

**1st Meeting of the
Transit Coordination Committee
November 19, 2024 – 8:30 AM
Metro COG Conference Room/Microsoft Teams**

Members Present:

John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Julie Bommelman, Fargo Transit Director
Susan Thompson, Fargo Finance Director
Ryan Nelson, Moorhead City Council
Deb White, Moorhead City Council
Jenica Flanagan, Moorhead Finance Director
Mike Rietz, Moorhead Assistant City Manager
Dustin Scott, West Fargo City Administrator
Peyton Mastera, Dilworth City Administrator
Ben Griffith, Metro COG Executive Director
Brit Stevens, NDSU Transportation Manager

Members Absent:

Denise Kolpack, Fargo City Commission

Others Present:

Adam Altenburg, Metro COG
Brenda Derrig, City of Fargo
Cindy Girdner, Valley Senior Services
Paul Grindeland, Valley Senior Services
Luke Grittner, MATBUS
Taaren Haak, MATBUS
Chelsea Levorsen, City of Fargo
Ian McLean, City of Fargo
Matt Pinotti, Transdev
Cole Swingen, MATBUS
Lori Van Beek, MATBUS

1a. Introduction to the New Transit Coordination Committee

Interim Chair Bommelman welcomed everyone to the new Transit Coordination Committee and led committee members in a brief round of introductions.

1b. Elect Board Chair

Interim Chair Bommelman led a discussion on how the committee would like to choose a board chair for future meetings. Ms. White responded that she would be happy to serve as chair, as she had been a member of the MAT Coordinating Board since 2019. Ms. Bommelman said she would support Ms. White as board chair. She noted that the Fargo City Attorney's office is developing bylaws that would help codify terms and a potential schedule for future chairs. Ms. Flanagan and Ms. Van Beek noted that the chair would serve a two-year term according to the interim Joint Powers Agreement.

A motion to appoint Ms. White as chair of the Transit Coordination Committee was made by Mr. Mastera and seconded by Mr. Griffith. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

2a. Assignment of Moorhead Expense and Revenue Contracts to Fargo

Ms. Van Beek explained that the interim Joint Powers Agreement included a Cost Allocation Plan which distributes certain transit revenues and expenses between parties within the MATBUS service area. She stated that she has been working with the Moorhead City Attorney's office to determine which revenue and expense contracts with the City of Moorhead should be assigned to the City of Fargo and allowing others to expire or be terminated.

Ms. Van Beek noted that the assignment of expense and revenue contracts has already been approved by the Moorhead City Council but that it still needs to be approved by the Fargo City Commission and contractors. Information provided to the Moorhead City Council on November 12 regarding revenue and expense contracts included the following:

Revenue Contracts

- U-Pass Contracts with MSUM, MState and Concordia (2nd payment due 3/1/2025)
- Bench Advertising with Creative Outdoor Advertising (expires 4/30/2025)
- Exterior Advertising Contract with MState (expires 12/31/2025)
- Fargo to sell advertising on Moorhead vehicles beginning on 1/1/2025

Expense Contracts

- Sentry Security (Secure delivery of farebox revenue to bank) – Expires 12/31/2024; notice to terminate 12/31/2024
- Valley Green & Associates (Shelter maintenance) - Expires 8/7/2027; notice to terminate 12/31/2024; Fargo to be invoiced for Moorhead locations
- Valley Green & Associates (Snow Removal) – Expires 9/30/2027; notice to terminate 12/31/2024; Fargo to be invoiced for Moorhead shelter and hub locations
- Transdev (Driver Services) – Contract expires 12/31/2024; Fargo to add Moorhead service hours to their contract in 2025

A motion to recommend to the Fargo City Commission acceptance of assignment of City of Moorhead expense and revenue contracts to the City of Fargo was made by Ms. White and seconded by Mr. Strand. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

2b. Request for MATBUS Appointment to Metro COG Policy Board

Mr. Griffith provided a memo to the committee that explained that, with Metro COG having transitioned to a Transportation Management Agency (TMA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) require a representative of the region's transit agency to sit on its Policy Board. He noted that, with the newly approved Transit Reorganization Study and reorganization of MATBUS into a consolidated transit operation and creation of the new Transit Coordination Committee, now would be an appropriate time for Metro COG to seek a transit representative to its 16-member Policy Board beginning in January 2025. He explained that it was his view that it was premature to ask for an appointment at this time as Metro COG's Policy Board had not yet acted on the request.

Ms. White asked if the transit representative should not be someone already serving on Metro COG's Policy Board. Mr. Griffith clarified that this person's role would be to serve transit's interests ahead of the jurisdiction they're from. Ms. Van Beek explained that the Transit Coordination Committee does include staff members from MATBUS and area jurisdictions that would be eligible to be appointed. Mr. Strand asked if these would be voting members of Metro COG's Policy Board to which Mr. Griffith answered yes.

Interim Chair Bommelman asked if the committee was willing to wait until its next meeting to select a Policy Board representative. Mr. McLean stated it may be better to wait until a formal request came from Metro COG.

Ms. Van Beek explained that this is a federal requirement and that Metro COG has been a TMA since October 2023. Ms. White said that it seemed like a pretty straightforward request and wondered why there was any particular reason to wait.

