

**92nd Meeting of the
Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board
November 16, 2022
Virtual Meeting**

Members Present:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Kevin Hanson, Chair
Steve Lindaas, Moorhead City Council
Gabrielle Lommel, Concordia College
Brad Olson, West Fargo City Commission
Teresa Stolfus, M|State
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Annie Wood, MSUM

Members Absent:

Brian Arett, Valley Senior Services
Paul Grindeland, Valley Senior Services
Denise Kolpack, Fargo City Commission
Larry Seljevold, Moorhead City Council
Brit Stevens, NDSU

Others Present:

Heidi Benke, City of Fargo
Julie Bommelman, City of Fargo
Shaun Crowell, City of Fargo
Ari Del Rosario, FM Metro COG
Luke Grittner, City of Fargo
Taaren Haak, City of Moorhead
Matthew Pinotti, First Transit
Jordan Smith, City of Moorhead
Cole Swingen, City of Fargo
Lori Van Beek, City of Moorhead

1. Call to Order and Introductions

a. Introduce Matt Pinotti, General Manager for First Transit

Chair Hanson called the meeting to order. A quorum was not present at the start of the meeting. Therefore, after introductions, the Chair continued to informational item 3.a. before circling back to the action items once a quorum was present.

Matthew Pinotti introduced himself as the new General Manager for First Transit after being promoted from Operations Manager in Fargo.

2. Action Items

a. September 28, 2022 Meeting Minutes

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

b. Selection of a Vice-Chair

Ms. Van Beek brought up that it may be helpful to select a Vice-Chair in the event that the Chair is absent.

After hearing no volunteers, Chair Hanson suggested that we reach out to all board members in the coming months to try to fill that role.

c. 2024 State of North Dakota Capital Grant Applications – Julie Bommelman

Ms. Bommelman explained that the State of North Dakota sets aside capital grant funding for transit every year. For fiscal year 2024, ND has made \$12.8 million available. A summary table showed a breakdown of the City of Fargo Transit Department's capital grant requests for 2024. Ms. Bommelman reminded members that the ND state fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. This means that the request also includes some local share funding for the City of Fargo's 2023 fiscal year. The capital grant request includes replacing paratransit schedule software, automated bus announcement system, miscellaneous support equipment, updating the Metro Transit Garage building, a mobility manager, the Ground Transportation Center deck overlay and bus and vehicle replacements.

Chair Hanson asked about the needs for updating the MTG building. Ms. Bommelman mentioned that they are interested in separating one of the offices into two, replacing carpet, replacing the bus wash and eventually looking at a possible expansion in the future.

Mr. Lindaas asked how competitive these State grants are. Ms. Bommelman said that funding is almost guaranteed, however the competition for this funding is shared among the 3 urban transit locations across ND (Fargo, Bismarck and Grand Forks). Grand Forks were previously awarded capital grant funding last year to build a new facility. This increases the odds of being awarded funding for all City of Fargo requests.

A motion to recommend to the Fargo City Commission approval to apply for grant funding for the items listed, and, upon successful receipt of funds, approve the grant execution was made by Mr. Lindaas and seconded by Mr. Strand. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

d. 2023 Meeting Schedule – Lori Van Beek & Julie Bommelman

Ms. Van Beek presented the proposed meeting dates for 2023. This included January 18, March 15, May 17, July 19, September (to be rescheduled to October 4 due to DTA conference), and November 15. Ms. Van Beek also asked the board to consider moving the January meeting to February because it is expected that the 2022 annual report data will be available by then. Mr. Strand suggested sending out a Doodle poll to check everyone's availability.

Chair Hanson asked whether anyone has considered if meetings should continue to take place virtually or resume in-person. Ms. Wood expressed that virtual meetings would be preferred to allow her to participate on the board and still attend 9am meetings on campus. Mr. Strand also added that attending virtually works well for him.

