

98th Meeting of the Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board Feb. 7, 2024 – 8:00 AM

Fargo Commission Chambers with Virtual Option

Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Kevin Hanson, Chair
Denise Kolpack, Fargo City Commission
Brad Olson, West Fargo City Commission
Deb White, Moorhead City Council
Amber Borah, Dilworth City Council
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Scott Ebsen, M | State
Jean Hollaar, MSUM
Sarah Orr, Concordia College

Members Absent:

Paul Grindeland, Valley Senior Services
Brit Stevens, NDSU
Ryan Nelson, Moorhead City Council

Others Present:

Julie Bommelman, City of Fargo
Adam Altenburg, FM Metro COG
Matthew Pinotti, First Transit
Jordan Smith, City of Moorhead
Lori Van Beek, City of Moorhead
Luke Grittner, City of Fargo
Taaren Haak, City of Moorhead
Shaun Crowell, City of Fargo
Cole Swingen, City of Fargo
Ben Griffith, FM Metro GOC
Lisa Bode, City of Moorhead

1. Call to Order and Introductions

2. Action Items:

- a. A quorum was not present. November 15, 2023 Meeting Minutes will be moved to the next meeting.
- b. During additional business, it was determined that a quorum was present. A motion to approve the November 15, 2023 minutes was made by Mr. Strand and seconded by Ms. Kolpack. Motioned was approved.

3. Informational Items:

- a. Update on Transit Reorganization Study and Discussion on Concept of 2025 proposed Organizational Chart – Julie Bommelman
 - i. KLJ will give a more in-depth presentation at the next MAT Coordinating Board meeting in March
 - ii. Fargo has been approved as the designated recipient for Federal Grant Funds by North Dakota Governor.
 - iii. Programming on coordination of Fargo-Moorhead financial records and cost/revenue allocation between the jurisdictions.
 - iv. Analysis and recommendations on staff framework for the large UZA designation requires additional planning activities, civil rights requirements, and grant administration.
 - v. Transit staff changes can incrementally unfold in 2024, with most notable changes becoming effective in 2025:
 1. Moorhead transit manager responsibilities shared across organization
 2. Current Moorhead staff retained
 3. Contract drivers and operations staff transition to Fargo employees
 4. Position reclassification evaluation
 - vi. 2025 Proposed Organizational Chart.

Mr. Strand asked how many people and what are the impacts and timing of drivers becoming City of Fargo Staff? Ms. Bommelman said that fixed route and paratransit drivers would feed into service coordinator positions, similar to equipment operators in Public Works.

Mr. Olson commented on noticing a slow down of action from NDDOT. He said if MATBUS receives any slowdown or push back from DOT to please let him know.

Mr. Hanson asked about Next steps. Bommelman replied that they are currently working on job descriptions and getting organized. They are finalizing the Joint Powers Agreement between Fargo and Moorhead. They are also working on creating a standardized process with the four local colleges/universities.

- b. 2023 Achievements – Lori Van Beek & Julie Bommelman
 - i. Participated in procurement for replacement of large buses as part of Duluth Consortium. 10 buses proceeded to build in January 2024
 - ii. 1 – Moorhead, 9 – Fargo
 - iii. Awarded bid for replacement of two paratransit buses for Moorhead (units 1231 & 1322); delivery delayed from 2022 to April 2024 due to Ford Chassis availability
 - iv. Received replacement shop truck, awaiting accessories to be installed in 2024
 - v. Replaced water heater at Metro Transit Garage

