



**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 Kate Wurtzler at:

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**Welcome and Introduction of David Burns**

My name is David Burns, and I am delighted to be joining the Metro COG team as the new Principal Planner and GIS Coordinator. Originally from Rochester, MN, I received my B.A. in Geography from the University of Minnesota Duluth and my M.A. (also in Geography) from Miami University. After spending the previous eight years in Florida, I am extremely excited to return to my Midwestern roots and become entrenched in the vibrant Fargo-Moorhead community.

During my time in Florida, I worked as both an employee and consultant for the Florida Department of Transportation. I began my career in the GIS/CADD Services section of the Department, where I focused primarily on converting the CADD-based County Highway Map series into a spatially intelligent GIS environment. My passion, however, was in the field of planning, and I soon had the opportunity to fulfill this passion as a Transportation Planner within FDOT's Systems Planning Office. In this role I gained valuable experience aiding in the development the Department's 10-year Work Program, Cost Feasible, and 40-year Unfunded Needs Plans. As a consultant with Cambridge Systematics, my primary task

was supporting FDOT's Office of Policy Planning in a state-wide, multi-agency effort to plan the major transportation corridors most critical to Florida's economic competitiveness and quality of life over the next 50 years.

While I have enjoyed the perks of living in Florida – sunshine, warm weather, and proximity to the Gulf of Mexico and its beaches – my heart remained in the Midwest. My wife, who is also originally from Minnesota, is equally excited to return to the area and introduce our 2 young daughters to some of the winter activities we remember so fondly. The greatest draw for me, however, is the opportunity to work with the fantastic staff and planning partners of the Metro COG in a position that so closely unites my professional experience. I am very much looking forward to growing within both the organization and local planning community, and am dedicated to helping the Fargo-Moorhead area continue to develop in a manner that best meets the shared vision of residents and partners within the region. I look forward to meeting and working with you all!



**Welcome Letter from our New Executive Director**

Hello to the Metro COG region. My name is Bill Christian and it is my privilege to be the new Metro COG Executive Director. Little did I know that when I was hired as the Senior Transportation Planner in January that I would be afforded the opportunity to serve as Executive Director. It is the crowning achievement of an over 27 year career as a MPO Transportation Planner and Manager.

I started my planning career in Omaha, Nebraska in 1987 after my four-year enlistment with the United States Air Force. I spent 22 years in Omaha before moving to Wichita, Kansas where I was a MPO planner and planning manager. It is my desire to close out my planning career here at Metro COG after a long, productive tenure. I can actually say with few reservations that I have enjoyed my career field and will continue to do so. Who would not want to work for a regional planning agency?

I hold a Bachelors degree from Indiana State University as well as a Masters degree from the University of Nebraska. I also have the honorary title of Admiral in the Nebraska Navy. I have jumped out of a perfectly good airplane twice and survived to tell the tale. The most important thing in my life, however, is my family.

My wife Judy is semi-retired after over 26 years at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska. We are proud parents of two daughters and have two grandchildren. My oldest daughter Allysia is an elementary school teacher and is married to my son-in-law Keagan who is currently serving in the Air Force. They are the parents of our two, dare I say, most handsome grandsons ever, Asheron and Kieran. My youngest daughter Myriah is a recent graduate of the University of Nebraska and is currently working in marketing in the Chicago area.

I am fortunate to have inherited from Wade Kline, former Executive Director, a well-trained staff and a top-notch organization. It is my desire to continue the quality that is expected from the agency and to grow and adapt with the rapid change taking place in the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area. I am very much looking forward to working for, and with, the Metro COG Policy Board, staff and our planning partners. Together we can all make a difference.

William A. Christian  
Executive Director



Pictured left to right:  
Kate Wurtzler, David Burns, Dan Farnsworth, Adam Altenburg and Bill Christian



**PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITY!**

Look for this symbol

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**Policy Board**

**2014 Officers**

- Frank Gross.....Chair  
*Clay County*
- Julie Nash.....Vice Chair  
*Dilworth*

**Metro COG Staff:**

- Adam Altenburg.....Community and Transp. Analyst
- David Burns.....GIS Coordinator/Principal Planner
- William A. Christian.....Executive Director
- Dan Farnsworth.....Transp. Planner
- Kate Wurtzler.....Executive Secretary

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## Current Projects & Events

### Heartland Trail

The Heartland Trail is a paved shared use path that currently extends from Park Rapids, MN to Cass Lake, MN (49 miles). Constructed on a former railroad corridor, the Heartland Trail was one of the first rails-to-trails projects in the country. For many reasons the trail is a popular recreational destination, especially during the summer months.

In 2006 the Minnesota legislature authorized the extension of the trail from Park Rapids to Moorhead. Since the authorization, steps have been taken to someday make the extension of the trail a reality. In 2011 the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) completed the Heartland State Trail Extension Park Rapids to Moorhead Master Plan. This document looks at potential corridors for trail alignment, at destinations and attractions along the future route, and more.

Since the beginning of 2014 Metro COG has been working with leaders in Clay County to help progress efforts of planning the trail's extension through Clay County. In May of 2014 the Clay County Heartland Trail Task Force was formed to guide the planning of the trail through Clay County. Leaders in Becker County have also been regularly meeting to help progress the planning of the trail through Becker County.

