84th Meeting of the
Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board
November 18, 2020
Virtual Meeting

Members Present:
Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Brian Arett, Valley Senior Services
Kevin Hanson, Chair
Steve Lindaas, Moorhead City Council
Jackie Maahs, Concordia College
Brad Olson, West Fargo City Commission
Brit Stevens, NDSU
Sara Watson Curry, Moorhead City Council
Annie Wood, MSUM

Members Absent:
Tony Grindberg, Fargo City Commission
Paul Grindeland, Valley Senior Services
Teresa Stolfus, M|State
John Strand, Fargo City Commission

Others Present:
Lisa Bode, City of Moorhead
Julie Bommelman, City of Fargo
Paul Buharin, First Transit
Shaun Crowell, City of Fargo
Maury Gibboney, First Transit
Taaren Haak, City of Moorhead
Michael Maddox, FM Metro COG
Jordan Smith, City of Moorhead
Lori Van Beek, City of Moorhead
Voni Vegar, MnDOT

1. Call to Order and Introductions

a. Ed Pearl, General Manager of First Transit

Chair Hanson called the meeting to order and acknowledged that it was Ms. Watson Curry's last MAT Coordinating Board meeting. Ms. Van Beek announced Mr. Pearl as the new General Manager of First Transit. A quorum was present.

2. Action Items

a. September 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Arett and seconded by Mr. Olson. Additionally, it was asked if changes can be made to include Mr. Arett as present at the previous meeting and to correct the date in action item 2.a. from 2019 to 2020. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

b. Draft Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP)

Mr. Smith presented an overview of the draft Public Transit Agency Safety Plan. The plan involves the City of Fargo, the City of Moorhead as well as the contractor, and is overseen by a safety committee made up of eleven (11) members with regular meetings among bus operators and all MATBUS staff. The overall goal of the PTASP is to foster a "safety culture" in the organization. Steps to be taken for risk management include hazard identification, non-punitive reporting, safety risk assessment, prioritization, assurance and risk mitigation. The performance of the safety plan will be measured by the number of injuries, fatalities, safety events, system reliability and safety culture, which includes training hours for staff, results of employee surveys and the participation of staff in hazard reporting. Specific target numbers will be outlined in the plan itself. The FTA has outlined that the data and information collected with regards to the PTASP be used to inform decision making and instill positive change. The main objective is the continuous improvement of transit system safety.

Mr. Hanson asked if the plan needed to be reviewed on a federal level. Mr. Smith confirmed that the plan was sent to the FTA and feedback was provided, including elements to be added and corrections to the plan. Revisions were then made based upon this feedback. However, it was noted that there is no formal approval process from the federal level and it is left up to local jurisdictions to approve. The FTA will then review MATBUS' effective implementation of the plan tri-annually.

A motion to approve the proposed safety plan and recommend advancement to the Fargo City Commission and Moorhead City Council for approval was put forward by Ms. Watson Curry and seconded by Mr. Lindaas. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

c. Amendment to 2020-2021 Joint Powers Agreement for Metro Senior Ride

Ms. Van Beek prefaced the amendment to the 2020-2021 Joint Powers Agreement for Metro Senior Ride by explaining that the City of Moorhead Transit Department has been using CARES Act grant funds to match State grant funds. This is being used instead of the local match that normally comes from farebox revenue. The amendment would remove the need for a local match and allow this revenue source to be substituted with federal funding for the City of Moorhead.

d. Amendment to 2020-2021 Transit Services Agreement with Dilworth

Ms. Van Beek clarified that the Amendment to 2020-2021 Transit Services Agreement with Dilworth was effectively identical to that of the amendment in 2.c. but applied to the City of Dilworth.

A motion to approve both the amendment to the 2020-2021 Joint Powers Agreement for Metro Senior Ride (2.c.) and the amendment to the 2020-2021 Transit Services Agreement with Dilworth (2.d.) was put forward by Mr. Arett and seconded by Mr. Lindaas. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

3. Informational Items

a. Update on RFP for Driver Services

Ms. Bommelman presented an update on the RFP for Driver Services. Three (3) companies submitted proposals including First Transit, National Express and Hallcon. The evaluation team interviewed all companies and requested revised proposals from each. The evaluation team gave out points to each company which were summarized and averaged. The most points were

awarded to First Transit. Ms. Bommelman then shared a table which highlighted First Transit's revised estimated transit operational services cost proposal for a two-year period.

The Fargo City Commission and Moorhead City Council then approved awarding the contract to First Transit. This was done under the condition that the terms of the contract are still to be negotiated by staff and legal counsel and brought back to the elected official of both cities for approval. Some of the key areas that the evaluation team identified to negotiate included (1) The cities taking over incentives/awards as pass-through bonuses, clearly defining these bonuses but requiring First Transit first ask for the cities approval before giving incentives like hiring bonuses based on market needs (2) Lowering the training wage to $15 per hour (3) Including the new version of DriveCam with the collision-avoidance feature with the cities possibly taking over DriveCam licenses in the future (4) Ensuring training hours are spelled out on what the breakdown of training will be.

Ms. Bommelman then outlined some of the incentives and safety programs such as new operator sign-on bonuses, the employee referral bonus program, a safety bonus and other incentive bonuses for full-time employees. First Transit's management fee includes two additional staff including a classroom instructor and a road supervisor. Negotiations are nearing completion with the City of Fargo and the City of Moorhead having separate contracts. These new contracts will by for January, 2021 through to December 31, 2022 with the option to extend the contracts for three (3) one-year periods.

b. Update on Transit Development Plan

Mr. Maddox provided an update on the MATBUS Transit Development Plan, which Metro COG has been working on with consultants from SRF and AECOM. The SRC met and discussed some of the initial results from public engagement efforts. Public outreach for the TDP will continue, including an upcoming virtual public meeting and a planned information kiosk. There was also an initial round of engagement with stakeholders with future plans to reach out directly to specific entities such as Senior Ride and Valley Senior Services.

The next phase in the process would be to conduct an analysis of bus stops, stop spacing, amenities at each location and route planning. Route planning would not only look at specific bus routes but include overall system discussions such as assessing the efficacy of TapRide services as a feeder for the fixed route system and changes to bus frequency.

c. Operations Report

Ms. Van Beek went through a presentation of the year-to-date, Jan-Oct 2020 Operations Report. Due to COVID-19, ridership began to fall sharply in March and hit its lowest point in April. Since then ridership has steadily increased. Paratransit ridership is still down considerably. When compared to 2019, revenue hours in 2020 have only seen a slight decrease as MATBUS has tried to continue running at normal service levels. Social media traffic has been down this year, however calls to MATBUS are currently exceeding 2019 levels as people ask questions about service and whether there are plans to continue fare-free rides. Metro Senior Ride and NDSU ridership is also down significantly this year.

4. Other Business

Hearing no other business, Mr. Hanson adjourned the meeting at 8:41 AM.