Interim Chair Bommelman said that there were two choices in front of the committee: wait for a formal request for a transit representative from Metro COG or ask for a name now. Mr. Strand responded that the committee should pick someone now, should anyone be interested. Mr. Rietz said that he was willing to serve as Metro COG's Policy Board transit representative and noted that he had previously attended Metro COG meetings in a prior capacity.

A motion to appoint Mike Rietz as transit representative to Metro COG's Policy Board was made by Mr. McLean and seconded by Mr. Strand. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

3a. Review Interim Joint Powers Agreement

Ms. Van Beek reviewed the interim Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with the committee. She explained that the prior JPA is still in place but that the interim JPA supersedes it in some areas including: the functions and duties of the Transit Coordination Committee, staffing and support services, and funding allocation. She stated that it is the intent to have a new JPA in place in the near future.

Ms. White asked if there was anything in the interim JPA that the committee should review or be apprised of before the next meeting. Ms. Van Beek responded that the items related to the committee's duties such as reviewing transit cost sharing budgets are an important component of the interim JPA and that parts of the Cost Allocation Plan will be explained in the next agenda item. She also encouraged committee members to review the Transit Reorganization Study available on the MATBUS website.

3b. Transit Cost Allocation Plan Introduction/Updates

Mr. Swingen reviewed the 2025 Cost Allocation Plan with the committee. He explained that the methodology used for sharing system costs and revenues was developed in close collaboration with the City of Fargo and City of Moorhead Finance Departments to ensure fair and equitable allocation of resources and services.

Mr. Swingen stated that costs were divided into 10 "Cost Centers" based on maintenance, operations, administration, management, and planning to better apply appropriate allocation methodologies and assist with federal reporting requirements. He provided additional details about the cost-sharing for Cost Centers based on one of four allocation principles: revenue hours of the total system, revenue hours of the fixed route system, revenue miles of the total system, and paratransit ridership of the paratransit system.

He further explained the revenue allocation methodology and how it is broken down into three categories: local, state, and federal revenues. He concluded by reviewing transit cost-sharing and expense spreadsheets in detail with the committee.

Mr. Strand asked what policies or practices MATBUS has to provide rides for people unable to afford bus fares or bus passes. Mr. Swingen stated that MATBUS does provide discounted fixed rides for individuals with disabilities, discounted ride options for Medicare card holders, and service-connected veterans. He also explained that there are county and various agencies that provide funding directly to individuals in need. Mr. Strand responded that he would like to explore potential policies and practices in the future.

Ms. Van Beek responded that the City of Moorhead has a fee schedule developed through ordinance annually and that the Moorhead City Manager can waive fares for community events and promotional periods. She also stated that MATBUS allows social services agencies to buy single-ride tickets in packets to pass on to individuals who may need transportation assistance. She further explained that Moorhead's Opportunities Under Transit (OUT) program funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program also buys bus passes for individuals.

3c. 2025 Organization Staffing Updates

Interim Chair Bommelman informed the committee that Taaren Haak, Moorhead Assistant Transit Planner and Marketing Specialist, and Jackie Engel, Moorhead Office Specialist, will be brought on as City of Fargo employees effective December 9. She also stated that Jean Henning was recently hired as a new Transit Accountant who reports to the City of Fargo Finance Department.

3d. 2026 Driver Discussion/Staffing

Interim Chair Bommelman explained that MATBUS has executed its final option with Transdev, a private sector operator that provides fixed route dispatch and driver services to the City of Fargo and the City of Moorhead. She stated that the contract with Transdev will now be in effect until the end of 2025 but that there have been discussions between different parties about bringing MATBUS drivers in-house as City of Fargo employees versus contracting services out again. She said that this will need to be decided during future 2026 budget discussions and that more information on the cost of bringing drivers in-house will be brought forward at future Transit Coordination Committee meetings. She concluded by noting that there is historically a 12 percent cost increase with each new five-year contract for services.

Mr. Strand asked where the official recommendation for future driver discussions would come from. Ms. Bommelman said it would start with the Transit Coordination Committee, to which Mr. Strand responded that it would be imperative for the committee to make that recommendation as soon as possible. He said he would also like to see information about the cultural benefits of having drivers in-house, to which Ms. Bommelman responded that MATBUS does have good examples from other transit agencies and cities, including Cities Area Transit (CAT) in Grand Forks.

3e. Transit Development Plan Introduction

Mr. Swingen provided information on the Transit Development Plan (TDP) which kicked off in July 2024. He explained that the five-year TDP serves as a strategic roadmap for MATBUS while outlining needs, priorities, and proposed improvements to enhance service quality and efficiency. He stated that TDPs often identify areas for expansion, route adjustments, and capital investments based on community input and data analyses. He also stated that the TDP is a federal requirement that helps MATBUS meet its 5310 funding program and Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (CPTHSTP) needs.

Mr. Swingen informed the committee that Bolton & Menk was selected to develop the plan and that several public engagement opportunities have already occurred, including a recently released passenger survey.

Mr. Strand noted that he would be interested to see the TDP incorporate innovative transit practices from other cities, including micromobility services. He also stated that he would like to make sure that employers from the Amazon Fulfillment Center and representatives from area industrial parks are included in future stakeholder outreach.

4. Other Business

Interim Chair Bommelman stated that the next Transit Coordination Committee meeting would be held Tuesday, December 3 at 8:30 AM.

Interim Chair Bommelman adjourned the meeting at 9:56 AM.