

**Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments**

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You receive this newsletter because you are identified as person and/or agency who is considered important to the implementation of Metro COG projects and programs. If you wish to discontinue receiving this newsletter or you wish to begin receiving this newsletter electronically, please contact Joan Geyer at:

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**Stay Informed, Get Involved**

In addition to the Metro Connection, Metro COG offers additional ways for the public to keep informed about Metro COG's projects, meetings and other items. Public involvement is a very important and a beneficial asset to Metro COG's work. That's why we have the following additional resources to reach out to the public and keep citizens involved:

**Metro COG's Website**

Metro COG's website has a variety of resources ranging from a question/comment box, news/events, maps, reports/plans, meeting minutes and agendas, committee information, contact information and more. We encourage everyone to visit our website at: [www.fmmetrocog.org](http://www.fmmetrocog.org).

**Facebook**

Yes Metro COG has a facebook page which we encourage everyone to "like"! The page is simply titled *Metro COG*. Once you "Like" Metro COG's facebook page you can post comments and view updates posted by Metro COG.

**Committees**

Metro COG has five committees which serve to oversee the planning and operations of Metro COG. The committees meet at various times with most meeting in Metro COG's Conference Room. The public is welcome to attend any of the committee meetings. If you wish to regularly receive a meeting agenda packet to see items being discussed, please contact Joan Geyer at [geyer@fmmetrocog.org](mailto:geyer@fmmetrocog.org). You will then be added to our interested persons list where you

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The FM Metropolitan Council of Governments

vol 12 | issue 1 | 2013



**PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITY!**

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**In this issue:**

Progress Through Planning...  
The Tradition Continues.....1

Bicycle & Pedestrian Count Program.....2

Moorhead River Corridor.....2

 Food Systems.....2

Clay County State Aid Highway 18.....3

SE Main Ave, Moorhead.....3

Flashing Yellow Arrow.....3

Stay Informed, Get Involved.....4

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**Progress Through Planning... The Tradition Continues**

*By Wade Kline, Metro COG Executive Director*

Some years ago as I cleaned out the back library here at Metro COG I came across a binder of our old annual reports. The title of those reports was "Progress Through Planning". I always thought that was an accurate way to define Metro COG's role. As we look towards the future that phrase rings true when you understand the role Metro COG is aiming to play within your transportation system.

This spring we see the opening of the new Lindenwood/Gooseberry Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge. It was just a few years ago that Metro COG worked closely with the City of Fargo and the City of Moorhead to study the feasibility of how best to replace both the Lindenwood/Gooseberry Bridge and the Oak Grove/Memorial Bridge. One down one to go as the new Lindenwood/Gooseberry Bridge is open for business.

In 2013 Metro COG is working side by side with the City of Moorhead to more closely understand the options and opportunities along the Red River Corridor for reuse of once private property for meaningful public uses, such as new bicycle trails and recreational areas. The Moorhead River Corridor Study (discussed in more detail on page 2 of Metro Connection) will set in motion a long term implementation strategy for the City of Moorhead to reclaim its river front as it continues an aggressive flood protection program.

For the past year Metro COG, the City of Fargo, and the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) have been looking at the needs along the Main Avenue Corridor between 25th Street and the Red River. Later this spring, a final plan for the Main Avenue Corridor will be unveiled which will outline the alternatives for improving safety and mobility along Main Avenue. Through the work of Metro COG and its partners, it is hoped the Main Avenue Corridor can be fully rebuilt over the next eight (8) to ten (10) years.

Following Main Avenue from Fargo into Moorhead, Metro COG, the City of Moorhead, and the Minnesota Department

of Transportation (MnDOT) are nearly finished with an exhaustive analysis of Main Avenue, Center Avenue, and 8th Street. Through this effort Metro COG and its partners have put forth new and innovative ideas to improve transportation mobility through Moorhead. As well, Metro COG continues to broker discussions between Moorhead, MnDOT, and the City of Fargo to improve traffic signal coordination through the downtown area, seeking out alternatives by which signal operations can be better synchronized between both cities, and in relation to adjacent railroad tracks. The outcome of the work on Main Avenue, Center Avenue, and 8th Street is likely to be felt in the next several years. In fact, this summer MnDOT will go a long way to improve traffic conditions in Moorhead by upgrading and improving several existing traffic signals, ensuring better connectivity between Moorhead and MnDOT traffic signals.

Looking at the big picture, Metro COG will soon announce the update of the Metropolitan area's 30 Year Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP will serve to reestablish the area's overall transportation strategy, and will address new performance management requirements which are pending the implementation of the recent Federal Transportation authorization Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), which was signed into law in July of 2012. The LRTP will focus on key area-wide needs such as interstate traffic operations, Red River Bridge crossings, and improved multimodal transportation alternatives. Please stay tuned to the next edition of Metro Connection for opportunities to become involved in the update of the LRTP.