- vi. Received 4 replacement paratransit vehicles that were ordered in 2019 and 2021
- vii. Fares:
 - 1. Approved increase in Connect card replacement fee from \$5 to \$10 effective January 1, 2024
- viii. Fargo route & Service Changes
 - 1. Jan. 9, 2023 Implemented minor route changes to route 15, 18, 20, & 32 to improve consistency and on-time performance
 - a. Route 15 was reduced by .54 miles, making the route 2 minutes shorter
 - b. Route 18 was reduced by 3.6 miles, making it 8 minutes shorter
 - c. Route 20 was reduced by 1.06 miles, making in 10 minutes shorter
 - d. Route 32 was adjusted to travel on different roads near university Village Shelter to avoid issues with snow during winter
 - 2. March 6, 2023: replaced Tapride with MATBUS On-Demand powered by TramsLocx
 - 3. July 2023: Added one additional vehicle to Route 11 & 14 to increase frequency
 - 4. August 2023: Temporarily suspended Route 36 and added an additional vehicle to Route 13 to increase frequency to every 30 minutes and to provide additional service to the northern [art of Fargo
 - 5. October 2023: Eliminated Osgood portion of Route 18 to further increase on-time performance. Reduced the route's overall time by approximately 3 minutes.
- ix. Updated Safety Plan in August 2023
- x. 2024 negotiated one-year contract with TransDev
 - 1. Includes increase to driver wages and pay differential for night & weekend shift
- xi. Completed procurement with state of ND for replacement of fixed-route CAD AVA/AVL software and paratransit dispatch software

Ms. Bommelman added that all staff participated in Narcan training and that Narcan kits are now on all busses.

Mr. Strand asked how the Cass co. jail is serviced. Ms. Bommelman said that Route 20 drives by the jail. Route 20 does not have high ridership. Mr. Strand asked if bus education is passed on to inmates. Mr. Swingen said that the jail does purchase single-ride tickets, but that he will reach out to the jail to see if they can provide any training. Ms. Van Beek said she will offer the jail access to their travel trainer work shop.

- c. 2024 Goals - Lori Van Beek & Julie Bommelman
 - i. Fill driver vacancies & reinstate full service through pay differentials targeted on weekend and evening shifts

- ii. Implement recommendations of the Transit Reorganization Study
 - iii. Complete construction of the Dilworth Walk=mart Transit Hub
 - iv. Replace Downtown Moorhead shelters on Center Ave.
 - v. Replace Shelter concrete for improved accessibility at up to six locations
 - vi. Implement new paratransit scheduling software
 - vii. Implement new fixed-route CAD AVA/AV: software, including live tracking and Google Transit
 - viii. Implement new technology for pre-trip and post-trip vehicle inspections
 - ix. Request qualifications for engineering and architectural services
 - x. Continue discussions to replace and relocate the West Acres Transit Hub
 - xi. Continue Major improvements to the Metro Transit Garage and Ground Transportation Center
 - xii. Continue to increase ridership and return full service
- d. Update on Driver Shortage – Matt Pinotti, TransDev General Manager
- i. As of January 7, 2024:
 1. 66 drivers employed, including 4 people on leave of absence
 2. 59 drivers available for service, with 3 daily call-offs and 4 on leave
 - ii. As of February 1, 2024:
 1. 77 drivers employed, 67 available for service
 - iii. Results from Pay increase implemented for 2024:
 1. Increase of 8 new drivers in service since January
 2. Applicant flow has increased
 3. Average 6-7 drivers in classroom every other week (Previously 2-3)
 4. Average training takes 4-5 weeks to complete for revenue service
- e. Vehicle Replacement Updates – Jordan Smith
- i. MATBUS received 3 ten-passenger paratransit vehicles. These offer better fuel milage and are easier to drive than other paratransit vehicles in the fleet.

Mr. Strand asked what they do to brand/wrap these new vehicles? Smith said that these vehicles will be labeled with the blue, paratransit logo, but they will continue to market and provide advertising opportunities on fixed route vehicles.

Mr. Hanson asked if they are still seeing issues and delays with the supply chain? Mr. Smith said they are still seeing some, however, it is getting better.

