

**BISMARCK-MANDAN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MARCH 17, 2025**

The Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met March 17, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in the Tom Baker Meeting Room, City/County Building, 221 N 5th St, Bismarck, ND. Kim Riepl presided.

Members present or participating via Zoom were Ben Ehreth, Dan Schriock, Andrew Stromme, Jarek Wigness, Greg Feser, Mitch Flanagan, Will Hutchings, and Kim Riepl. Members absent were Deidre Hughes, Gabe Schell, John Saiki, Natalie Pierce, and Dean Schloss. The Freight Industry Representative membership is vacant.

Others present or participating via Zoom were Stephen Larson and Paulette Jacobsen, Bismarck-Mandan MPO; Kristen Sperry and Joe Callaway, FHWA; John Forman, Ulteig; Susan Dingle, Citizen; Sharijad Hasan, NDSU/ATAC; and Luke Champa, SRF.

MINUTES

Chair Riepl called for consideration of the minutes from February 18, 2025.

MOTION: Mr. Hutchings made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Feser seconded the motion and with Ben Ehreth, Dan Schriock, Andrew Stromme, Jarek Wigness, Greg Feser, Mitch Flanagan, Will Hutchings, and Chair Riepl voting in favor, the minutes were approved.

PM1 HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (HSIP) TARGETS

Mr. Larson presented. PM stands for Performance Measures. North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) recently adopted their annual HSIP performance targets for 2025. The federal government requires every state DOT to monitor the amount and rate of injuries and fatalities on the state road system, and to use this monitoring to assist in setting safety targets in the effort to increase roadway safety. MPOs are allowed to either set their own PM1 targets, or to support the State targets. The Bismarck-Mandan MPO has historically supported NDDOT's targets, and MPO staff recommends doing the same this year.

MOTION: Mr. Wigness made a motion to approve the PM1 HSIP Targets as presented. Mr. Ehreth seconded the motion and with Ben Ehreth, Dan Schriock, Andrew Stromme, Jarek Wigness, Greg Feser, Mitch Flanagan, Will Hutchings, and Chair Riepl voting in favor, the motion was approved.

2025 SAFETY POLICY STUDY

Mr. Champa presented an update for SRF. They have been busy with project management, meeting with the MPO every other week. They selected a project logo, and the MPO has created a webpage for the study, housed within the MPO website. They have collected the data they need and are in the process of reviewing it. They have created a draft Literature and Policy Review Memo to make sure they are building on national best practices and applying them to this project. They have a Steering Committee meeting scheduled for March 26, and have

started building their final report template. Their subconsultant, Emergent Strategies Group, is working to set up Focus Group meetings with various stakeholders in April. Mr. Champa encouraged everyone to head to the MPO's website, go to the 2025 Safety Policy Study page, and click the link to subscribe for study updates.

2025 ITS RA

Ms. Riepl provide an update on the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Regional Architecture (RA) project, which the MPO is performing together with the Advanced Traffic Analysis Center (ATAC). Over thirty stakeholders have been identified for this update, and a good portion of them attended the project kickoff meeting. Ms. Riepl showed several slides for the project. There are five primary service centers identified for the Bismarck-Mandan RA, including Public Transportation Management, Traffic Management, Emergency Management, Maintenance and Construction Management, and Data Management. The update to the RA will look at the existing transportation technologies in the community and how they interact. It will examine the functions being performed by the technologies, subsystems, information flows, and interface communications. It will also lay out the responsibilities of the various stakeholders, and any existing agreements between them. Finally, it will look at planning, integrating the ITS RA into the MPO's other plans, and providing a framework for the jurisdictions to evaluate additional technologies in the coming years.

In the past week, ATAC and the MPO held small group meetings with several sets of stakeholders. These meetings help identify the service packages currently being used in the region. It is also intended that any service packages planned over the next five years be included as 'planned service packages,' and any packages in the ten-to-fifteen-year planning horizon be included as 'future service packages.' The ITS RA is a living document which should respond to the need for improvements to the transportation network.

The data collection phase for the ITS RA update will last until around May. The RA inventory will be updated over the summer, and review, implementation and finalization should lead to a November completion date for the project.

Mr. Hasan noted ATAC is still collecting some data. They are reaching out to some stakeholders who were not able to attend their small group meetings.

BSPRA GOVERNMENT PARTNERS PROGRAM

Ms. Riepl presented. Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) held a Government Partners Program webinar on February 27. About half the webinar was based on answering questions from the MPO and its partners. BSPRA addressed the new federal administration and the uncertainty about federal funding for passenger rail service. They believe the restoration of passenger rail service fits with USDOT goals, and although new federal grant activity has been paused, this is temporary and does not affect the Corridor ID Program being used to prepare for new passenger rail routes. BSPRA has begun work on their Corridor ID project to restore service to the Big Sky North Coast Corridor (which would run from Chicago to Seattle and pass-through Bismarck and Mandan). They were awarded \$500,000 with no local match to develop a project scope for this effort, and they expect to complete this in April or May of this year. The next step would be to form a service development plan. This would require local match, which BSPRA would be looking for assistance in funding (the estimated cost would be about \$200,000 for each state along the route). The final step in the process would be final design, which is likely about eight years out. This would require a more substantial local match.

The MPO asked BSPRA how cities will be chosen to have train stations, and what criteria would be used for this process. BSPRA explained this will be an interactive process and will be very dependent on local initiative and cooperation with surrounding areas. A location's contributions to route goals will be significant (ridership, economic benefits, etc.). An Intergovernmental Consultation Council representing States and Tribes has been formed, and this will support a formal public engagement process. Likely sites may include trade and service center cities, gateways to major destinations, historic rail station locations, locations providing operational services for passenger rail, and communities committed to using passenger rail to develop opportunities for their citizens and surrounding areas. Special evaluation would be needed if a community were less than 50 miles from another station location. BSPRA also noted the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) will have final approval for station locations. Mr. Hutchings said based on the potential station list he has seen there are gaps in eastern Montana. He asked if local communities have additional opportunities to get involved in station development in future. Ms. Riepl said yes there will be other opportunities, but the MPO believes getting involved earlier is better for a region's chances of promoting its own success.

The MPO asked what resources (for locational analysis, land acquisition, construction, supporting services funding, transit infrastructure/rapid transit funding, etc.) will be available for cities who are selected to have a station. BSPRA said they and the Corridor ID staff and consultants are available to assist local communities. They also pointed to the Western Transportation Institute and Amtrak as possible resources. They emphasized participation in BSPRA webinars and conferences, including the upcoming BSPRA Annual Meeting held September 8-10 in Livingston, Montana.

The MPO asked how local communities can influence higher levels of government to support projects like this. BSPRA encouraged recruiting additional Government Partners for their Program. They also suggested contacting state officials about providing funding for the Corridor ID Program matching contribution, recommending prominent citizens to service on the BSPRA private fundraising board, talking to Senators and Congressmen about supporting the Big Sky North Coast Corridor, and staying engaged overall. Ms. Riepl said the MPO is incorporating passenger rail into its Safety Policy Study. The study will look at at-grade rail crossings, since elimination or mitigation of these crossings can enhance passenger rail service.

NORTH DAKOTA MPO DIRECTOR'S MEETING

Ms. Riepl presented. The North Dakota MPO's Directors and staff met with staff from NDDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on February 28 for the spring Directors Meeting. Ms. Riepl shared several updates from the meeting, primarily concerning the MPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and the annual contract connected to it. Because the MPO is tied to an annual contract, and annual Consolidated Planning Grant (CPG) funding, NDDOT has come up with a new process to address unused CPG funds. Going forward at year end, any unused CPG funds will be de-obligated by NDDOT. The MPO Directors will make an annual recommendation for the use of these funds based on their needs, and NDDOT will then make the final decision on distributing the funds to the MPOs the following year (so, unused 2024 funds would be re-obligated in 2026).

Exhibit E contains some information on the timelines for this process. Ms. Riepl noted if the MPO Directors cannot agree on a recommendation for unspent CPG funds, NDDOT will determine the distribution. As of right now, unspent CPG funds for 2024 will be around \$291,000, and the MPO Directors recommended the funding be redistributed based on

population. The Minot MPO requested to abstain from this funding because they are still gaining momentum as an office and do not currently have sufficient staff or local match available.

Mr. Ehreth asked if the MPO Directors will discuss the re-distribution of funds every year. Ms. Riepl said yes. Mr. Hutchings explained NDDOT designed the process to give the MPOs autonomy, they will only get involved if the Directors cannot come to a consensus. He noted Minot foregoing funding this year means they will have priority in the future if needed.

BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Ms. Riepl presented. The MPO area was awarded a Bronze Designation through the League of American Bicyclists as a Bicycle Friendly Community. This designation is active for four years. The League also contacted the MPO and indicated they have grant funding to send a staff member to Bismarck-Mandan to conduct a Bicycle Friendly Community Workshop this year. The MPO expressed interest in hosting, and Exhibit F shows the flier recently created for the workshop. This will be a 1 and ½ day workshop on May 21 and 22, 2025 at the Bismarck Public Works building (601 South 26th Street). It will begin on May 21 at 9 a.m. with classroom instruction and discussion. A free lunch will be catered by the League and then a bike ride audit (route to be determined) will be held in the afternoon. The workshop will conclude on May 22 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. with some more time for discussion and education. The workshop is intended to accommodate up to 50 attendees, and the registration form is live.

2025-2028 TIP ADMINISTRATIVE MODIFICATIONS

Mr. Larson presented. This month, the MPO processed four administrative modifications to the 2025-2028 TIP to move four micro surfacing projects in Bismarck from FY 2025 to 2026. These projects are for work on Bismarck's 9th Street from Expressway to Front Avenue, on Expressway from Main Avenue to the end of the asphalt and from Washington Street to Main Avenue, and on ND 1804 from Expressway to 48th Avenue SE.

OTHER BUSINESS

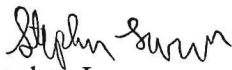
MPO Transportation Planner Opening

Ms. Riepl said the MPO received 30 applications for the open Transportation Planner position. The MPO is going through a refining process and hopes to hold interviews soon.

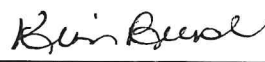
ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m., with the next scheduled meeting to take place on April 14, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in the Tom Baker Meeting Room of the City/County Building, 221 N 5th St, Bismarck.

Respectfully Submitted,


Stephen Larson
Recording Secretary

APPROVED:



MPO TAC Chair