

**20th Meeting of the
MATBUS Coordination Committee
July 15, 2026 – 9:00 AM
Metro COG Conference Room/Zoom**

Members Present:

Deb White, Moorhead City Council, Chair
Nikki Gullickson, Fargo City Commission
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Cole Swingen, Assistant Transit Director (proxy)
Sebastian McDougall, Moorhead City Council
Jenica Flanagan, Moorhead Finance Director
Dustin Scott, West Fargo City Administrator
Brit Stevens, NDSU Transportation Manager
Ben Griffith, Metro COG Executive Director

Members Absent:

Susan Thompson, Fargo Finance Director
Mike Rietz, Moorhead Assistant City Manager
Perry Baatz, Dilworth Finance Officer

Others Present:

Andrew Almer, MATBUS
Adam Altenburg, Metro COG
Heidi Benke, MATBUS
Chaun Crowell, MATBUS
Brenda Derrig, City of Fargo
Mel Ell, Great Plains Food Bank
Cindy Girdner, Valley Senior Services
Jean Henning, City of Fargo
Aiden Jung, Metro COG
Wyatt Papenfuss, City of Fargo
Matt Pinotti, MATBUS
Jordan Smith, MATBUS
Megan Zahradka, City of Moorhead
Linghao Zhang, Metro COG

1a. Approve Order and Contents of the Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Strand and seconded by Mr. Griffith. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from June 17, 2026

A motion to approve the minutes for the June 2026 regular meeting was made by Mr. McDougall and seconded by Ms. Flanagan. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

2. Public Comment Period

No members of the public addressed the committee.

3a. Resolutions to Suspend Route 2C During Academic Year

Mr. Swingen explained that Route 2C is a supplemental bus route in Moorhead that operates during the academic school year and serves both Concordia and MSUM campuses. The supplemental Route 2C service provides additional service during the academic year, increasing Route 2 frequency from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes.

Mr. Swingen explained that MATBUS is proposing a service adjustment to improve operational efficiency, achieve a slight cost reduction, and assist operations staff heading into the next academic year. He stated that Route 2C is scheduled to be eliminated beginning in 2027, and that suspending the service early would reduce service by approximately 332 revenue hours and 4,400 revenue miles. Because the reduction represents less than 25 percent of total revenue hours and revenue miles, a public hearing is not required. He noted that MATBUS will provide the service reduction information to MSUM to ensure the university is aware of the change.

A motion to approve the suspension of Route 2C, effective August 24, 2026, was made by Mr. McDougall and seconded by Ms. Flanagan. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

4a. June Budget to Actuals Review

Ms. Henning provided the committee with an overview of the June budget-to-actuals review. She noted that expenses are approximately \$500,000 under budget, with salaries approximately \$150,000 under budget, while health insurance is approximately \$350,000 under budget due to the employee selection process. Overtime is approximately \$350,000 over budget due to a shortage of approximately 13 drivers; however, seven new drivers are scheduled to start in July. Diesel fuel and gasoline expenses are also contributing to the overall expense underrun.

Ms. Henning stated that MATBUS is working on the suballocation letter from Fargo and Moorhead. A meeting was held the week of July 6 to discuss the Section 5307 revenue and how MATBUS will receive the funds. A letter will be sent to the FTA regarding the funding. MATBUS is also looking at opportunities to pursue grants on behalf of both Fargo and Moorhead, as well as identifying programs and projects to bring forward.

Mr. Swingen discussed the budget-to-actuals. He explained that the budget is divided evenly across the 12 months; however, actual expenses and revenues can vary throughout the year due to factors such as the school year, seasonal employment, paratransit eligibility, and other seasonal variations. Generally, a decrease in activity is seen during the summer months as people utilize other forms of transportation, such as bicycles.

Mr. Swingen stated that a driver training class will begin Monday with four drivers, and three additional drivers are ready to begin the following training class. The committee discussed whether there have been any updates regarding the extent of CDL restrictions affecting immigrants. At this time, MATBUS does not have any drivers who would fall into that category.