Progress is being made on the trail's extension efforts. In 2013 a new traffic signal was installed on US Highway 10 in the City of Hawley with accommodations for the potential crossing of the Heartland Trail at that location. This year a tunnel under US Highway 10 just east of Detroit Lakes was constructed which will be used by the future Heartland Trail. Today the City of Detroit Lakes is in the process of constructing shared use paths within the city that would serve as a portion of the

Heartland Trail. The State of Minnesota has been a key player in helping fund the trail's extension. This year the Minnesota legislature approved \$2,684,600 for design and development of the Heartland Trail from Detroit Lakes to Frazee and to predesign the trail between Moorhead and Hawley.

The Clay County Heartland Trail Task Force has been meeting nearly every month and is currently evaluating trail alignment alternatives. The Task Force hopes to have a proposed trail alignment determined by the end of November with public input meetings occurring this winter. For more information on the Heartland Trail, you can contact Dan Farnsworth at [Farnsworth@fmmetrocog.org](mailto:Farnsworth@fmmetrocog.org) or at 701-232-3242 ex 35.



### Public Input Opportunity

### MnDOT State Rail Plan Meeting

The Minnesota Department of Transportation will hold a public meeting on November 24 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at the Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Ave N, Moorhead to gather input for the 2015 update of the Minnesota State Rail Plan.

The Minnesota State Rail Plan covers Minnesota's freight and passenger rail system and provides guidance and priorities for state transportation decisions to ensure that efficient, competitive services are available to rail customers. The plan also seeks to enhance freight access to local and global markets.

The 2015 Minnesota State Rail Plan update will integrate the latest information on four active passenger rail projects, reevaluate potential future passenger rail corridors, and update freight commodity flows and trends. The update will also develop a freight and passenger rail project list for planning and investment purposes.

### Oakport Services Expansion Analysis

At the request of the City of Moorhead and Metro Area Transit (MATBUS), Metro COG is currently developing a service expansion and technical memorandum to analyze transit needs and funding options respective to the future annexations of Oakport Township by the City of Moorhead.

In 1990, the City of Moorhead and Oakport Township entered into a Joint Resolution for Orderly Annexation agreement. In accordance with the agreement, Tract Two of Oakport Township will be annexed by the City of Moorhead on January 1, 2015. Upon completion of the annexation, the Moorhead City Council will have the sole authority over the area.

The Oakport Service Expansion study will include an existing conditions analysis and provide a detailed investigation on what transit services will be required in future annexed areas of the City of Moorhead. The study will also provide funding recommendations and a discussion on potential public/private partnerships.

## Upcoming Projects

### 2016-2020 Transit Development Plan Update

As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the FM Metropolitan area, Metro COG is responsible under federal law for maintaining a continuous, comprehensive, and coordinated transportation planning process (3C). A component to this process is the Transit Development Plan (TDP) which is intended to identify strategies and recommendations to improve transit service delivery. The TDP is developed under a defined five-year planning horizon and functions as a sub-element of the approved Long Range Transportation Plan.

In early 2015, Metro COG will begin solicitations for a consultant to assist with the 2016-2020 Transit Development Plan update for the FM Metropolitan area. It is envisioned that the development of the TDP will be conducted through collective efforts of Metro COG, Metro Area Transit (MATBUS) staff, and a contracted consultant to assist with issue identification, operations analysis, and overall system coordination.

It is envisioned that the 2016-2020 Transit Development Plan update would be completed by the end of 2015.

### Hawley Comprehensive & Transportation Plan Update

In early 2015, Metro COG will assist the City of Hawley in developing an update to its current Comprehensive Plan. The plan will focus on transportation and related infrastructure needs within the City of Hawley and serve as an update to the current 2009 Comprehensive Plan. It is anticipated that this plan update would be completed in late 2015.

In addition to demographic projections and issue identification regarding community development, close attention will be paid to roadway facilities including MnDOT US Highway 10 and county roads in and adjacent to the City of Hawley. The plan update will also focus on the feasibility of expanding multimodal and pedestrian networks within the city.

Given the recent addition of Hawley to the Metropolitan Planning Area, attention will be paid to developing existing and projected data sets which will better integrate Hawley within the overall Metro COG transportation planning process.

### Dilworth Subdivision Ordinance Update

In wrapping up projects slated for completion in the 2013-2014 Unified Planning Work Program, Metro COG is anticipating to begin work on the City of Dilworth Subdivision Ordinance update in late November. This update to the June 1999 Subdivision Ordinance would ensure uniformity with the December 2010 City of Dilworth Zoning Ordinance and consistency with statutory and industry standards.

A public comment and inspection period on the draft Subdivision Ordinance update would be held the last two weeks in January, with final approval by the City of Dilworth in February 2015.

### Food Systems Planning and Implementation Efforts

In October 2013, Metro COG completed the Metropolitan Food Systems Plan. This plan establishes a framework for understanding the local food system and lists issues, objectives, and desired outcomes as they relate to food access, community health indicators, food security, and urban agriculture and land use. The Metropolitan Food Systems Plan is supported by Fargo Cass Public Health and Clay County Public Health.

In response to the Metropolitan Food Systems Plan and the growing relationships between Metropolitan Planning Organizations and public health officials throughout the country, Metro COG has officially added Food Systems Planning and Implementation Efforts as part of its work program.

As part of its first task, Metro COG is currently working with the City of Fargo and Clay County on the creation of a Food Systems Advisory Commission. The purpose of this commission would be to establish a public entity to advise policy makers and elected officials in the FM Metropolitan area on how to assure that residents have access to safe, nutritious, and affordable foods. The commission would also support community wellness activities, provide guidance on policies, and propose recommendations on ways to improve the food system in the FM Metropolitan area. Pending approval by area jurisdictions, it is anticipated that the Food Systems Advisory Commission would be initiated in early 2015.