

**94th Meeting of the
Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board
March 15, 2023
Virtual Meeting**

Members Present:

Amber Borah, Dilworth City Council
Paul Grindeland, Valley Senior Services
Kevin Hanson, Chair
Steve Lindaas, Moorhead City Council
Brad Olson, West Fargo City Commission
Brit Stevens, NDSU
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Annie Wood, MSUM

Members Absent:

Brian Arett, Valley Senior Services
Denise Kolpack, Fargo City Commission
Gabrielle Lommel, Concordia College
Ryan Nelson, Moorhead City Council
Teresa Stolfus, M|State

Others Present:

Julie Bommelman, City of Fargo
Shaun Crowell, City of Fargo
Ari Del Rosario, FM Metro COG
Taaren Haak, City of Moorhead
Matthew Pinotti, First Transit
Jordan Smith, City of Moorhead
Cole Swingen, City of Fargo
Lori Van Beek, City of Moorhead

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Hanson called the meeting to order. A quorum was not present at the start of the meeting. Therefore, after introductions, the Chair continued to informational item 3.a. before circling back to the action items once a quorum was present.

2. Action Items

a. February 1, 2023, Meeting Minutes

It was noted that Amber Borah was present during that last meeting although she was marked as absent. With that amendment, a motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Olson and seconded by Mr. Grindeland. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

b. Moorhead Capital Improvement Plan for 2024-2027 – Lori Van Beek

Ms. Van Beek presented an excerpt from the 10-year Financial Plan of capital equipment and facility improvements needed for the 2024-2027 CIP. The 2024 projects listed would require a local share match of \$72,898. The annual CIP allocation to Mass Transit of \$150,000 would be used, with the remaining \$77,102 placed in Mass Transit Reserves for future CIP projects. The

listing presented included shelters, paratransit vehicles, a placeholder for an on-demand vehicle expansion, senior vehicles, large buses, facility equipment, and technology. The senior vehicles have a 4-year life span and 3 of those vehicles are scheduled to be replaced in 2025.

Mr. Lindaas asked if there is a benefit to replace vehicles at the same time or to stagger their replacement. Ms. Van Beek explained that they try to spread out replacement of the larger buses more so than the smaller vehicles. This is in an attempt to spread funding more equally across years.

Mr. Lindaas also asked if there is any way to prevent the bus shelters from filling up with snow. Ms. Van Beek explained that MATBUS pays attention to the orientation of the bus shelters to avoid as much wind from blowing snow in. Certain opening widths however are necessary for ADA compliance. Snow removal contractors are also hired to remove snow at bus shelters.

A recommended motion to provide the 2024-2027 CIP to the Moorhead City Manager and recommend the 2024 projects for consideration in the 2024 budget was made by Mr. Lindaas and seconded by Mr. Olson. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

c. Proposed Moorhead U-Pass Fees for Academic Year 2023-2024 – Lori Van Beek

Ms. Van Beek expressed that they weren't able to meet with the colleges over spring break, but they have been in contact over email to organize a future meeting. Part of the issue with the U-Pass in the past has been due to pricing being connected to farebox revenue, with 30% of farebox revenue being covered by the colleges. The proposed fees for academic year 2023-2024 may see this formula increase by 19% to reflect increased operation costs. MATBUS will enter negotiations with the colleges and then bring a recommendation to the council in the summer.

This action item was tabled with a motion made by Mr. Olson and seconded by Mr. Grindeland. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

d. Annual List of Free, Reduced, Promotional and Pilot Fares to Moorhead City Manager and Future Policy Discussion – Lori Van Beek & Julie Bommelman

Ms. Van Beek presented a list of upcoming free, reduced, and promotional fares in 2023. This included free fares for a number of events including the Fargo Marathon, Public Library Events, the Midwest Kid Fest, the Street Fair, Try MATBUS Week, and LinkFM events.

Mr. Lindaas commented that he liked some of these events listed, including a fare-free day for the General Election Day. Mr. Lindaas continued to ask if there were many K-12th Grade School Field Trips that also took advantage of free rides on MATBUS. Ms. Van Beek expressed that they used to take advantage of that, but have not since covid. MATBUS does however have promotional material that they can send out to the principals, and plan to before the start of the academic year. Most of the time these trips are taken in the spring.

Mr. Lindaas also asked if the Transloc system was also included in these free or reduced fare events. Mr. Swingen confirmed that this is the case.

A motion to recommend the annual list of free, reduced, promotional and pilot fares to the Moorhead City Manager was made by Mr. Lindaas and seconded by Mr. Grindeland. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

3. Informational Items

a. Update on Vehicle Delivery – Jordan Smith

Mr. Smith shared that most vehicles are already ordered, including paratransit vehicles and New Flyer buses for Fargo and Moorhead. The cost of larger paratransit cutaways has significantly increased since 2019, which has meant that MATBUS has had to order smaller paratransit vehicles that are still wheelchair accessible. MATBUS is expecting to be caught up on vehicle orders within the next 12-18 months and be back on schedule.

Chair Hanson asked if the backlog on vehicle parts has also improved. Mr. Smith confirmed that orders for vehicle parts are still lagging and inconsistent.

Mr. Grindeland asked what make the smaller paratransit vehicles were. Mr. Smith confirmed that they are Ford Transit-350s, which are similar to the campus microtransit vehicles.

b. MATBUS On Demand, Powered by TransLoc (Replaces TapRide) – Cole Swingen

Mr. Swingen updated the board on MATBUS switching from the previous on-demand TapRide service to TransLoc after TransLoc's parent company recently purchased TapRide. All images on the on-demand vehicles and content on the MATBUS website have been updated to reflect this change. Service will remain the same, connecting riders to the Fargo Industrial Park and the NDSU campus.

Chair Hanson asked if there will be a new app available for TransLoc. Mr. Swingen confirmed that there is a brand-new app and this information was sent out to users of the previous TapRide app to let passengers know where the new app can be found. Chair Hanson further asked whether MATBUS is able to see how many people have successfully switched to the new app. Although Mr. Swingen expressed that they have not seen those numbers, he did add that ridership for TransLoc has remained steady despite the change.

c. 2023 Operations Report for January & February – Cole Swingen & Lori Van Beek

Mr. Swingen presented the operations report for the first 2 months of 2023. Overall, there have been some substantial increases in transit ridership compared to the beginning of 2022. Route 11 was an outlier, with a decrease of almost 19% in ridership. All other fixed-route bus routes in Fargo, TransLoc service, paratransit, and college routes all saw a notable increase in ridership.

Ms. Van Beek presented ridership for Moorhead routes. Similar to Fargo, there were noticeable increases in ridership across all routes except Route 6 through Dilworth.

Mr. Swingen went through the breakdown of ridership by college. All colleges saw a substantial increase in transit ridership with the exception of NDSCS. Ms. Van Beek presented ridership numbers for Metro Senior Ride, which was up more than 15% when comparing January 2023 to January 2022.

Ms. Wood asked if MATBUS had compared these ridership numbers to pre-pandemic ridership. Ms. Van Beek said they do have those numbers and that ridership has not yet fully bounced back to pre-COVID levels, although they are steadily getting back to those numbers. Metro Senior Ride ridership is getting close to pre-pandemic levels and paratransit has surpassed previous numbers. However, fixed route service is still lagging. Ms. Bommelman added that

some of the numbers would look better if it weren't for cuts to frequency on some bus routes. Once transit frequencies are back to full-service levels and driver shortage issues have been resolved, we may expect to see greater increases in ridership.

4. Other Business

Hearing no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:48 AM.