As we have in the past, Metro COG will continue to direct our efforts towards ensuring innovation and progress towards an improved transportation system throughout the Metropolitan area. If you ever have any questions or comments regarding our transportation system, please feel free to drop me a note.

will receive a meeting packet (electronic or mailed) prior to each meeting. Simply specify which committee(s) for which you are interested in receiving the meeting packet. Metro COG's committees are the following:

**MAT Board** - This committee coordinates MATBUS operations between the area cities and key stakeholders. The committee meets monthly in the Fargo City Hall's City Commission Room.

**Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee** - The bike & pedestrian committee meets quarterly in Metro COG's Conference Room and discusses items pertaining to bicycle and pedestrian-related improvements/issues.

**Metropolitan Transportation Initiative** - This committee meets on an as needed bases and discusses issues regarding human service public transportation.

**Transportation Technical Committee (TTC)** - The TTC meets the 2nd Thursday of each month in Metro COG's Conference Room. This committee discusses issues pertaining to area transportation.

**Metro COG Policy Board** - Metro COG's Policy Board meets monthly on the 3rd Thursday of each month in Metro COG's Conference Room. The Policy Board is comprised of elected officials from area jurisdictions and give final approval of items previously approved by the other committees.

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## Bicycle & Pedestrian Count Program

Metro COG will embark on a new bicycle and pedestrian count program beginning the fall of 2013. In the past Metro COG counted cyclists and pedestrians but the program was put on hold in 2009 to reevaluate the program.

As bicycle and pedestrian activity increases around the area it becomes increasingly important to acquire bicycle and pedestrian data which can provide insight into facility usage, mobility patterns and potential improvement areas. This data can be used for planning and justifying future bicycle and pedestrian facilities.



Most of the counts will occur once a year in September. Counts will take place on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday preferably with weather conditions favorable to bicycle and pedestrian activity. Counts may also be taken on a Saturday.

The counts will be taken along various facilities ranging from shared-use paths to bike lanes to sidewalks. Twenty-three (23) locations are proposed to be counted each year. This is a significant increase from the number of locations taken in previous years where roughly five (5) locations were counted per year. These count locations will mostly remain the same from year-to-year but may change as the area grows and as improvements are made. The counts will be taken throughout the metropolitan area.

Metro COG will use various resources to count the cyclists and pedestrians. Portable cameras will be placed at count locations where activity can be pre-recorded and counted later by Metro COG staff. City intersection traffic cameras will also be utilized at select intersections. Other locations will be manually counted by Metro COG staff and volunteers. Metro COG also plans to use six infrared trail counters that will be placed along specific shared-use paths and sidewalks around the area. The infrared counters count by detecting the body heat of a passing user. One major benefit of the infrared counters is that they have the capability of counting pedestrians and cyclists year-round. Acquiring counts year-round will provide Metro COG with information about facility usage at various times of the day, various times of the year, and usage during various weather conditions.

The counts will not only be used by Metro COG and area officials, but will also be used on a national scale in analyzing bicycle and pedestrian trends. More information on count locations can be found by visiting Metro COG's website ([fmmetrocog.org](http://fmmetrocog.org)) and clicking on the News & Events link.

## Moorhead River Corridor Study

In January Metro COG and the City of Moorhead completed several early public input efforts to support the development of Phase I of the River Corridor Study. This included a public input meeting, a community-wide needs survey, and work with the Red River Citizens Advisory Committee (appointed by the City Council in late 2012).

In general, public comments regarding the River Corridor shared one common theme, and that was the River Corridor should be developed as a public resource open for year around activities, with consideration for adjacent private property. It was generally recognized that an expanded and continuous multi-use trail network for biking, walking, skiing and other non-motorized outdoor activities would benefit the City of Moorhead. There appeared clear public support for the development of easements that would help to expand trails further where private property may hinder a continuous trail system. The clear consensus among comments received from the public supported the development of facilities that can be used year round, including the development of varying types of parks and open space amenities. There appeared clear support for a nearly continuous greenway which could include specialized sports facilities as well as amenities for pedestrian, bicycle, and ski trails.

Metro COG and the City of Moorhead are currently completing the River Corridor Needs and Issues Report which will conclude Phase I, and will present a list of more opportunities to be explored in detail over the spring and early summer of 2013. It is anticipated that a full version of the Needs and Issues Report will be ready for public review and presentation to the City Council in late March. Metro COG and the City of Moorhead anticipate at least two (2) additional public input meetings on the River Corridor Study between July and end of 2013. Stay tuned to [www.fmmetrocog.org](http://www.fmmetrocog.org) for the latest on the Moorhead River Corridor Study.

