

Faribault-Martin County Joint Transit Board
Faribault County Human Services Center Conference Room
412 North Nicollet Street
Blue Earth, MN 56013
Tuesday February 22, 2023 8:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Board Chair Elliot Belgard.

Due to bad weather and road conditions forecasted, this meeting was held as a hybrid option for attendance. Joint Transit Board members present in person at the public location were: Faribault County Commissioners Groskreutz, Roper, Anderson and Young. Joining the meeting virtually were Martin County Commissioners Belgard, Flohrs, Smith, Bleess, and Koons and Faribault County Commissioner Loveall. Also present via teleconference was Jeremy Monahan, Faribault – Martin County Transit Director.

The Board Chair asked if there were any other additions to the agenda. Monahan noted that new information regarding the 2021 Vehicle Purchase had come to him the prior evening and he wished to update the Board as there was a decision deadline upcoming. Motion made by Commissioner Koons, seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

A motion was made by Commissioner Groskreutz, seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve the meeting minutes for the December 27, 2022 Full Board meeting, January 6, 2023 and February 10, 2023 Executive Committee meetings. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion turned to Old Business and a discussion regarding Transit Advisory Committees. Monahan reported that the recent Title VI manual update had some comments and a prominent one was that the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) needed to meet more consistently to comply with the Community Input requirements. TACs are not necessarily required but are likely the easiest way to meet the FTA and Title VI community input requirements. The way the Transit Board's TAC is set up is according to the By-laws which were developed in 2015 during the process of the merger and established that each commissioner would appoint a representative to the TAC. This has proven to be difficult to maintain through the years. We have not been able to have very successful or well attended TAC meetings, even when switching to virtual attendance options. The Executive Committee discussed this matter at their February meeting and decided this had to be a conversation with the Full Board.

Discussion ensued regarding some of the existing TAC members but Commissioner Loveall pointed out that perhaps since the TAC format as it stands has not been successful there may be a better way to get public input. He suggested having public open houses in towns throughout the system on a regular basis and to advertise to have the public that are interested come and voice their concerns or have their questions answered. There was discussion about this including the logistics of completing it and Monahan's concerns of if this would qualify as meeting the public input requirements according to MnDOT.

A motion was made by Commissioner Loveall, seconded by Commissioner Koons, to have the Executive Committee explore the feasibility of having public open houses spread throughout the system area rather than appointing TAC members at this time. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion turned to an update on the 2021 Vehicle purchases. Monahan reported that the evening prior to the meeting he received information from MnDOT regarding six of the seven vehicles ordered with 2021 contracts. These six vehicles have not been delivered and are part of a large backlog of transit vehicles being felt by transit systems nationwide. The delay is also causing the likelihood of price increases as the vehicles are now being built on different chassis than they were planned to be when they were ordered in 2021. The 2021 vehicle contract being discussed was all on a \$95,000 maximum and all six vehicles used almost all of the \$95,000 in the order. MnDOT notified Monahan that those six vehicles would now cost approximately \$126,000 each, or an increase of over \$31,500 each. In order for the Transit Board to not have to bear the entire burden of the increased cost, MnDOT will modify the contract maximum from \$95,000 to \$114,000 or an increase of \$19,000 each. With the contract terms still being a 10 percent local share and that anything over the contract maximum is 100 percent the responsibility of the Transit Board, the new price meant that each bus had the 10 percent local share, which was now at \$11,400 per bus, but now had an additional \$12,000 per bus for going over the contract maximum. The local share for the six buses went from just under \$57,000, total to just under \$144,000 total.

Monahan said there were options now and an upcoming deadline which is why he brought the raw information to the board. First, the orders could be cancelled. Monahan explained this would be a terrible decision as the new buses are still desperately needed despite the price increases and the cancellation would put the Transit Board at the back of the line in terms of replacement eligibility. Second, the orders could be kept as is. Monahan explained this is possible but not necessary because the third option is to modify the orders by changing or eliminating options to reduce the costs. Monahan said he had not yet had a chance to review the options selected again but he was confident he would be able to reduce the costs of the vehicles. He was not sure if he could get the cost down to the contract maximum of \$114,000 due to what is needed and expected on Prairie Lakes Transit vehicles. However he knows the vehicle vendor well and will be able to work with him to get the costs as close to \$114,000 as possible. This was his preferred option.

