

**14th Meeting of the
MATBUS Coordination Committee
December 17, 2025 – 9:00 AM
Metro COG Conference Room/Zoom**

Members Present:

Deb White, Moorhead City Council, Chair
Julie Bommelman, Fargo Transit Director
Susan Thompson, Fargo Finance Director
Sebastian McDougall, 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
Brit Stevens, NDSU Transportation Manager
Ben Griffith, Metro COG Executive Director

Members Absent:

Denise Kolpack, Fargo City Commission
John Strand, Fargo City Commission

Others Present:

Adam Altenburg, Metro COG
Jeff Anderson, The Arc of Cass County
Brenda Derrig, City of Fargo
Cindy Girdner, Valley Senior Services
Luke Grittner, MATBUS
Taaren Haak, MATBUS
Jean Henning, City of Fargo
Aiden Jung, Metro COG
Nicole Lipinoga, Metro COG
Linda Onstad, Citizen
Wyatt Papenfuss, City of Fargo
Megan Zahradka, City of Moorhead
Cole Swingen, MATBUS

1a. Approve Order and Contents of the Agenda

A motion to approve the order and contents of the agenda was made by Ms. Bommelman and seconded by Mr. McDougall. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from November 19, 2025

A motion to approve the minutes for the November 2025 regular meeting was made by Mr. Mastera and seconded by Mr. Griffith. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

Mr. Stevens arrived at 9:03 AM.

2. Public Comment Period

Linda Onstad was present and spoke during the meeting. She expressed concerns about ongoing safety issues, including incidents involving driver assaults and rider safety. She further stated that she does not believe free bus passes should be distributed to businesses across the metro area.

3a. 2027 Service Plan and Budget Timeline

Mr. Swingen provided an overview of the proposed 2027 budget timeline, highlighting key deadlines MATBUS aims to meet throughout the budgeting process.

Ms. Flannagan asked how the proposed schedule aligns with the City of Fargo's budgeting timeline. Ms. Thompson responded that the timeline appears aggressive, noting that staffing represents one of the largest expenses and that Fargo's cost-of-living adjustments are typically not finalized until later in the year. She suggested that shifting preliminary budget discussions to April or May would better align the two timelines.

Chair White emphasized the importance of maintaining open and proactive communication regarding budgets to ensure MATBUS is aware of any potential constraints as early as possible.

Mr. Mastera added that MATBUS is primarily seeking direction from the participating jurisdictions regarding when budget materials should be prepared and submitted. Ms. Thompson stated that a June 1 deadline appears reasonable for completing a preliminary budget. Mr. Swingen asked whether monthly updates on the budget process would be beneficial to the committee. Mr. Mastera responded that such updates would be helpful only if MATBUS determines they are necessary.

3b. Bus Stop SMS/IVR Usage Update

Mr. Swingen provided an overview of the new SMS/IVR pilot program and its usage. He reported that since implementation on November 17, 2025, the program has gained 51 subscribers. To date, 92 messages have been sent to users' phones, 198 messages have been sent from the SMS system, and 46 calls have been received. In response to a question from Ms. Thompson regarding program costs, Mr. Swingen stated that the program is a year-long subscription costing approximately \$1,400 annually, with an additional one-time setup fee of approximately \$1,000. He also noted that new informational signs are currently installed at 20 of the busiest stops throughout the metro.

Ms. Thompson asked whether MATBUS has received any rider feedback on the service. Mr. Swingen responded that limited feedback has been received to date but that MATBUS may distribute a survey in the coming months to gather rider input.

Chair White noted that the program is currently operating well below its subscription capacity and suggested that expanding the service could help generate a more robust dataset to evaluate rider interest and satisfaction.

3c. Safety and Security Report and Security Follow Up

Mr. Swingen provided an overview of proposed initiatives to improve safety and security within the MATBUS system. He explained that MATBUS is currently evaluating two options: vehicle signage for all buses and body-worn cameras. After reviewing both options, staff believe body-worn cameras may not be cost-effective, as they would primarily face the windshield and may not capture interactions occurring behind the driver.

Ms. Thompson asked whether the reported incidents represent all occurrences. Mr. Swingen clarified that he compiles only incidents requiring security involvement or assistance from the Fargo Police Department. Ms. Bommelman noted that providing a summary of non-security or non-police incidents could help present a more complete picture.

Chair White asked whether the vehicle signage decals are budgeted for 2026 or 2027. Mr. Swingen responded that purchase and installation could likely be completed within a couple of weeks, as the decals only need to be ordered and applied.

Mr. Swingen also provided an update on the new security company, noting improvements in de-escalation practices and a reduced reliance on Fargo Police Department involvement. He highlighted additional driver training that has contributed to improved conflict management. In response to a question from Mr. Rietz regarding the identification of high-incident areas, Mr. Swingen agreed that targeting problem locations would be beneficial but emphasized that the ability to expand security presence depends on available budget.

Chair White asked whether drivers have noticed a change in incident frequency. Mr. Swingen reported that fewer incidents have recently been brought to his attention. He also noted that some states classify assaulting a bus driver as a felony and suggested that North Dakota and Minnesota could consider similar legislation.

Ms. Bommelman added that MATBUS maintains a comprehensive list of individuals who have been trespassed, which is accessible to all drivers. She acknowledged, however, that it can be challenging for drivers to remember all individuals on the list.

4. Other Business

No additional business was brought before the committee.

Chair White adjourned the meeting at 9:46 AM.