coordinator - Kelly Kunz, Communications Coordinator - Michelle Griffin, Cultural Center Coordinator	Informed them about Celtic and all over events at the Hjemkomst. Communicated with Michelle, giving advice on other park and ride locations for a potential shuttle. Parks and Rec will discuss further. Will be meeting with Michelle to work through parking options. Had been hoping to hire 2 pedicabs, which may not be possible with construction.
Scandinavian Festival	June 20-21	Marit Hordvik, President, Nordic Culture Clubs	None yet
Street Fair	July 17-19	Rocky Schneider, Executive Director, DCP	None yet
Trollwood	July 22-26, July 28-August 2	Kathy Anderson, Executive Director, Trollwood Chair, Co-Chair, Pride in the Park, and	Responded that they would miss the service, but thanked us for helping out in previous years.
Pride in the Park	August 9, 2025	Sponsor@fmpride.com	None yet
Pangea	November 15, 2025	Maureen Jonason, Emily Kulzer, Director of Museum Operations, Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County/Hjemkomst Museum	Expressed concern about where to direct visitors for parking, and which Moorhead Center Mall lots would be available. They will work with Michelle Griffin on this moving forward.



## 3b.ii. Charter Service Federal Regulations

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**The following guidelines were recommended from FTA for LinkFM Service:**

- Do not change the path of the route for events that occur on an irregular basis or for a limited duration.
- Do not charge a fee for extended service that occurs on an irregular basis or for a limited duration.
- Do accept contributions for extended service for regularly scheduled service, such as extended hours every Friday and Saturday.
- If Transit determines that they are supporting an event as a marketing strategy, the calendar of events when service will be extended is to be published in the printed schedule, or at a minimum be listed on the web page.

**FTA Charter Service Ombudsman is available to answer questions and assist in understanding the requirements.**

# Memorandum

**To:** MATBUS Coordination Committee

**From:** Julie Bommelman, Transit Director

**Date:** March 19, 2025

**RE:** *MATBUS Driver Services*



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As discussed at our February 19, 2025, Committee meeting, the recent MATBUS Reorganization Study identified several opportunities for the Transit Department, including transitioning from drivers and their supervisors being contracted employees through a service provider to become City of Fargo employees.

## **Current Contractor Relationship**

Services provided by First Transit (Transdev) include:

- Drivers for fixed routes in Fargo and Moorhead (West Fargo and Dilworth are included through Fargo and Moorhead)
- Drivers for paratransit in the same geographic areas and during the same hours as fixed route (note: paratransit services are also provided on Sundays 7am-5 pm even though fixed route is not provided)
- Management, safety oversight, training and road supervision of drivers, and office clerk

In the past, the Cities of Fargo and Moorhead had separate contracts with First Transit (Transdev), however, the City of Fargo's contract included all paratransit services and Moorhead and West Fargo were billed for their usage.

Currently, the City of Fargo has a contract with First Transit and operates the Transit services for the entire metro area. The existing contract expires December 31, 2025 and there are no option years remaining. We have identified two discernable opportunities: (1) rebid the contract through an intensive procurement process or (2) hire the drivers and their management staff as City of Fargo employees to coincide with the expiration of the contract to avoid service interruptions.

## **Opportunity (1):**

Rebid the current contract. This procurement process is labor intensive for Transit staff, heavily regulated and requires approximately six months from start to finish. There is a need to garner assistance from the City of Fargo Procurement staff if this route is chosen. A complex regulatory framework negatively impacts our ability to expeditiously issue a RFP and pursue a procurement. Rules about drug and alcohol testing, Commercial Driver's License (CDL) requirements, required criminal background checks, and driving records extend the hiring process then training, which includes classroom, behind the wheel and cadet training for a minimum total of 120 hours per driver.

### **Opportunity (2):**

Hire the drivers and their management staff as City of Fargo employees to coincide with the expiration of the contract to avoid service interruptions.

