

**85th Meeting of the
Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board
February 3, 2021
Virtual Meeting**

Members Present:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Brian Arett, Valley Senior Services
Kevin Hanson, Chair
Steve Lindaas, Moorhead City Council
Brad Olson, West Fargo City Commission
Larry Seljevold, Moorhead City Council
Brit Stevens, NDSU
Teresa Stolfus, M|State
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Annie Wood, MSUM

Members Absent:

Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission
Paul Grindeland, Valley Senior Services
Jackie Maahs, Concordia College

Others Present:

Lisa Bode, City of Moorhead
Julie Bommelman, City of Fargo
Shaun Crowell, City of Fargo
Taaren Haak, City of Moorhead
Michael Maddox, FM Metro COG
Matthew Peterson, City of Fargo
Edward Pearl, First Transit
Jordan Smith, City of Moorhead
Lori Van Beek, City of Moorhead

1. Call to Order and Introductions

a. Larry Seljevold, Moorhead City Council

Chair Hanson called the meeting to order and introduced Larry Seljevold as a new Moorhead City Council Member. A quorum was present.

2. Action Items

a. November 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Olson and seconded by Mr. Seljevold. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

b. Federal Grant Application for 2021 Capital (Moorhead)

Ms. Van Beek began by giving a brief overview of the federal funding sources for transit capital projects in Moorhead. Along with federal grants received as an urban area under Section 5307, the state of Minnesota selects projects that are funded with their federal pass-through funds. As

part of this process, the City of Moorhead is planning a number of projects. Some of these projects include the replacement of a large transit bus, two paratransit buses and a bus shelter.

A motion to approve the City of Moorhead's federal grant application was put forward by Ms. Arett and seconded by Mr. Lindaas. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

c. Federal Grant Application for 2021 Capital (Fargo)

In a similar process as outlined by Ms. Van Beek in action item 2.b., Ms. Bommelman explained what the City of Fargo plans to include in their application for federal grants. Funds will be used for maintenance, ADA costs, planning assistance and operating assistance. Unlike the City of Moorhead, there are no major capital investments in this particular application however a public hearing is still required.

A motion to approve the City of Fargo's federal grant application was put forward by Mr. Strand and seconded by Mr. Lindaas. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

d. Award of LED Lighting Project for Metro Transit Garage

Mr. Smith explained that both the City of Fargo and Moorhead were allocated grant money for a lighting upgrade at the Metro Transit Garage. The project was put out to bid, with Superior Electric Fargo placing the lowest bid. Mr. Smith expressed that investment in this project will dramatically save energy and costs in the long term.

A motion to recommend to the Fargo City Commission and the Moorhead City Council the award of the LED Lighting Project for Metro Transit Garage was put forward by Mr. Olson and seconded by Mr. Lindaas. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

e. Annual List of Free, Reduced, Promotional and Pilot Fares

As is presented to the board at the beginning every year, Ms. Haak explained that the attached list contains all promotional fares that deviate from the normal fare structure. This includes internal promotions run by the City as well as those in partnership with local community events.

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

3. Informational Items

a. Ground Transportation Center Project Update

Ms. Bommelman gave an overview of the GTC project history from the initial study period to funding. There were some unexpected issues during the renovation process but the budget was ultimately met. The interior renovation is now complete with occupancy late last year. The exterior renovation phase of the project will move forward and the same consultant (KLJ) was hired. Exterior renovations will commence this Spring. Renovations will include the replacement of the entire roof and fascia, deck improvements, upgraded canopies over the deck area and re-pouring concrete in pedestrian areas. Ms. Bommelman went through the numbers of the budget and the estimated costs. This phase of the project is expected to be completed by early Fall 2021 and, depending on the status of COVID-19, there will be an open house.

Mr. Lindaas asked about disruptions to bus motion at the site during exterior renovations. In reply, Ms. Bommelman explained that buses will use 4th Street as an access point when needed. The contractors will work on Sundays, which means regular operations at the GTC will be able to continue despite the renovations.

Mr. Hanson asked about comments received from the riders and GTC staff in regards to the interior renovations. Ms. Bommelman has said feedback has been positive, particularly from staff who love the more collaborative working environment. Mr. Peterson added that having the fixed route dispatchers and paratransit reservationists in the same space has been successful. Separating radio communications from those responding to passenger phone calls has also successfully mitigated noise issues and improved concentration. Dispatch staff have been very adaptable to change.

b. COVID-19 Update on Fares

Ms. Van Beek reminded everyone that fares have been suspended during the pandemic. This suspension is due to expire at the end of March. New fareboxes are being prepared in time for April 1.

Mr. Strand expressed his wish for transit to continue fare-free, but understands it's not realistic. Ms. Bommelman sympathized with Mr. Strand's wishes and explained that going fare-free has been possible due to federal CARES Act funding. She also said she would leave the door open to consider a fare-free transit system in the future.

c. COVID-19 Update on Vehicle Improvements

Mr. Smith outlined some of the projects for vehicle improvements in light of COVID-19. Completed projects include, air and surface purification system installation in every vehicle, driver barriers in some TapRide and paratransit vehicles and installation of hand sanitizer dispensers. Some driver barriers for fixed route buses are still yet to be installed but are expected to be in within the next two weeks.

d. 2021 Fuel Bids

The City of Fargo Transit and Public Works Department goes out for bid twice a year for fuel. Mr. Smith informed that in January, the department awarded for the third and fourth quarter of 2021. The winning bid will bring the total price for diesel well under last year's costs. Mr. Smith also added that putting out a bid for fuel has always meant significant savings.

Following a comment from Mr. Hanson about the low cost, Mr. Smith acknowledged that historically this is some of the cheapest per gallon prices the department has seen.

e. 2020 Incidents Report

Mr. Peterson expressed that this information will be covered in informational item 3.g., prompting Chair Hanson to move on.

f. 2020 Achievements Report

An attachment was handed out with a list of achievements from 2020, grouped by category. Ms. Van Beek outlined the list. Some of these achievements included, buying a new-fare collection system expanded to paratransit, a green light priority system, LED lighting and a faster web-based maintenance system at the Metro Transit Garage, going fare-free and minor route

changes due to the pandemic, GTC renovations, new shelters, completing a transit authority study and going out to bid for driver services which led to the successful bid from First Transit.

g. 2020 Annual Operations Report

Mr. Peterson went through a presentation of the 2020 Annual Operations Report. Due to COVID-19, ridership in 2020 was almost 30% lower than in the year previous. Ridership in Fargo fell more significantly than Moorhead, largely due to the colleges resuming classes virtually. Ridership towards the end of the year steadily increased, thanks in part to rides being fare-free. Routes that typically serve college students were the worst performing. Although numbers for fixed-route service in Fargo and paratransit across the region were down, TapRide for the industrial park did see a significant increase in ridership. Furthermore, Routes 3 and 5 in Moorhead slightly increased in ridership. By demographic, adult ridership increased while college-aged, elderly, disabled and child ridership all dropped. There was little change in vehicle revenue hours, with the exception of low numbers for paratransit. There was a slight decrease in revenue hours in Fargo largely due to suspending 15-minute service for Route 15. Social media traffic was down in 2020 as there wasn't much advertising for events and promotions throughout the year. Calls to MATBUS did increase however, mostly due to people asking questions about service during the pandemic. Mr. Peterson then summarized the tables that tallied the number of complaints, reported incidents, other feedback items, missed trips, system failures and collisions. The results were consistent with expectations and collision statistics were particularly promising.

Ms. Van Beek gave an overview of college ridership in 2020. Since transit was fare-free for most of the year, college students have not been showing their student ID cards to board. This means that the numbers of college students counted relied on bus drivers noting ridership, mainly by college campuses. Therefore, college ridership numbers in 2020 are not entirely accurate.

Mr. Hanson had a question about access to vaccination sites. He asked whether there were any increased demands for rides, questions or specific requests. Mr. Peterson said he hadn't heard anything. Ms. Van Beek mentioned that Clay County bus drivers will be vaccinated in the next week or so.

h. Interesting Transit Articles

Ms. Van Beek drew the board members attention to some transit articles that were shared with them and encouraged people to view if interested.

4. Other Business

Hearing no other business, Mr. Hanson adjourned the meeting at 8:57 AM.