Mr. Swingen noted that there will always be a small percentage of employee turnover; however, current turnover is higher than desired. Mr. Pinotti added that some drivers explore other employment opportunities that utilize their CDLs, including seasonal beet harvest work, and may return to MATBUS after the season ends. Staff have noted some trends in driver turnover and employment patterns.

4b. MATBUS Transit Comprehensive Operation Analysis Overview and Estimated Costs

Mr. Smith stated that the committee had previously discussed conducting a Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) and asked him to reach out to peer transit agencies that had recently completed similar studies to learn more about the process and how a COA could be structured for MATBUS. The committee was particularly interested in understanding potential service redesign options in light of the future of the GTC and how the transit system could be structured to address those changes. Duluth and St. Cloud have both completed COAs within the past five years.

Mr. Smith explained that a COA could include an analysis of:

- Existing routes
- Population and employment
- Development and evaluation of new service alternatives
- Recommended route alignments
- Transfer locations
- Bus shelters
- Transit services
- Financial considerations

The agencies that completed the studies indicated that the analyses were very beneficial and that they were pleased with the consultants selected. The Duluth study cost approximately \$250,000, while the St. Cloud study cost approximately \$307,000, not including implementation assistance. If MATBUS decides to pursue a COA, funding sources would need to be identified.

Mr. Strand asked what financial efficiencies were achieved as a result of the studies. Mr. Smith stated that this information was not available to him and that he would need to follow up with the agencies. Mr. Strand also asked whether the study could be completed internally and achieve similar results. Mr. Smith stated that he did not believe staff could obtain the same level of information and analysis internally.

Mr. Smith noted that the Transit Development Plan (TDP) was intended to identify changes that would be budget neutral; however, significant service reductions were ultimately necessary. A COA would be more comprehensive and would evaluate a broader range of service options. He cautioned that, if MATBUS invests the resources necessary to complete a COA, all participating jurisdictions would need to be prepared to support and implement the recommendations. Otherwise, there would be little benefit to investing in a study that is ultimately not acted upon. He stated that the study should be undertaken with a clear purpose and intent to implement recommendations, rather than simply to identify options. Before moving forward, each participating city should be prepared to support the process and its potential outcomes.

Mr. Strand asked for an explanation of potential bus rapid transit/light BRT corridors. Mr. Smith explained that BRT typically has fewer stops, allowing buses to travel more efficiently, and generally operates at higher frequencies. Mr. Strand asked whether the corridors could be evaluated without a consultant. Mr. Smith stated that staff could conduct an internal evaluation and develop recommendations.

Mr. Smith stated he would follow up with Duluth and St. Cloud to obtain additional information regarding the financial analysis and efficiencies identified through their respective COAs. He noted that staff would also investigate potential funding sources that

MATBUS could use to conduct a study. He noted that it would also be helpful to understand the commitments made by Duluth and St. Cloud, including any infrastructure investments associated with implementing their recommendations.

4c. Safety and Security Update

Mr. Swingen provided the committee with an overview of security concerns reported during the month. He noted that the number of security incidents was consistent with the previous month.

4d. Quarterly Ridership Update

Mr. Swingen presented information comparing MATBUS ridership and service levels for January through June 2025 and 2026. He noted that ridership can fluctuate for a variety of reasons, including detours, route changes, and other service adjustments. Minnesota ridership decreased by 0.1 percent, while North Dakota ridership decreased by 11.6 percent compared with the same period in 2025.

Paratransit ridership decreased by 1.1 percent. On-demand service was eliminated at the beginning of 2026. Ridership increased at Concordia and M State, while ridership decreased at MSUM and NDSU.

Minnesota experienced a decrease of approximately 100 revenue hours, while North Dakota experienced a decrease of approximately 2,028 revenue hours compared with the same period in 2025.

5. Other Business

No additional business was brought before the committee.

Chair White adjourned the meeting at 9:54 AM.