## Food Systems Study

Metro COG is developing the Metropolitan Food Systems Plan in cooperation with the Cass Clay Food Systems Initiative (CCFSI). The development of the Food Systems Plan is a continuation of work started by CCFSI in 2010 to increase access to and production of healthy and locally grown food. In order to support the development of the Metropolitan Food Systems Plan, Metro COG will gather input from a range of interested persons and stakeholders from various sectors of the local community. Members of the public and other interested persons are invited to a public meeting as follows to provide input into development of the Metropolitan Food Systems Plan:

**Tuesday March 19, 2013**  
**Fargo Public Library, Community Room**  
**102 3rd St North, Fargo**  
**5:30 pm to 7:00 pm**

The Metropolitan Food Systems Plan will identify strategies to improve the production, sales, distribution, and consumption of healthy and locally grown foods within the Fargo-Moorhead

Metropolitan area. The Metropolitan Food Systems Plan will put forward policy considerations to increase access to safe, nutritious, and affordable foods by strengthening all aspects of the local food system. More information regarding the Metropolitan Food Systems Plan is available at Metro COG's website at [www.fmmetrocog.org](http://www.fmmetrocog.org).

## Clay County State Aid Highway 18

Metro COG is assisting Clay County with turn lane analysis on Clay County State Aid Highway 18 (CSAH 18) between 11th St N (CSAH 3) and one mile east of CSAH 11. Analysis is being performed to determine if turn lanes are warranted at five intersections on CSAH 18. Turn lane analysis takes into account roadway sight distance, truck traffic, crash history, current and projected traffic, and other detailed information. Once the analysis is complete, Metro COG will recommend to Clay County which turn lanes should be installed in the upcoming construction of CSAH 18.

CSAH 18 is scheduled for construction in 2014 and 2015. The construction in 2014 will consist of removing the existing roadway surface, re-grading the roadway base and ditch slopes, and temporarily surfacing the roadway with gravel. The construction in 2015 will consist of surfacing the roadway with concrete.

## SE Main Avenue, Moorhead

Metro COG is assisting the City of Moorhead with traffic analysis for a project that is scheduled for construction in 2014 along SE Main Avenue in Moorhead. The project limits are from Oak Way to the north ramp of I-94. The traffic analysis will consist of analyzing roadway cross sections, intersection configurations, signal timings, traffic conditions, crash data, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, future transit plans, and more. Metro COG will also develop a low-cost option to improve aesthetics along the corridor.

Once the traffic analysis is complete, recommendations will be included in the project memorandum. The project memorandum will serve as the required environmental document for the project. The traffic analysis is anticipated to be complete by May of 2013 with the project memorandum expected to be complete in the summer of 2013.

Construction will begin in 2014 and will consist of milling and overlaying the roadway surface with new asphalt pavement and will include the possibility for traffic signal, bicycle and pedestrian, and landscaping improvements. Construction is anticipated to be complete by the fall of 2014.

## Flashing Yellow Arrow

Metro COG has begun analyzing intersections around the metro area that could benefit from the installation of flashing yellow left-turn arrows. The flashing yellow arrow could be installed at existing signalized intersections and could replace some five-section and

three-section signal heads currently used for signaling left turn lanes. The flashing yellow arrow would be displayed on a four-section signal head.

The use of flashing yellow arrows at signalized intersections is growing in popularity for many jurisdictions around the country because they have been shown to reduce driver error and enhance intersection safety when used in place of a solid circular green indicator. They can reduce delay for left turn movements when used in-place of a protected-only left turn signal and the flashing yellow arrow provides traffic engineers with more flexibility to handle variations in traffic conditions.

Similar to the current three-section signal heads used for protected left turn movements, the flashing yellow arrow would be displayed on a four-section signal head. The only difference from the three-section signal head is that the flashing yellow arrow would be added. Therefore the new signal head has the capability to display a solid green arrow, a flashing yellow arrow, a solid yellow arrow, and a solid red arrow. When flashing yellow arrows are displayed, they signal to drivers that they can turn left however they need to yield to oncoming traffic.

Metro COG is studying which intersections in the metro area could benefit from the use of the flashing yellow arrow by looking at the required costs at each intersection, the safety benefits, and the impacts/benefits to traffic.

Flashing yellow arrows have been well favored by the public where they have been implemented. The intuitive nature of a flashing yellow arrow portraying caution to drivers when turning has made the implementation process safe and smooth in many areas. Nevertheless, Metro COG will study ways of educating the public to make the implementation of the new traffic control device as safe and smooth as possible.



Metro COG is working closely with the local traffic operators to analyze the costs and benefits of implementing the flashing yellow arrow. Metro COG is using the Traffic Operations Working Group as the study review committee to help guide this research document to completion. Once a final list of intersections has been developed, Metro COG will recommend the implementation of the flashing yellow arrow to applicable jurisdictions. Metro COG plans to have this technical memorandum finalized and approved by September of 2013.

The use of flashing yellow arrows at intersections can be found in many jurisdictions in Minnesota including one intersection in Moorhead – the intersection of 12th Ave S and 20th St.