

Faribault-Martin County Joint Transit Board – Executive Committee
FM Transit Facility
1023 North Dewey Street Fairmont, MN 56031
April 7, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Board Chair Elliot Belgard. Joint Transit Board Executive Committee members present in person were: Faribault County Commissioners Young and Groskreutz and Martin County Commissioner Belgard and Bleess. Also present in person was Jeremy Monahan, Faribault – Martin County Transit Director.

Board Chair asked for any changes to the agenda. Monahan noted he had added a discussion regarding the October 14, 2022 accident and a discussion regarding Albert Lea service to the agenda from what was sent out earlier in the week. Motion made by Commissioner Groskreutz, seconded by Commissioner Bleess to approve the amended agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

Monahan produced an Unpaid Bills report totaling \$30,183.98 and noted that there will still be a number of regular and recurring bills arriving in the coming days and weeks that will be due before the next Executive Committee meeting. There was brief discussion regarding a few of the bills.

Motion made by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Groskreutz to approve payment of the Unpaid Bills as presented and to approve giving the Transit Director authority to continue to pay other regular and recurring bills at the discretion of the Transit Director upon receipt. Motion passed unanimously.

Monahan produced a Bank Statement for the Transit Board. It showed that as of March 31, 2023 the Transit Board had \$254,002.59 for a bank balance. Monahan noted that the interest increase grew again with a full month at the new rate and an interest dividend of over \$533 for March. At that pace interest alone could total over \$6,000 annually for the transit system. Monahan noted there will be another Operations Contract payment from MnDOT due to arrive in mid-April. There was brief discussion about the bank statement.

Monahan produced two Financial Reports. The first showed the Year to Date expenditures compared to Line Item budgets through the December submittal which was recently completed. Monahan noted that some line items went over the amount budgeted or predicted and many were under the amount budgeted, in particular the Operators Wages due to the staffing shortage. Overall 90 percent of the budgeted amount was spent. Any overpayment, which will be calculated in the coming weeks, will have to eventually be paid back to MnDOT. The farebox and other revenue totaled 7.9 percent of the total expenditures. Monahan noted that for 2023 the local share responsibility is 5 percent and with the increase in interest revenue alone, along with the strong ridership amounts to be discussed later, the 5 percent should be attainable for the 2023 contract year.

The second report was a new series of charts showing the breakdown of revenue sources on a monthly basis. The charts showed how much money per month came in via fareboxes, how much was from invoices, how much was from counter sales of token packs, and lastly how much was from vehicle exterior ad sales. The chart also showed the financial value collected each month in tokens but it was discussed that this information was not appropriate for this chart as this money was included within the other revenue sources. Monahan said he will modify these charts in future versions. The majority of the revenue comes from farebox collections followed by counter sales and invoices. Ad sales are intermittently large amounts but average out to be a small amount per month. The chart did show that there is a large amount of token usage by the transit riders each month.

Discussion turned to Old Business and the 2024 Operations Contract Local Share. Monahan reported that previously MnDOT had noted that for 2024 they might need to increase the local share for Operations back to 15 percent due to revenue amounts available to them. This was met with a lot of pushback from numerous systems including Monahan who said it would be impossible to reach 15 percent and we would need to deplete our hard earned Transit Reserve Fund and eventually start asking for County Levy funds for Operations. At a March 24th meeting with MnDOT, they reported that for 2024 they will be able to hold the Local Share to 8 percent, which was a great relief. The trade-off for being able to keep the Local Share at a lower amount was MnDOT stated they will only be able to increase 2024 Operations contracts by 2 to 4 percent over the 2023 contracts. The 2023 contract, due to the rapid increase in costs and wages needed for staff recruitment, were allowed to be increased by 10 percent over the 2022 contracts. The other trade-off was that the 10 percent Local Share for vehicles will need to return to a 20 percent Local Share. This was not unexpected as the 10 percent Local Share was meant to be a stop gap to allow systems to catch up on aging fleets when it was implemented. Since it was implemented unfortunately the vehicle costs have increased significantly but having an additional 10 percent increase locally for vehicles is much less of a financial burden than having to endure a 15 percent operations local share.

