



Transportation Steering Committee

AGENDA April 28, 2025

Tom Baker Meeting Room	City/County Office Building 221 N. 5th St. Bismarck, ND 58501	12:00 PM
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CALL TO ORDER

REGULAR AGENDA

- A. Public Comment
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes
- C. Discussion with City of Mandan Leadership
- D. Expectations for Additional Services
- E. Other Business

ADJOURN



MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION STEERING COMMITTEE

4/11/2025 - Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

The Transportation Steering Committee met on Friday, April 11, 2025, at 12:00 PM, in the Tom Baker Meeting Room, 221 N 5th St, Bismarck, ND.

Committee members present included, Trevor Vannett, Micah Olson, Dawn Kopp, Mayor Mike Schmitz, Brenda Nagel, Mike Taylor and Dustin Gawrylow. Members Brian Ritter, Melissa Nordsven, Jaelyn Chathams, and Commissioner Michael Connelly were absent.

REGULAR AGENDA

A. Public Comment

- Susan Dingle, a public transportation advocate, recommends the Transportation Steering Committee stop stalling around. Would like Bismarck Transit to receive more funding.
- Isaac Chepatah, representing BTS Taxi, established 2018. Isaac stated that his company would to partner with the City to continue to provide reliable rides for Bismarck citizens. Would specifically like to request support from this committee to provide accessible rides, subsidized fares and invest in systems and training for employees to ensure more reliable service.
- Kyle Theil, representing Ridable, provided an explanation of the services and struggles Ridable faces to provide reliable service to our community. Kyle states Ridable would like to work with Bismarck Transit, other rides service providers and the City by providing a modern reliable ride service to our community.

- Taylor Barnett, representing Community Bridge Transportation. Non-profit organization provide services to vulnerable populations transitioning from prison or jail, halfway houses, Stated that they are working with Ministry on the Margins to set up rides for the homeless population. Charge \$5 to \$7.50 a ride, any funding they receive is donated back to provide free rides for individuals who can not pay for rides. Looking for funding for paratransit bus.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Dawn Kopp moved to approve the minutes as presented and Member Taylor seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

C. Update from Bis-Man Transit

Deidre Hughes, Executive Director at Bismar Transit, addressed the committee concerning the topics below forward in the March 21, 2025 Transportation Steering Committee.

- School busing issues - Deidre explained to the committee that no federal funding through federal transportation administration can be used for school busing. Transit programs that receive federal funding can not cater to school busing. To cater would mean to schedule fixed routes to coincide with the times where students need to be picked up to go to school or taken home or to modify routes to go by schools during drop off or pick up times for students. Deidre stated Bismar Transit does already have routes that do provide rides within 2 blocks to most of the schools in Bismarck and Mandan. Member Taylor asked Deidre to clarify what catering meant. Deidre responded that going out of our way to go by schools or changing routes times. Member Taylor then asked if expanding route times would we be catering to schools? Deidre responded that Bismar Transit would not be catering because the expanded times would not be focusing on schools. Member Taylor then asked if it would be considering "catering" if Bismar Transit meets with schools to coordinate routes? Deidre responded that she was not sure and that as the Executive Director she would want something in writing from the Federal Transportation Administration indicating that it wouldn't jeopardize their federal funding
- Deidre then addressed whether routing of services to ensure medical services (non-emergent services) for individuals needing rides to non-emergent medical appointments stating that this would require running a completely separate mode of transportation. Deidre was concerned that this service would require same day service which would be very similar to providing taxi services, which would be a violation of FTA funding because it would directly compete with private businesses.
- Deidre elaborated on the financial document provided to the committee showing what the costs of current services and what the costs would be for various scenarios for expanded service. Member Taylor asked does the analysis assume

income or is this just expense. Deidre responded that the financial breakdown only shows expense. Member Taylor then asked what the revenues are where Deidre responded that revenues are difficult to calculate due to the formula for federal funding. Deidre elaborated that if Bismarck Transit increases fares then their federal funding would be decreased. Deidre then stated that Bismarck Transit receives state funding for paratransit services.