Mr. Lindaas asked if the board has had better attendance to meet a quorum since going virtual. Ms. Van Beek responded that she believes that this has been easier to achieve virtually. Chair Hanson agreed.

No action ended up being required regarding future meeting dates and a virtual versus in-person meeting option, but it was agreed upon that this can be revisited in future.

3. Informational Items

a. Temporary Service Hours for 2023 – Cole Swingen, Julie Bommelman, Lori Van Beek

Mr. Swingen provided some background about temporary service hours that are currently in place due to driver shortages. Current service hours end at 9:45pm. After internal review, MATBUS administrative staff is proposing to extend the temporary service hours by 30 minutes to 10:15pm. Part of the reasoning behind potentially extending service hours is due to the fact that more major retail and employment destinations are now open later.

Mr. Swingen also presented a graph which showed the percentage of ridership by time period. Generally, ridership steadily decreases after 5:30pm. Prior to covid, ridership drastically decreased after 10pm at less than 1% of total ridership. Routes that travel through major colleges (e.g. NDSU and MSUM) are typically utilized later in the evening compared to other core routes.

Adjusting the service end time to be 10:15pm will create more consistent 8-hour day, 40-hour week shifts for bus drivers. The longer afternoon shift is more beneficial for filling driver shifts and retaining drivers. Next steps include collecting passenger feedback and driver input based on an evaluation in 9-12 months to determine if the shift to a 10:15pm end time was valuable.

Mr. Lindaas asked if we have data about how long it takes for riders to adjust to new service hours. Ms. Van Beek recalled that service hours were extended in 2017 and a year after the change, ridership was up 25%.

Mr. Strand mentioned that someone had reached out to him to express concern that MATBUS schedules posted on the bus stops were not updated to reflect current changes. Mr. Swingen explained that these new changes are planned to come into effect in January of next year. At that time, MATBUS also plans to redo their maps and timetables to reflect these changes. Up-to-date information is also available on their website.

Chair Hanson asked if MATBUS has received any comments yet regarding the temporary service hours. Mr. Swingen responded that they haven't heard much since they did the initial hour change back in January. He reiterated that this impacted a very small percentage of their ridership. Ms. Van Beek clarified that this has only been a temporary change and therefore was not vetted through the public hearing process. According to their policy, they can make these administrative changes based on staff shortages. As a temporary change, MATBUS is still committed to bringing their service frequency up as they look to hire more bus drivers.

b. September-October 2022 Operations Report – Cole Swingen & Lori Van Beek

Mr. Swingen presented a summary of transit ridership in 2022 so far, compared to 2021. There was a mix of increases and decreases in ridership across Fargo. There were some reduced frequencies on Routes 11, 13, 14 and 15. Those routes subsequently saw decreases in ridership. Route 15 also dealt with a lot of construction this summer. This shifted some ridership from Route 15 to Route 16 to get from the GTC to West Acres. Route 16, 17 and 18 have seen

increases in ridership, whereas Route 20 and 24 saw slight decreases. The Industrial Park TapRide service and the college routes have seen the most significant increases.

Ms. Van Beek presented ridership data for Moorhead Transit. Similar to Fargo, the college routes (Route 1 and 2) have seen an increase in ridership while most other routes have seen ridership decreases.

Mr. Swingen also presented a table of college ridership. NDSCS was the only college to see a decrease in ridership.

Chair Hanson asked if MATBUS has heard of increased gas prices impacting transit ridership. Mr. Swingen confirmed that they have received a few comments regarding this choice, however it is hard to gauge how much of any increases in ridership are due to gas prices versus a natural bounce back from the pandemic. Ms. Van Beek added that typically transit does see a slight increase in ridership whenever gas prices rise.

Ms. Van Beek also presented data for Metro Senior Ride ridership. These numbers, along with paratransit, have continued to increase. There have been internal discussions about the expected future demand of these services.

4. Other Business

Hearing no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:41 AM.