- f. Marketing Strategy for 2024 – Taaren Haak & Luke Grittner
 - i. Education
 - 1. Utilize a series of short-form videos on educational topics such as:
 - a. The benefits of using the connect app
 - b. Rider courtesy campaign
 - c. Winter riding tips
 - d. How to use the bike rack
 - 2. Assess MATBUS.com to focus on ease of use and develop FAQs
 - 3. Maintain digital marketing presence consistently throughout the year
 - 4. Engage young riders; feature bus wrap design competition
 - 5. Continue to develop new social media platforms – Instagram & TikTok
 - 6. New MATBUS connect promotion to highlight mobile ticketing
 - ii. LinkFM Partnership Events:
 - 1. Frostival at Hjemkomst
 - 2. Celtic Festival
 - 3. Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival
 - 4. Downtown Street Fair
 - 5. Trollwood Mainstage Musical (Bluestem)
 - 6. Pangea: Cultivate Our Cultures
 - iii. Community Partnership Events:
 - 1. Midwest Kid Fest
 - 2. Fargo Police Community Picnic
 - 3. Stuff the Bus – Midwest Radio
 - 4. Red River Market
 - 5. Public Libraries – Fargo, Moorhead, West Fargo
 - 6. Party for the Planet – Red River Zoo
 - 7. Homeless Veterans' Stand Down
 - 8. College Orientations
 - 9. Holiday Lights Parade

Ms. White asked that Pride in the Park be considered for Community Events. She added that transporting students from college campuses to the Pride event at Bluestem may be a win-win. Ms. Haak noted that certain requirements have to be met when considering which services qualify for LinkFM, as they cannot be considered “charter services”.

- g. Mobility Management Report / Paratransit Service Demand – Shaun Crowell
 - i. In 2023, 256 paratransit applications were approved. (268 applications in 2022)
 - 1. Fargo 141
 - 2. Moorhead 57
 - 3. West Fargo 27
 - 4. Dilworth 11
 - 5. Visitor / Temporary 20

- ii. 24 people attended the Travel Training Workshop in 2023
 1. Attendees from: Southeast Human Services, Center, CAPLP, Restore, Community Options, Freedom Through Discovery, CCRI, Metro COG, Lighthouse Recovery Services, SENDCAA)
 2. The workshop provides hands-on training and assistance from Human Service Professionals to empower their clients with independence by learning about MATBUS
 3. Attendees can request a 10-ride card to help in training clients on the MATBUS fixed-route system. They also receive an instructor card to ride free when training their clients.

h. 2023 Operations Report – Cole Swingen & Lori Van Beek
Swingen reported ridership data for Fargo as follows:

- Route 11 – 14.06%
- Route 13 + 12.91%
- Route 14 – 4.055%
- Route 15 +1.19%
- Route 16 – 5.85%
- Route 17 + 2.04%
- Route 18 + 7.04%
- Route 20 + 8.38%
- Route 24 + 18.75%
- Link FM + 68.42%
- Industrial Park On-Demand – 44.68%
- Paratransit + 3.93%
- Route 31 + 4.30%
- Route 32 – 12.53%
- Route 33 + 23.27%
- Route 34 + 59.14%
- Route 36 - -53.69%
- NDSU on-Demand – 37.31%
- NDSU + 8.42%
- MSUM – 4.91%
- Concordia + 17.88%
- M|State + 61.80%
- NDSCS – 13.14%

Van Beek reported ridership data for Moorhead as follows:

- Route 1 + 19.24%
- Route 2 – 2.00%
- Route 3 + 12.00%
- Route 4 + 7.53%
- Route 5 + 13.21%
- Route 6 + 4.28%
- Route 9 + 48.76%
- Mhd. Senior Ride + 5.45%

Overall, Ridership is up 5.10% (3.46% in Fargo, 9.03% in Moorhead)

Ms. White asked, if now that progress is being made with the driver shortage, are you working to reinstate services? Ms. Van Beek said they are currently working to stabilize the drivers.

4. Other Business

Mr. Strad asked if there has been any discussion with the future of transit with the Airport, since they plan to increase the terminal size and add a parking ramp. Ms. Bommelman said that there has been no communication with the Airport, but they would be happy to reach out and begin that conversation. Mr. Strand said he would be happy to help begin the conversation.

Hearing no other business, the meeting was adjourned by Chair Hanson.