- Member Taylor then asked what is the estimated annual income from sales tax as a result of Measure 1. City of Bismarck Finance Director, Dmitriy Chernyak respond that in 2026 the estimated collections should roughly equal \$4.5 million. Member Taylor then asked if there is a sunset on Measure 1? Dmitriy Chernyak stated, No.
- Mike Taylor - is there a sunset for ballot measure - NO
- Deidre Hughes stated that the estimated operating deficit for 2025 is \$955,000. Member Gawrylow asked how much federal funding does Bismarck Transit currently receive. Deidre stated just over \$2 million and that Bismarck Transit receives a \$270,000 - \$300,000 grant for providing after hours service
- Member Dustin Gawrylow stated that Community Bridge Transportation mentioned in Public Comment that they are looking for a bus, is Bismarck Transit retiring any paratransit buses soon. Deidre responded, yes but as a public entity we need to follow certain rules for selling of equipment. Member Kopp asked how many buses will be taken out of commission. Deidre responded that 3 to 4 buses will be taken out of commission in the next couple of years.
- Member Mike Taylor stated that we have been trending deficit spending, who pays for the deficit? Deidre explained that Bismarck Transit we received \$3.7M in COVID funding which helped significantly and City of Bismarck and City of Mandan have contributed some as well but that funding has run out. Member Taylor asked what is in cash reserves and how is it used? Deidre responded that Bismarck Transit has \$2M in CDs and \$2M in cash reserves.
- Member Vannett asked Deidre what expanding Sunday Services would look like. Deidre responded that it would be very difficult to know what this service would look like or what Transit could count on. Ridership averages 226 paratransit trips per month on Sundays.
- Deidre then addressed what Express routes might look like. Deidre stated that express or circular route could run a loop by Heavens Helpers, hospitals, mall, United Way, Dream Center, Bismarck Burleigh Public Health and Walmart. Another option would be to run from Front Avenue to Mapleton Ave or Front Ave to Dan's in Mandan. All routes would be roughly 30 minutes
- Deidre then described Bismarck Transits partnership with the University of Mary stating that Bismarck Transit has a great partnership with UMARY. Deidre explained that the university supports transit services through advertisement by paying for the wrapping of buses. Member Nagel then asked are there conflicts with the FTA if Bismarck Transit is serving colleges. Deidre responded, no, because colleges do

not run school buses and further explained that many of the rides to the University of Mary are used by non-students or employees of the university.

D. Other Business

- Mayor Schmitz asked if Deidre has heard what Mandan is doing with their sales tax dollars? Deidre responded that she believes Mandan has an application for individuals/businesses/organizations that would like to receive funding for transportation services and that they will evaluate the submitted application by a panel and award based on decisions of the panel.
- Member Trevor Vannet stated that the Bismarck Transit deficit is not just a Bismarck problem and asked what do we need to do to coordinate with Mandan? Mayor Schmitz responded that it would be nice to have a community solution and that there needs to be some dialogue between decision makers of the two communities.
- Member Vannett then stated that he would like to see expanded fixed routes 600AM - 900PM, Sunday expanded service times, expand holiday hours, and expanded paratransit. Member Micah Olsen stated that he agreed with Member Vannett.
- Member Gawrylow stated that the first step is to sure up the current situation and that Bismarck Transit needs a million for the 2025 budget.
- Member Gawrylow then made a motion that the committee make the recommendation to reserve up to one million dollars in 2025 to ensure Bismarck Transit services are solvent. Member Vannett seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION -

Member Mike Taylor stated that he is unsure about support deficit spending. Mayor Mike Schmitz stated that the deficit is due to operations of the level of service that is currently being provided to the city. Federal funding has not evolved to stay parallel with inflation. In order to sustain the services we currently have we needed to have another funding source for the community and currently there is no commitment from Mandan to help with the deficit and that he would like to see the City of Mandan contribute to the solution. Mayor Schmitz reminded the committee that they are making recommendations to the City Commission and the commission will vote and give direction. Member Dawn Kopp stated that recommending up to 1M is reasonable because we do not know what the future costs are.

Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

- Member Trevor Vannett then made a motion that this committee request that City Commission or Mayor Schmitz have a conversation with the City of Mandan and work toward a cooperative agreement to address the deficit funding. Member Mike Taylor seconded.

Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURN