

Faribault-Martin County Joint Transit Board – Executive Committee
FM Transit Facility
1023 North Dewey Street Fairmont, MN 56031
September 8, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Board Vice-Chair Bill Groskreutz with the absence of Board Chair Elliot Belgard. Joint Transit Board Executive Committee members present in person were: Faribault County Commissioners Young and Groskreutz and Martin County Commissioner Bleess. Martin County Commissioner Koons attended the meeting in place of Commissioner Belgard. Also present in person was Cathleen Amick, MnDOT Transit Project Manager, and Jeremy Monahan, Faribault – Martin County Transit Director.

Board Vice-Chair asked for any changes to the agenda. Monahan noted he had an update to the 2021 Vehicle purchases status that he added to Old Business. Motion made by Commissioner Koons, seconded by Commissioner Bleess to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

Monahan produced an Unpaid Bills report totaling \$63,015.64 and noted there will still be regular and recurring bills arriving in the coming weeks that will be due before the next Executive Committee meeting. This month's Unpaid Bills report has an especially high balance primarily because of a large bill from RouteMatch Software which does the dispatching and scheduling for the transit system. Their invoice costs have been going up at very large rates across the state and Monahan noted this bill compared to the bill received last year was over 2 times larger. The new owners of the software are stating the increase in cost is to catch up with the market costs that are necessary. Monahan noted that this invoice spawned what will be discussed later in the meeting regarding Technology Procurement efforts. There was a few other questions about some of the other bills, including fuel increase but Monahan noted that there were a lot more operating days in August than July and more routes being able to be covered with better staffing levels. Hence more fuel being used.

Motion made by Commissioner Koons, seconded by Commissioner Bleess 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 August 31, 2023 the Transit Board had \$578,065.43 for a bank balance. Monahan noted the 2nd Quarter payment for 2023 Operations Contract Federal share in the amount of \$124,999.70 made on August 18th which is the primary reason the bank balance continues to be high at this time. He noted though with the abnormally high Unpaid Bills and the unusual 3 payrolls that will be run in September, a large amount of funds will be expended this month. It is nothing that the cashflow can't handle but it will be a large amount. There was brief discussion about some of the bank statement. No action was required.

Discussion turned to Old Business and an update on the Labor Market Analysis Project being completed by consultants and funded by MnDOT. Monahan reminded the Executive Committee

that a number of services were available for transit systems to choose and he selected a Labor Market Analysis as one of them. Mainly because with the almost certain upcoming retirements of a number of our drivers, Monahan wants to be able to know who is available in the area that might be interested in our type of employment, part-time commercial driving. Once we learn who is available he wants the consultant to advise him on methods to attract these specific individuals so that there are not wasted, ineffective efforts. The consultant had been working on the project on and off and had recently provided an update to Monahan. Monahan shared a few of the high points of the update and noted that when the project is complete, the report will be presented to the Full Board, perhaps as early as October.

Discussion turned to an update on the 5339 funded 2021 Vehicle purchase. This purchase was a no local share purchase awarded as part of a federal grant the state received in 2020. Monahan had purchased a standard Martin County style CDL sized bus from a different vendor than usual who notified him that the cost had increase since the purchase had been made. Monahan told the vendor that a cost increase had to be worked out between the vendor and the state since they are funding the project. Monahan had presented some alternatives to the Executive Committee that might lower the cost or increase the chances of assuring we receive the bus, but it was decided to wait and see what the state and vendor could work out. The state notified Monahan the day before the Executive Committee meeting that the contract would be amended to cover the increased cost the vendor is incurring and therefore needing to pass on to the purchaser. So there will not be a need to offer a local contribution or a need to make any modifications. When asked Monahan noted this bus has a VIN associated with it already and may be delivered as early as February 2024 but he expects later next year is more likely.

At this time Cathleen Amick from MnDOT provided a brief update on the BETTER project which is the Federal grant awarded to the state that will fund the electric bus and all necessary infrastructure at the Fairmont Transit Facility. Advisory Consultants are being sought right now and they will guide Prairie Lakes Transit and the other systems involved in their site situations along with vehicle specifications and procurement efforts. It is still a long ways out before delivery and implementation of the actual bus but the project is moving forward. There was brief discussion regarding the project.

Discussion turned to New Business and the Part-Time Employee Sick and Safe Time Leave Law that is going into effect on January 1st 2024. Monahan said he recently attended a webinar put on by MCIT explaining the new law that goes into effect in a few months and then another law that enacts more paid leave in 2026 for all staff. Currently part-time staff is not allotted sick time or PTO only Full Time staff is. The current Full Time staff leave policy will cover the law's requirements. However Monahan noted that a policy will have to be created, agreed upon, and adopted by December so that it can be enacted by January 1st. He said he is still learning about this law and its rules and will be reaching out to colleagues for guidance. Also, another consultant project coming up is Policy Review and the consultant will likely be able to help create this policy while writing the other Part-Time Personnel Policy Manual we'll be working on. There was discussion about the law and questions about the current Transit Board policies. No action was needed at this time Monahan just wanted to update them and say he is working on it.

Discussion turned to the Technology Procurement Consultant Project discussion. Monahan noted earlier in the meeting that RouteMatch had recently sent an invoice that had more than doubled since last year, without any warning or prior explanation. Combined with a litany of other issues it was decided to hit the market and see what else might be available for the Transit Board that could perform comparably or even better and cost the same or less. There was an option to select a consultant to assist with Technology Procurement and Monahan had selected that option. They had recently contacted Monahan saying they are ready to start working on the project. Also, MnDOT recently release the 2024 Technology Grant Application. This grant is like a capital grant in that it is separate from the operating funds and used to purchase something large, like a brand new software and implementation program. The consultant is available to assist in all stags of the Grant Application, which is a huge relief as that is a difficult task to understand and to fit into the limited available time for local staff. Monahan did note that while applying for a Grant does not necessarily lock the Board into any financial commitments, if the Grant is awarded there is a 10 percent local share, which would likely be covered by the Transit Reserve Funds for a project of this size. Having Board support is not clear if it is necessary but would be desired if offered.

Motion made by Commissioner Koons, seconded by Commissioner Young, to authorize Monahan to pursue the Technology Grant Application for scheduling software procurement. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion turned to the ridership report. Monahan reported that August performed well with its 23 weekdays of operation. There are small increases over last year's ridership amounts. He also noted that Friday September 1st was one of the busiest days for the system in months as dozens of riders bought token packs and over 200 rides were provided in the system. Monahan said he maintains an optimistic outlook in regards to the ridership.

The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday October 6th at 8:00 am at the Fairmont Transit Facility. The next Full Board meeting will be on Tuesday October 31st at 9:00 am at the Faribault County Human Service Conference Room.

With no further business to wit, a motion was made by Commissioner Young and seconded by Commissioner Koons, to adjourn and the Board Vice-Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

JOINT TRANSIT BOARD
FARIBAULMARTIN COUNTIES



Elliot Belgard, Joint Transit Board Chair

ATTEST: 
Jaime Bless, Board Secretary