Discussion turned to the Low / No Emission Grant project that was discussed at the February Full Transit Board meeting. At that meeting the Full Board voted to have Monahan tell MnDOT the Transit Board was interested in participating in another grant opportunity to get another electric bus for the Fairmont routes. After doing so, Monahan noted he received a phone call from MnDOT stating that we were one of only two systems which replied with interest. Also our system was the only system replying with interest in an electric bus, the other system having interest in propane powered buses. MnDOT asked if we would “stand down” for this grant so that they could focus on writing a solid grant proposal for propane buses, just like they did for writing the grant for electric buses the prior year when we were awarded an electric bus and infrastructure support. Monahan stated that he took the “team player approach” and told them we would stand down for this grant knowing that there will be a grant opportunity every year for quite a few years to come. The Executive Committee discussed this and by consensus agreed with Monahan’s decision.

Discussion turned to the October 14th accident which involved one of the Transit Board’s buses colliding with a semi-tractor and trailer. Monahan noted that MCIT had contacted him recently and stated that the other party’s insurance had accepted 100 percent responsibility for the

accident. MCIT's subrogation request included reimbursement of the Transit Board's \$1,000 deductible and if it is agreed to by the other party's insurance it will be sent back to us. There was brief discussion regarding this topic.

Discussion turned to New Business and the potential hiring of a new Dispatcher. Monahan stated that with current capacity and need and after discussions with staff have resulted in a desire to hire another dispatcher and have one of our current dispatchers become a more regular driver and a back-up dispatcher moving forward for now. The Executive Committee discussed this and by consensus agreed to allow Monahan to pursue hiring a new Dispatcher.

Discussion turned to Albert Lea service. Monahan stated that on April 10th one of the regular Blue Earth based drivers is leaving for a few months for a farming job that he does annually. Due to that the staffing levels out of Blue Earth are very low. There is a number of promising driver candidates that may be helpful in the near future but for now their levels are low. One remedy to alleviate some of the staffing shortage is to temporarily suspend service to Albert Lea. Monahan said it is not a heavily used service and takes up a lot of time for a very valuable staff member when we are travelling there. After discussion the Executive Committee agreed by consensus that it was okay with suspending service to Albert Lea temporarily until staffing levels can be restored to an acceptable level.

Discussion turned to Personnel Actions. Monahan presented five (5) potential Probationary Transit Driver hires to the Executive Committee. He noted that four of these drivers have never driven transit buses before and have only completed the interview stage and need to obtain their CDL learners permit. The fifth is a former Prairie Lakes Transit driver who left about 5 years ago and his CDL status is currently unclear but we are assuming he has let his CDL lapse and will have to obtain his learners permit and retake the behind the wheel exam again. These individuals are Joseph Valtinson, Maleea Bryan, Olivia Williams, Lisa Jones, and Cindy Milne.

Motion made by Commissioner Groskreutz, seconded by Commissioner Bleess to approve all five proposed Personnel Actions as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion turned to the ridership report. Monahan reported that the March once again had the highest ridership total ever for a month in Faribault County. Also once again it was done while being short staffed. Martin County again showed a steady ridership and a nice improvement over 2022 numbers. Monahan did note that March had one of the most operational days available in the year and there were no weather disruptions or holidays which could have helped increase the ridership some.

Discussion turned to the Transit Board meeting plans. The April Full Transit Board meeting is still planned for Tuesday April 25th at 9:00 am and will be held at the Fairmont Transit Facility. The June Full Transit Board meeting was scheduled for Tuesday June 27th at 9:00 am and will be held in Blue Earth. The likely location will be the Faribault County Courthouse in the Human Services Conference Room. The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday May 5th at 8:00 am at the Fairmont Transit Facility.

With no further business to wit, a motion was made by Commissioner Groskreutz and seconded by Commissioner Bleess, to adjourn and the Board Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

JOINT TRANSIT BOARD
FARIBAULMARTIN COUNTIES


Elliot Belgard, Joint Transit Board Chair

ATTEST: 
Jamie Bleess, Board Secretary