### **Proposed Contractor Relationship**

- 80 Drivers
- 6 Senior Drivers (Job duties include behind the wheel training and Cadet training. Creation of the senior driver position eliminates the need to pay differential for training hours.)
- 5 Road Supervisors
- Management Staff
  - Fixed Route Operations Manager
  - Services Coordinator
  - Safety & Training Manager
  - Training Specialist
  - Office Associate
- Temporary/Non-Benefited costs to be used for 6 part-time positions (Transdev currently has 12 part-time positions)
- Full Benefits Deduction (Assuming 12% of employees will not take full benefits. Based on the percentage of employees that have health insurance benefit through the City of Fargo as per the City of Fargo benefits survey.)
- Overtime Costs

### **Advantages:**

- Higher wages than current contract
- Better benefits than current contract
- No union restrictions
- More flexible scheduling
- Increased retention and job satisfaction
- Management staff focused on our operations and not spending time on corporate tasks
- City staff will have control over the entire operation/hiring of employees/all aspects of the operation/training/handbooks, etc.

### **Successful Precedence**

In the past, various coordination options were developed by staff that were thought to be appropriate for the organization. One of the more significant outcomes was moving the fixed route dispatchers from the contractor to City of Fargo employees and reclassifying the existing Lead Paratransit Reservationist to an Operations Manager overseeing the fixed route and paratransit dispatch staff. Overall, the anticipated improvements have far exceeded expectations and the adoption of the dispatchers and reservationists into City of Fargo employment has been a tremendous success:

- Implementation of adequate safety policies and procedures
- Enforce applicable MATBUS Policies and Procedures
- Completion of required ride-along's and Reports
- Improved efficiencies in schedule and timeliness
- Improved efficiencies in customer service
- Improved dispatcher training, consistency and performance
- Improved technology utilization

### **Additional input for consideration:**

- Bus operator wages can be capped at Step 3, this would reduce projected costs.
- Senior bus operator positions can be created to reduce annual training costs.
- Driver scheduling software that will be purchased this April is anticipated to demonstrate increased scheduling efficiencies. Current Transdev schedules require 81 bus operators that work between 34.08 and 39.97 hours per week. We expect to reduce this number by at least 1-2 positions by using this software and removing union restrictions.
- Based on previous new contract years (2016, 2021), the driver services contract is expected to increase between 15% and 25%.
- Two major lawsuits from Transdev driver accidents pending settlement. The North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund (NDRIF) is currently liable for the \$2M per occurrence due to our driver contract. Without a driver contractor, ND state statute limits a municipality liability to \$500,000 per occurrence.
- Transdev corporate reporting and requirements will no longer be a time commitment for supervisory staff.
- Union restrictions will no longer affect scheduling allowing for more flexibility, while still recognizing seniority.
- In 2024, Transdev's driver retention was 53 percent for the year. Improved morale and benefits as well as a cohesive team mentality will help our department continue to improve this percentage.

**Requested motion:** Authorize staff to bring a recommendation to the City of Fargo Budget Team, Administration and City of Fargo Commission for approval to pursue transitioning Transit contracted drivers and their management staff to City of Fargo staff and thereby eliminating the RFP process for contracted driver services.

The top left corner of the page features a series of overlapping, thin, light brown lines that form various geometric shapes, including triangles and polygons, creating a complex, abstract pattern.

# CITY OF FARGO DRIVER TRANSITION

Cole Swingen & Julie Bommelman



# BACKGROUND

In 2024, the City of Fargo's Transit Department undertook the process of completing a Transit Reorganization Study due to the Moorhead Transit Manager's then upcoming retirement. One recommendation of the study was to transition Bus Operators and their management staff from contracted employees to City of Fargo Employees.

## CONTRACT COST INCREASE

Based on previous new contract years (2016, 2021), the driver services contract is expected to increase approximately 17%.

## INSURANCE COST INCREASE

Two major lawsuits from Transdev driver accidents pending settlement. North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund is currently liable for the first \$2 million per occurrence due to our driver contract. Without a driver contract ND state statute limits a municipality liability to \$500,000 per occurrence.

## IMPROVED USE OF TIME AND RESOURCES

Transdev corporate reporting and requirements will no longer be a time commitment for supervisory staff. Union restrictions will no longer affect scheduling allowing for more flexibility, while still recognizing seniority.

## IMPROVED RETENTION

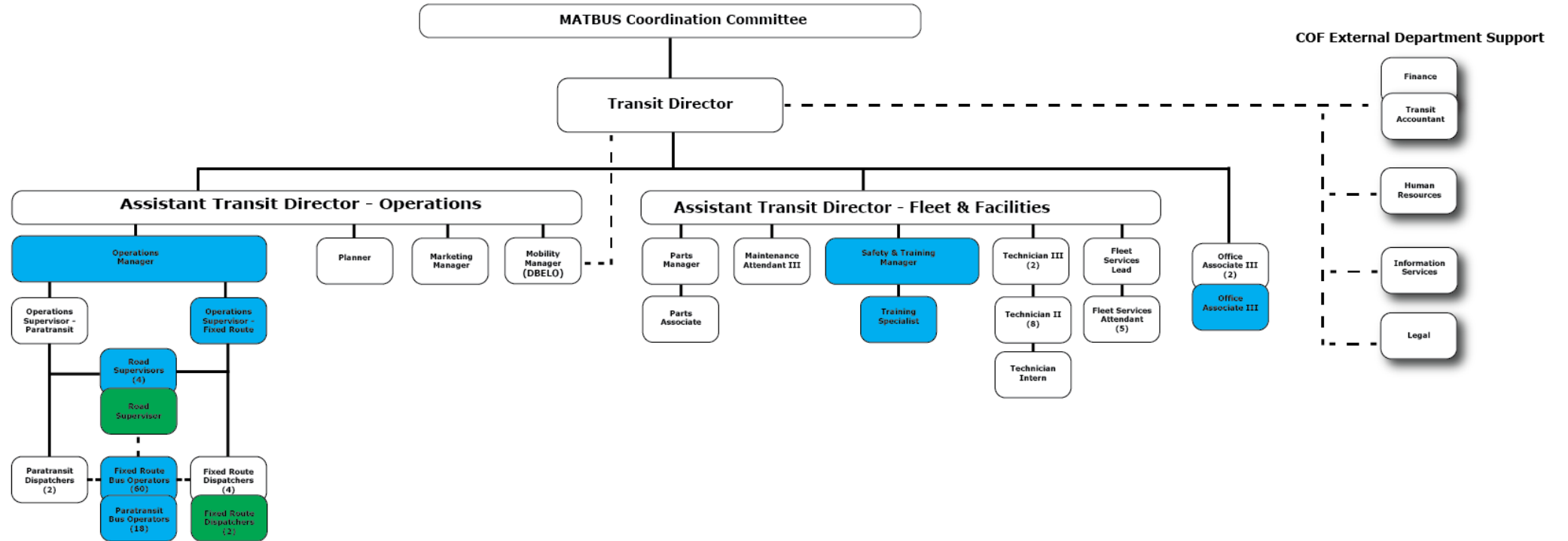
In 2024, Transdev's driver retention was 53% for the year. Improved morale and benefits as well as a cohesive team mentality will help our department continue to increase this percentage.

# ISSUES WITH CONTRACTING STAFF



## 2026 Proposed Organizational Chart

- Direct Report
- - - Gives Work Direction
- Existing Position
- New Position From Contracted Staff
- New Position



PROPOSED ORG CHART

# DRIVER SERVICES CONTRACT PRICE INCREASE HISTORY

Year	% Increase over previous year	Notes	First Transit	MV Transit	Ride Right
2016	9.88%	Beginning Contract Year	\$ 4,162,952.00	\$ 4,146,633.00	\$ 4,322,071.00
2017	4.65%				
2018	5.70%				
2019	5.36%	Option Year			
2020	1.46%	Option Year			
			First Transit	Hallcon	National Express
2021	24.26%	Beginning Contract Year	\$ 6,117,123.00	\$ 6,071,821.00	\$ 6,907,200.00
2022	8.50%	Driver Wage Increase			
2023	5.90%	Option Year			
2024	14.00%	Option Year; Driver Wage Increase			
2025	3.40%	Option Year			
	8.31%	Yearly Average			
	17.07%	Contract Increase Average			

# BUDGET

- Temporary/Non-Benefited costs to be used for 6 part-time positions (Transdev currently has 12 part-time positions).
- Full Benefits Deduction assuming 12% of employees will not take full benefits.
- Estimated 3.5% COLA for 2026.
- Overtime Costs based on 2% of total wages. These costs incorporate holiday pay, shift coverage for leave and mandatory meetings and trainings.
- Includes current driver night/weekend pay differential.
- This proposal would eliminate paying additional safety and incentive bonuses.
- Includes costs for software, safety equipment, cell phones, etc.
- Transitions contracted drivers and management staff to a pay grade/step similar to existing wages.

<b>In-House Transition</b>		
<b>Salaries</b>		
11-00	Full Time Staff	\$ 5,903,941.00
11-01	Full Time - Overtime	\$ 177,528.52
14-00	PT Seasonal No Benefits	\$ 175,000.00
<b>Salaries Total</b>		<b>\$ 6,256,469.52</b>
<b>Employee Benefits</b>		
20-01	Health Insurance	\$ 1,684,788.02
20-03	Dental Insurance	\$ 58,636.80
20-04	Long Term Disability	\$ 983.83
21-01	FICA 6.2%	\$ 366,043.88
21-02	Medicare 1.45%	\$ 85,606.87
22-04	NDPERS Pension 9.26%	\$ 546,682.00
<b>Employee Benefits Total</b>		<b>\$ 2,742,741.40</b>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		
38-99	Other Services	\$ 40,000.00
53-20	Cellular Phone Service	\$ 4,900.00
61-40	General Supplies	\$ 600.00
<b>Miscellaneous Total</b>		<b>\$ 45,500.00</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 9,044,710.92</b>

# BUDGETARY EFFICIENCIES

- Senior Bus Operator positions are proposed to reduce annual training costs.
- Driver scheduling software that will be purchased this April will show increased scheduling efficiencies. Current Transdev schedules require 81 Bus Operators that work between 34.08 and 39.97 hours per week. We expect to reduce this number by 1-2 positions by using this software and removing union restrictions.



# IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

## Spring 2025

- Receive approval from Budget Team.
- Begin developing Bus Operator training materials
- Work with HR staff to develop a hiring timeline
- Update departmental policies & procedures to reflect staffing change

## Summer 2025

- Upon final approval, begin hiring process. Present job offers to be effective FY2026.

## Winter 2025/2026

- Begin transit services utilizing newly transitioned Bus Operators and management staff

## Fall 2026

- Evaluate staffing levels/turnover percentage
- Report on success of transition and address areas that require improvement

# Item 3a

Feedback ID	Date / Time	Tracking Details	Feedback Comments
FB2502082400	2/8/2025	Police / Security Presence	<p>Police arrived in force on N.P. Avenue and restrained a man, Royal Rockefeller, whose trespass was reinstated earlier in the day from the GTC. The police ordered the GTC to be locked down. All buses were suspended in route to the GTC. This caused the 15:45 release of all routes to be missed.</p>
FB2502062401	2/6/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Received in Signal Security Incident Report:Customer has been at the GTC at 502 NP Ave Fargo, ND a majority of the day today (2-6-2025). Customer was concerned because his wallet was either lost or stolen. He contacted GTC staff and they informed him that in order to review the footage he would need to contact Fargo Police and file a report. 1 1/2 to 2 hours later I found the customer in the men's restroom for over an hour. I approached him and asked if everything was ok. He informed me of the previous information mentioned above I asked if he would like the non emergency number for the police. Customer then came back to the premises around6:00 pm. I contacted the police on the non emergency line and was dispatched officers. Fargo Police Officer Reid (badge# 748) arrived at location. I spoke with the officer and gave him the background information and he spoke with the customer. Officer asked if I would like him trespass and I declined. He was not causing issues other than the fact he was loitering. Customer left the premises of Ground Transportation Center without issue.</p>
FB2502072402	2/7/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Received in Signal Security Incident Report:Customer has been in and out of the GTC building at 502 NP Ave Fargo, ND. (11:30 am) I approached the customer and asked if he was waiting for a bus transfer and he informed me that he was. I asked what bus he was wanting to board to assist and he told me "I know what bus I need and that I did not need to know". I then informed the customer that I was just wanting to verify that he is not loitering because that is not allowed on the premises. Customer then left. Customer then returned at 12:30 pm and I approached asking if he would need assistance and what bus he was looking to get on. I then reminded the customer that loitering is not allowed and I would need to know what bus he was eating on so that he had a reason to be here. Customer refused to tell me what bus he was waiting for. I informed the customer that if he continued to be uncooperative I would need to contact Fargo Police. I contacted Fargo Police non emergency dispatch and requested an officer. Approximately 5 minutes after I called customer left, I attempted to contact dispatch to notify them that Officer assistance was not needed but while on hold an Officer arrived and I informed him of the situation. Officer then explained if I had any more problems to call back. At 1:00 pm customer returned. I approached and asked if he was waiting for a transfer and was told, "Not to worry about it. I have it under control". I contacted the Non emergency dispatch line again and requested an Officer. Officer Harris (badge #785) arrived and spoke with customer outside of the GTC lobby. After speaking with the customer I informed Officer Harris what had occurred throughout the late morning until then. They asked if I wanted customer trespass and I declined and just would like the customer not to come back the rest of today (2/7/2025).</p>
FB2502062404	2/6/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Received in Signal Security Incident Report:Customer had been waiting for what I was told a transfer for a little over an hour. The last round of buses were about to depart from the GTC building at 502 NP Ave Fargo, ND. I asked the customer if I could assist with finding a bus since this was the last pick up for most of the buses. Customer told me that he was waiting to transfer. I asked him multiple times where he would need to go and that if he wasn't transferring then I would need him to leave because he would be loitering. Customer then told me that he wasn't going to leave until the building closed. I kindly asked him one last time if he wasn't going to transfer I would need him to leave. I was then told "To make him". I contacted the Fargo Police non emergency line and had an Officer dispatched. Customer left approximately 5minutes after I called for an Officer. I contacted the Fargo Police dispatch and informed them customer had left the premises and was no longer needed.</p>
FB2502072405	2/7/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Received in Signal Security Incident Report:Customer came into the GTC building ( 502 NP Ave Fargo, ND) and had an extremely heavy alcohol odor. I kept an eye on him because of the odor and how he was having a difficult time walking. Approximately 1/2 and hour after he was here he walked outside to smoke a cigarette with another customer that I do not know. While walking out he fell on top of another customer. I approached him again and informed him that he can not be this drunk for his safety and ours. They proceeded to go to the smoking area. Once the buses arrived the same female customer approached me and informed me that the gentleman was out in the smoking area and she couldn't get him to move. And she had to leave to catch her bus. I called 911 and had medical services come and check on him when I was unable to get the customer to come inside. Fire, Police and EMS came to evaluate the customer. Customer left with Police Officers.</p>
FB2502102409	2/10/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence; Emergency Services	<p>Received in Signal Security Incident Report:Customer, male, native, 30s, Cole Demont. lied down and began to seize. Signal security Blake saw him and began to call 911. Mail security arrived and tended to the man. Emergency services arrived.</p> <p>Received in Signal Security Incident Report:Customer came into the GTC building located at 502 NP Ave Fargo, ND 58102 and was walking around to every customer offering them something from her pockets. I approached the customer and immediately smelled alcohol. I informed the customer that she would need to stop harassing the other customers in the lobby and wait for her bus or she would need to leave. As soon as I began walking away she continued to harass the other customers. At that point I informed her that she can either sit and wait for her bus or leave. She then responded by getting in my face and began to berate me with names and racial slurs. I told her that she would. Is. Red to leave the property at this time. More names and racial slurs came from her as I contacted the non emergency Police line. As I was on the phone with police dispatch CUSTOMER got into my face and was spitting as she insulted me. I was backed up against the wall and extended my arm to create distance from her. She then proceeded to hang out in the smoke shack located in the NW corner of the property where her and a group of people were drinking and causing a scene. Fargo Police Officer ???? showed up as the group proceed to walk west down NP Avenue. Officers made contact with ???? And had her trespass since this has gone on multiple occasions since Signal has began to provide security for the GTC. Officers ended up leaving without any update.</p>
FB2502142418	2/14/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Received in Signal Security Incident Report:As I begin my foot patrol at the GTC building (502 NP Ave Fargo, ND) I had noticed two regular customers because of the loud conversation they were having. As I was finishing checking the lobby, doors, and outlets I approached both the male and female customers and asked if they could keep the volume down and not cuss as much as much. The female customers began denying it and the male customer told her, "don't argue with that asshole. He will try and get you kicked out. He's a pissed off hobbit that doesn't like anyone." I informed both customers that I can smell the alcohol coming off their breathes and all I asked was to keep the volume and language down. I was berated more from both customers and told them that if they keep it up I will have to ask them to leave the property. Both laughed and told me, "I couldn't make them do shit". I contacted the non emergency police line and requested officer assistance. As I was on the phone I watched both customers go to the South loading bay and hung out for a little before stopping at the smoke shake on the NW corner of the property. Fargo Police Officer Omberg (badge #718) arrived and I fill him in on what had happened. Did not have either trespassed just needed then to leave the property until the can come back sober and able to follow the rules of the GTC.</p>
FB2502142419	2/14/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Received in Signal Security Incident Report:Customer was falling asleep multiple times. I used the intercom to let all customers know sleeping and loitering is not allowed at the GTC (502 NP Ave Fargo, ND).Customer fell asleep again so I approached and let the customer know sleeping wasn't allowed again. Customer then began to berate me in a louder more aggressive tone of voice and I kindly reminded him that he would need to lower his voice and stop cursing. Customer then began to threaten me so I contacted the non emergency line and had officers dispatched. Officer Gast (badge 772) arrived and spoke with the customer. Officer then approached me and asked if I wanted him trespass and I declined, but he couldn't continue to be here if he is intoxicated and not following the rules. Officers then were able to get customer into their police cruiser and take him to seek treatment for alcohol</p>
FB2502152420	2/15/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Received in Signal Security Incident Report:Customer has been extremely loud and disruptive in the lobby of the GTC located at 502NP Ave Fargo ND. I approached the customer and asked him to lower the volume and to see if I could help him since he had been here for over and hour and a half. Customer told me, "Not to F'n worry about it. Go get a real job, and that if I or anyone else continues to mess with him he would cap us". Contacted the non emergency line and had police officers dispatched. Customer then went outside to the smoke shack located on the NW corner of the property and eventually continued W on NP Ave. Officer pulled up and saw customer heading down the road and said she saw him and will go talk with him.</p>
FB2502152421	2/15/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Driver reported a sleeper on bus 4243 during driver switch at the 3:15 release. The sleeper appeared to be fake sleeping and would not remove himself from the bus. Security called emergency services and a fire truck, ambulance, and two squad cars arrived. The sleeper was removed by police and placed into a squad car.</p>
FB2502202426	2/20/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Received in Signal Security Incident Report:Customer refused to leave bus at the bus when arriving at the bus station and was intoxicated. Police apprehended the intoxicated individual and took him to the hospital.</p>
FB2502202431	2/20/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Driver 1895, Zachary Armstrong, reported an intoxicated individual on his bus that would not deboard. Dispatch had security meet the bus when it pulled into the GTC to remove the man. Emergency services were called, and the police took him. Dispatch Note: Mobile Detox was called first but they said the individual needed to be walking on his own in order for them to take him.</p>
FB2502242432	2/24/2025	Passenger Behavior; Police / Security Presence	<p>Driver 1895, Zachary Armstrong, reported an intoxicated individual on his bus that would not deboard. Dispatch had security meet the bus when it pulled into the GTC to remove the man. Emergency services were called, and the police took him. Dispatch Note: Mobile Detox was called first but they said the individual needed to be walking on his own in order for them to take him.</p>