

Faribault-Martin County Joint Transit Board
Martin County Courthouse
201 Lake Avenue
Fairmont, MN 56031
Tuesday August 25, 2020 9:30 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 10:25 a.m. by Board Chairman Bill Groskreutz. This meeting was held with teleconference attendance capabilities under Minnesota Statute 13D.021 which allows for teleconference meetings 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, Faribault County Commissioners Young and Roper and Martin County Commissioner Smith. Participating Board Members via internet teleconference were Martin County Commissioners Belgard, Koons, and Flohrs and Faribault County Commissioners Warmka and Loveall. Also present via teleconference was Melinda Estey, MnDOT. Also present in person was Jason Sorenson, Fairmont Sentinel and Jeremy Monahan, Faribault – Martin County Transit Director.

Commissioner Groskreutz asked if there were any additions to the agenda. There were none. Motion made by Commissioner Belgard, seconded by Commissioner Koons to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

A motion was made by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Belgard to approve the meeting minutes for the June 23 and July 28 2020 Full Board meetings and the July 10 and August 8 2020 Executive Committee meetings. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion turned to the Facility Construction project. Monahan reported that ISG Inc. is in the process of completing the first Technical Memorandum which will include revisions to the conceptual design from 2017 along with revised cost estimates. There was discussion regarding the budget for the project and if it will be adequate. Monahan stated the goal is of course to stay within the budget but due to the passage of time since the original estimate and even the project application it is likely going to be difficult to be completely within budget. Commissioner Belgard also noted that supplies of building supplies have been low in recent months and that may drive the cost of materials up once bids are completed. Monahan will continue to work with the Executive Committee, ISG Inc., and MnDOT on details moving forward.

Discussion turned to the Fare Collection Suspension policy. Monahan noted the Transit Board implemented a policy to suspend fare collections through August 2020. This measure was put in place as a safety precaution to limit the amount of exposure between passengers and staff, not as a promotion to increase ridership during the pandemic. It was noted the CARES Act funding covers 100 percent of all operation costs less any fare revenue. Any fares collected are just subtracted from our reimbursements. The fare money does not go to build the Transit Board's reserve account. Other revenue such as exterior ad sales or disposed bus sales can be used to build the reserve account and are not subtracted from our reimbursements.

Monahan noted that the Executive Committee discussed this topic at their August meeting and passed a motion to recommend to the Full Board that they extend the fare collection suspension through December 2020 when it can be discussed again regarding continuance.

Motion made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Flohrs to approve extension of the Fare Collection Suspension policy through at least December 2020. Motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Discussion turned to the Paid Administrative Leave policy. Again Monahan noted that the Transit Board implemented a policy in the spring to allow for employees to receive Paid Administrative Leave (PAL) for lost hours due to service reductions or due to them having to miss work due to a medical condition. This policy was also put in place through August 2020. The policy has been used sparsely but is appreciated by the staff and shows how they are valued as essential employees to our communities. This type of pay is possible under the CARES Act funding.

Monahan noted again that the Executive Committee discussed this topic at their August meeting and passed a motion to recommend to the Full Board that they extend the Paid Administrative Leave policy through December 2020 when it can be discussed again regarding continuance

Motion made by Commissioner Roper, seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve extension of the Paid Administrative Leave policy through at least December 2020. Motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Discussion turned to New Business regarding the 2021 replacement vehicle application. Monahan reported that an application for purchase of one replacement bus has been submitted to MnDOT. This vehicle will require a 10 percent local share. This vehicle is in addition to already awarded purchase of two replacement vehicles in 2020. These vehicles will also require a 10 percent local share. Monahan noted how these purchases have been delayed due to the pandemic and due to changes made by Ford to the chassis of their vehicles. Monahan has not even been able to meet with vendors yet to see the new vehicles.

Also in waiting is the contract to purchase an accessible mini-van. This was applied for last year as part of a service expansion application. It will require a 20 percent local share when completed. Monahan reported this project has been awarded but the contract has been delayed due to MnDOT needed to do many contract amendments for all transit systems statewide due to the CARES Act funding.

Lastly Monahan reported that the purchase of the used vehicle from the Minneapolis American Indian Center has been completed. This bus is now an active part of the fleet and is a great addition and find. It is not easy to locate and purchase a used vehicle of this caliber and in this good condition.

Monahan and Estey explained how MnDOT very recently received a federal grant to assist the state in bolstering replacement vehicle purchases. The 2021 application can be increased to more than one vehicle if desired. The Board would not be locked into the purchase until contracts are executed and the chances of being awarded two vehicles are not very high. There was discussion regarding the local share for buses purchased with the Federal grant. Commissioner Groskreutz also asked if there is any anticipation that vehicle prices might increase beyond the contracted amounts. Estey stated that she is not aware of that being likely and the MnDOT staffs that specialize in vehicle procurements are well versed with market changes. It was also discussed if electric powered buses would be used in the future. It was noted that for vehicles the size used by the Transit Board it is not likely for at least a few years, but MnDOT is very much behind efforts to obtain electric vehicles for transit fleets.

After more discussion a motion was made by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Smith to have Monahan modify the 2021 vehicle application to request the purchase of two replacement vehicles. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion turned to the Ridership Report. Monahan noted the ridership report shows an increase in ridership. Numbers have been very good in the evening and weekends. The ridership is still down about 30 percent weekly from expected or desired numbers. Monahan reported other systems, even in the region, are still going through larger reductions upwards of 70 percent.

The food delivery effort in cooperation with area food shelves, Meals on Wheels, and Faribault – Martin County Human Services has still been very active. Typically there have been about 200 meals or food / essential packages delivered per week still so the drivers are kept busy with this effort along with providing our regular transit services. Commissioner Smith asked which communities were receiving help with Meals on Wheels. Monahan replied Fairmont, Blue Earth, and Winnebago. Commissioner Young asked about the long term feasibility of food delivery efforts. Monahan noted that when fares are being collected again, it will be hard to deliver food packages without a form of fare compensation.

Discussion regarding the bill payment report ensued. Monahan noted some of the regular and recurring bills like utilities and advertising that was paid early in the week and not included in the packet sent out the previous week. There was brief discussion and clarification on some of the bills and vendors.

The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday September 10th at 8:00 a.m. at the Martin County Courthouse in Fairmont with the potential for teleconference attendance. The next Full Transit Board meeting date is scheduled for to take place in October but the date, time, and meeting format is still to be determined. Commissioner Groskreutz noted there could always be a possibility of needing a special Full Board meeting in September as well.

With no further business to wit, a motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Koons to adjourn and the Board Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

JOINT TRANSIT BOARD
FARIBAULT MARTIN COUNTIES



William Groskreutz Jr., Joint Transit Board Chair

ATTEST:


Greg Young, Board Secretary