

Faribault-Martin County Joint Transit Board  
Emergency Meeting  
Martin County Courthouse  
201 Lake Avenue  
Fairmont, MN 56031  
Tuesday March 31, 2020 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Board Chairman Bill Groskreutz. It was noted that this was a meeting called under a declared emergency condition and the quorum rules under the by-laws of the Faribault – Martin County Transit Board allowed for an unconventional quorum where only a minimum of six board members be present, regardless of county representation. Also this meeting was held with teleconference attendance capabilities under Minnesota Statute 13D.021 which allows for teleconference meeting while in a state of emergency during a health pandemic.

Joint Transit Board members present in person were: Faribault County Commissioner and Board Chair Bill Groskreutz and Faribault County Commissioner John Roper. Participating Board Members via telephone were Faribault County Commissioners Young, Warmka, and Loveall, Martin County Commissioners Smith and Flohrs. Missing were Commissioners Mahoney, Koons, and Belgard. Also present in person was Jeremy Monahan, Faribault – Martin County Transit Director and Jason Sorenson, Fairmont Sentinel. Also present via telephone was Melinda Estey, MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation.

Motion made by Commissioner Warmka, seconded by Commissioner Young to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion regarding the federal government passing the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA) which allows for paid leave in certain circumstances relating to the pandemic crisis. This includes all employees even those without normal paid sick leave, which the Transit Board part-time employees do not have. The Board was presented a draft Personnel Policy amendment that was written off a template from Martin County's labor legal counsel and customized for the Transit Board and its policies. The amendment was meant to keep the Transit Board in compliance with the FFCRA paid leave wages dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. This policy change is for all employees, goes into effect on April 1, 2020 and currently has a sunset of December 31, 2020.

Motion made by Commissioner Warmka, seconded by Commissioner Flohrs to adopt the Personnel Policy Amendment 2020-01 dealing with paid leave related to missing work for COVID-19 related situations. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion turned to fare collection policies. Monahan reported that collection of fares remains in place as the transit system continues to operate. With the loss of almost all current "charged" subscription rides that are invoiced monthly the fares collected are almost exclusively through cash, check, or token payment into the farebox. Drivers have been instructed to remember the policy that they do not need to handle fares before they are put into the farebox, but they are allowed to inspect the amount to ensure proper payment is made. However it is still a habit of

some riders to hand their payment in whatever form to the driver who then places it in the farebox tower. Monahan noted that some other systems in the state have eliminated fare collection during the pandemic to reduce the amount of potential exposure and asked the Board to consider whether they would like to adopt a similar policy or keep fare collection in place during the pandemic.

Motion made by Commissioner Warmka, seconded by Commissioner Young to eliminate all fare collections for the transit system. Discussion ensued including questions regarding an end date to the policy. Also of concern was the impact that free rides might have leading to a surge in ridership which is counter-intuitive to keeping social distancing as much as possible. Also discussed was that the transit system already has a limited revenue being generated by fares. Estey commented on a question regarding loss of revenue. Any revenue recovery policies due to the pandemic have not yet been decided. However funds are going to be available for yet to be determined relief efforts due to the impact to transit systems. It is possible the use of these funds could include helping to relieve the loss of revenue due to the crisis.

A motion was made by Commissioner Roper, seconded by Commissioner Smith to amend Commissioner Warmka's motion to include that the fare collection suspension be lifted upon the emergency status declaration being lifted by the Governor of Minnesota. There was discussion regarding if such a declaration will ever be made, which is unclear at this time. A roll call vote was conducted on the motion's amendment and it passed by a 5 – 2 vote.

A roll call vote was called on the original motion to suspend fare collection for the transit system now amended with an end date synchronized with the end of the declared emergency by the Governor of Minnesota. Motion failed by a 0 – 7 vote.

Discussion turned to another fare collection topic. Monahan reported that there is going to be an ongoing effort to support local food shelves with delivery of packages containing necessary provisions for those that normally utilize the food shelf. MnDOT is fully behind any transit system's effort to help with food delivery efforts. Due to a reduction in ridership there is capacity in terms of staff and vehicles to help a number of locations and residents with this service. Monahan has reached out to SHIP staff for Martin and Faribault Counties and the local food shelves to offer this service without expectation of a fare from either the food shelf or the recipient. This fare-free policy can be in effect at least through the crisis and can be evaluated as the crisis ends to see how feasible it is to maintain and at what level MnDOT will continue to support either through reimbursed operations cost or lost fares.

Motion made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Young to approve that food shelf delivery efforts be done without expectation of a fare from the food shelf or the recipient until the emergency status declaration is lifted by the Governor of Minnesota. A roll call vote was conducted and the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion regarding Executive Committee authority during the pandemic ensued. Monahan reported that due to the current pandemic crisis and the need for occasional actions like the ones taken today, consideration of allowing the Executive Committee authority to make decisions that will then be reported to the Full Board is an option. This could increase efficiency for decisions

that need to be made quickly and will limit the need for coordination of more people and grouping together. Discussion ensued and it was noted that this is meant to get the system through the emergency.

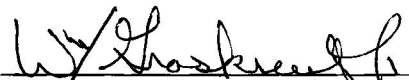
Motion made by Commissioner Loveall, seconded by Commissioner Smith to grant the Executive Committee authority over decisions during the pandemic crisis. A roll call vote was conducted and the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion regarding the system ridership report ensued. Monahan presented a chart and ridership tables showing how the ridership for the system has decreased since the declaration of the emergency in mid-March. It was noted that some route hours are being strategically reduced for efficiency. Monahan also pointed out that while there has been a significant, and expected, decrease in ridership, the transit system is still providing a good number of rides to the communities it serves. It will be a significant loss in the long run in terms of ridership projections but remaining available for the public is still essential.

The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday April 10<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. at the Martin County Courthouse in Fairmont with the potential for teleconference attendance. Commissioner Groskreutz will plan to be at the meetings in person along with Monahan to ensure compliance with the Minnesota statute that allows for teleconference meetings during a health pandemic. The next Full Transit Board meeting date was scheduled for Tuesday April 28<sup>th</sup> following Human Services Board meeting. Human Services also elected to have the authority for decisions be given to the Executive Committee during the emergency. Commissioner Groskreutz asked that if any board member wished to participate in the April 28<sup>th</sup> meeting to let him or Monahan know in advance.

With no further business to wit, Board Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

JOINT TRANSIT BOARD  
FARIBAULMARTIN COUNTIES

  
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William Groskreutz Jr., Joint Transit Board Chair

ATTEST:   
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Greg Young, Board Secretary