Discussion ensued which included questions about which options might be able to be removed, the timing of the arrival of the vehicles, and questions about funding for the purchase, especially in light of the increased costs. A motion was made by Commissioner Groskreutz, seconded by Commissioner Anderson to proceed with the vehicle order but work to reduce costs as much as possible to get close to the \$114,000 contract maximum. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion turned to New Business and an opportunity to again be involved in a Low-No Emissions Grant project with MnDOT. Monahan explained MnDOT has put out a request to see which systems that have vehicles that are eligible for replacement in 2025 might be interested in having one of those vehicles be involved in a Low-No Grant application with MnDOT.

Monahan noted that the grant received last year included infrastructure for two vehicle charging stations. Also, that the two in-town routes in Fairmont are good candidates for Battery Electric Buses due to the range of the vehicles and the daily mileage for the routes. Plus their constant proximity to the charging stations. The only downside to this project is the local financial match, which was funded by MnDOT for the last project, might not be able to be a state share this time and might need to come from local funds. Battery Electric Buses are more expensive upfront costs and theoretically lower operation costs so the local match might be upwards of \$60,000 for the purchase.

Discussion ensued regarding electric buses included concerns about safety and the funds coming from county levies. Also there was discussion about the great need for buses and this is another opportunity and means to get a desperately needed bus. Monahan noted this was not locking the Transit Board into the project, only that we are expressing an interest and that we could back out in the future if needed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Bleess to express to MnDOT our interest in participating in the 2025 Low-No Emission Grant project for another Battery Electric Bus. The roll call vote resulted in 8 aye and 2 no votes and passed.

Discussion turned to an update in the Transit Driver Position job description. Monahan explained how the part-time position of Transit Driver has needed to have an adjustment to allow select staff to be paid the Shift Differential Rate of \$0.50 more per hour for doing select light vehicle maintenance work. A few drivers had taken on these tasks or had been delegated these tasks in the past by the previous Safety Manager however no extra compensation was given to them. There were concerns expressed about the lack of added compensation or most recently one staff member stating they no longer wished to do any light maintenance work. In an effort to get that staff member to return to doing the light maintenance tasks, it was discussed by the Executive Committee to offer them the Shift Differential rate of \$0.50 more per hour when doing these tasks which are normally done outside of their normal driving shifts.

Currently Monahan has assigned two drivers to do these extra tasks, one in Fairmont and one in Blue Earth. They have recorded the extra work on their timecards and they have been paid the extra wage for those hours. It is typically 2-4 extra hours per week at the most.

The Executive Committee passed a motion at their January meeting to recommend to the Full Board that they approve this change in the position description to allow for select staff to be paid the extra wage for these extra tasks. It is desired that the Full Board consider doing the same.

A motion was made by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Anderson to follow the Executive Committee recommendation and approve the modification of the Transit Driver Position to allow for the Shift Differential rate to be paid for select staff to do light vehicle maintenance tasks. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Discussion turned to the Ridership Report. Monahan noted ridership for the system in 2022 came in at a 8.2 percent increase over 2021 which was the first time there was an increase from the previous year since 2017. There was discussion about ridership trends and how Monahan

would like to move forward looking at 2021 data forward as the data from 2019 and prior is from a different time for public transit

Discussion turned to the Financial Reports. Monahan produced the Bill Payment Report from the last meeting in December 2022 and noted that there was nothing out of the ordinary. He did note the annual MCIT insurance premium paid in January which is a large bill for the entire year that has to be paid every January rather than spread throughout the year like the funding. Next was an updated Financial Position Matrix showing a number of financial statistics for the Transit Board. He noted that even though it has been updated it is already out of date due to the new costs for the 2021 vehicle purchases. Other aspects of the matrix were discussed. Finally a report of Year to Date Expenditures compared to Annual Budget through November 2022 was presented. This report showed most line items in 2022 were under budget and the ones that were over budget could easily draw from other areas to compensate. Overall through November 80 percent of the budget has been expended. Monahan predicted that when the contract is closed 90 percent of the approved budget will be expended. He also noted that through November 8 percent of the expenditures have been recovered through farebox and ad sale revenue sources. If in 2024 the Operations contract is increased to a 15 percent local share, the 7 percent would need to be funded in some other manner.


The next Executive Committee meetings will be held on March 10th. The next Full Board meeting will be held on April 19th in Blue Earth at the Human Services conference room.

With no further business to wit, a motion was made by Commissioner Koons, seconded by Commissioner Young to adjourn and after a unanimous roll call vote the Board Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:25 a.m.

JOINT TRANSIT BOARD
FARIBAULMARTIN COUNTIES



Elliot Belgard, Joint Transit Board Chair

ATTEST: 

Jamie Bleess, Board Secretary